



BY MICHELLE CUMMINGS

Virtual Team Building Activities

30 Experiential Activities
for a Virtual Audience



By Michelle Cummings

(and friends!)

A Note from Michelle Cummings

Hello!

This e-book was thrown together quickly to help facilitators convert in-person activities to a virtual format when the Covid-19 virus spread rapidly around the world. I'm sure there are a few errors... This is my attempt to use my gifts and talents to help others as they frantically try to figure out this 'new normal' and facilitate in a virtual world for the time being. I think it's a good reminder that experiential activities should be outcome-based, so getting to the true purpose of why we are doing what we're doing will be important when it comes to selecting an activity to use virtually.



I designed this document with clickable links to share additional online resources as well. Many of the images in this document are also available as free downloads on our [Pinterest page](#).

You probably already know that converting regular activities into virtual activities isn't as simple as just finding an online meeting room to use. There are many additional things to consider and it requires some creativity, reimagining and redesigning, all while keeping the integrity of the program intact. We have to think about ways to increase engagement in an easily distractible environment. As the need for online delivery intensifies, I will continue to put out more virtual content on my [Blog](#) as well as in my Free Online Newsletter called [The Spokesperson](#).

A Big Shout Out to many facilitators that emailed in activities to include in this document. We are in this together! Here are several Virtual Team Building Activities you can use. Enjoy!

Have Fun Out There!

~Michelle Cummings, [Training Wheels](#)



Managing Group Energy and Tips for Virtual Facilitation

In a virtual world, managing the energy of your group and keeping people engaged can be a challenge. Especially if your online session is right after lunch when ‘food coma’ is likely to set in. Most people are not used to being engaged on a screen for long periods. It’s important to make sure that there are a mix of brain breaks and interactivity scattered throughout your presentation.



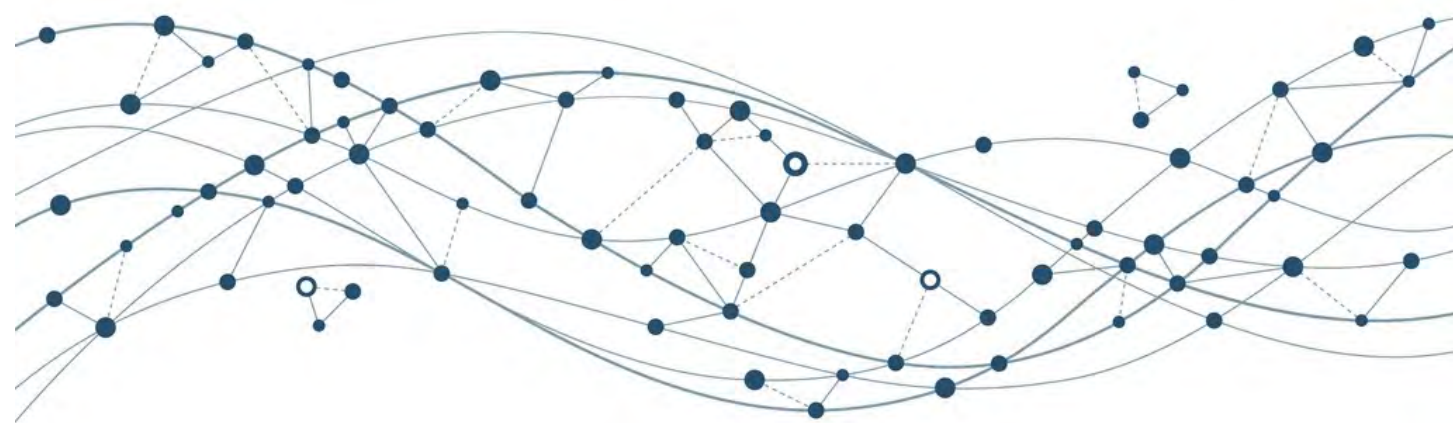
People’s attention spans are smaller for virtual classrooms. Try to keep the content in 30-, 45- or 60-minute segments. Longer than that will be a struggle to hold everyone’s attention and they will likely not retain much.

Some of our favorite research to back this concept was done by Dr Marcia Tate. In her book, [Sit and Get Won’t Grow Dendrites](#), she identified 20 brain-compatible strategies that are crucial for long-term retention and behavior change when teaching or facilitating. From her book: *“The average attention span for listening to a lecture is commensurate with the age of the participant. For example, a 6-year-old appears able to listen without active engagement for about 6 minutes, a 12-year-old 12 minutes, and so forth. However the maximum amount of time, even for an adult, is approximately 20 minutes. After that time, without active engagement, the brain has simply had enough (Tileston, 2004).*

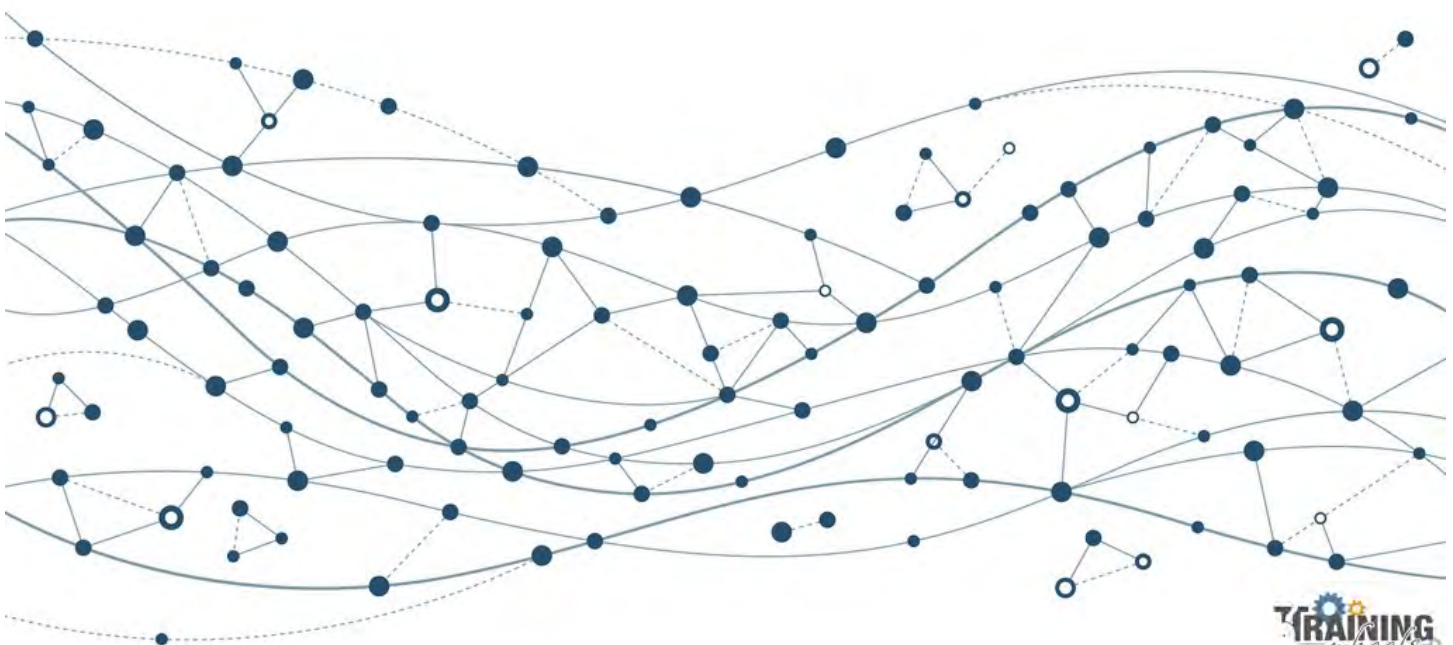
Email note-taking handouts with check-in prompts ahead of time. This will help learners stay engaged and will increase retention. If they’re listening and writing, they’re paying attention. Inject frequent interactivity into your session like polls, surveys, status check emojis (thumbs up/thumbs down) or the chat feature. Invite participants to stand and do a quick stretch. Even little things like this can help keep the brain engaged and help to keep people focused.

Use people’s names as much as you can. Respond to as many questions as you can. Make their participation count. Be visible to the learners. Appear on camera as much as you can. Script out your responses or remarks if you tend to get super nervous when presenting to a crowd of people. Dress the same way as you would in the classroom. Smile! If you don’t have the option for live streaming or video, put a headshot of you up on the slide when you introduce yourself so learners have a face to put with your voice.

Your expertise and professionalism will come across. Even virtually! You’ve got this!



Virtual Icebreaker Activities



Icebreaker Prompts

Directions:

- Invite participants to take turns answering the icebreaker question prompts.
- For large groups, send them into breakout rooms for 3-5 minutes. Have participants share their responses in their small group. Ask participants to take a screen shot of the questions so they have the prompts once they move to the breakout room.
- For smaller audiences, have each person take turns sharing their responses with the group.
- Commercial Icebreaker Question Cards available from Training Wheels: [Icebreaker Wheelies](#), [Icebreaker Wheelies for Kids](#)

ALL ABOUT ME



I was born in



My favorite sweet treat is



My favorite vacation spot is



In my spare time I like to



My family consists of



One thing people don't know about me is

A Penny For Your Thoughts

Directions:

- Ask each participant to bring a penny to the virtual meeting, or provide images of coins with different years on them.
- For younger kids, the pennies should be no older than 10 years from the current year.
- Ask participants to look for the date on their coin and share with the rest of the group something significant or interesting that happened to them in that year.
- Encourage participants to think outside the box. If the penny is dated before you were born, think about what happened in the world that year that might have had an impact on your current life.
- For large groups, send them into breakout rooms for 3-5 minutes. Have participants share their responses in their small group. Ask participants to take a screen shot of the questions so they have the prompts once they move to the breakout room.
- For smaller audiences, have each person take turns sharing their story with the group.
- You may need to give a few hints to younger children. For example, it might be a year that their brother or sister was born, or maybe it was the year their parents got married.



Playing Card Connections

Source: Adapted from an activity in the book, [Playing with a Full Deck](#), 52 Team Activities Using a Deck of Playing Cards by Michelle Cummings.

Directions:

- Ask each participant to bring a few playing cards to the virtual meeting, or provide images of playing cards.
- Create six icebreaker or debriefing questions.
- Ask participants to select six cards from their deck, Aces through six.
- Have them shuffle their small deck and take turns turning over their first card. Whatever number card is face up they would share their response to the corresponding question on your screen. For example, if someone turned over the two of spades, they would answer the questions “Name your two favorite holidays.”
- You could also provide images of the card faces and have participants select a number card.
- You could also have a deck of cards yourself on video and flip the cards over so the participants can see which card flipped over.



Virtual Icebreaker Bingo

Source: Shared by Tim Walther, Grand Dynamics

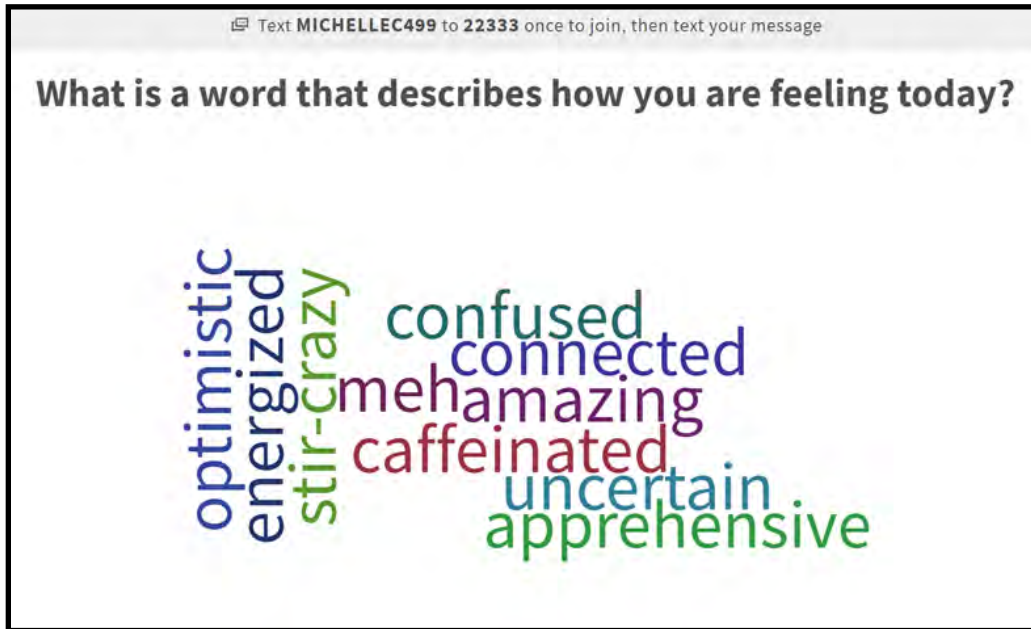
Directions:

- Ask each participant to print off an Icebreaker Bingo Card.
- Assign 2-3 categories to each participant ahead of time and ask them to bring them up in casual conversation during the chat. You'll need several different designs that all have the same prompts in different squares.
- Have each person mark out their own card at home.
- First person to mark five in a row yells out Bingo! Have prizes for the winners.
- There are several websites that allow you to [Create Your Own Bingo Cards](#).

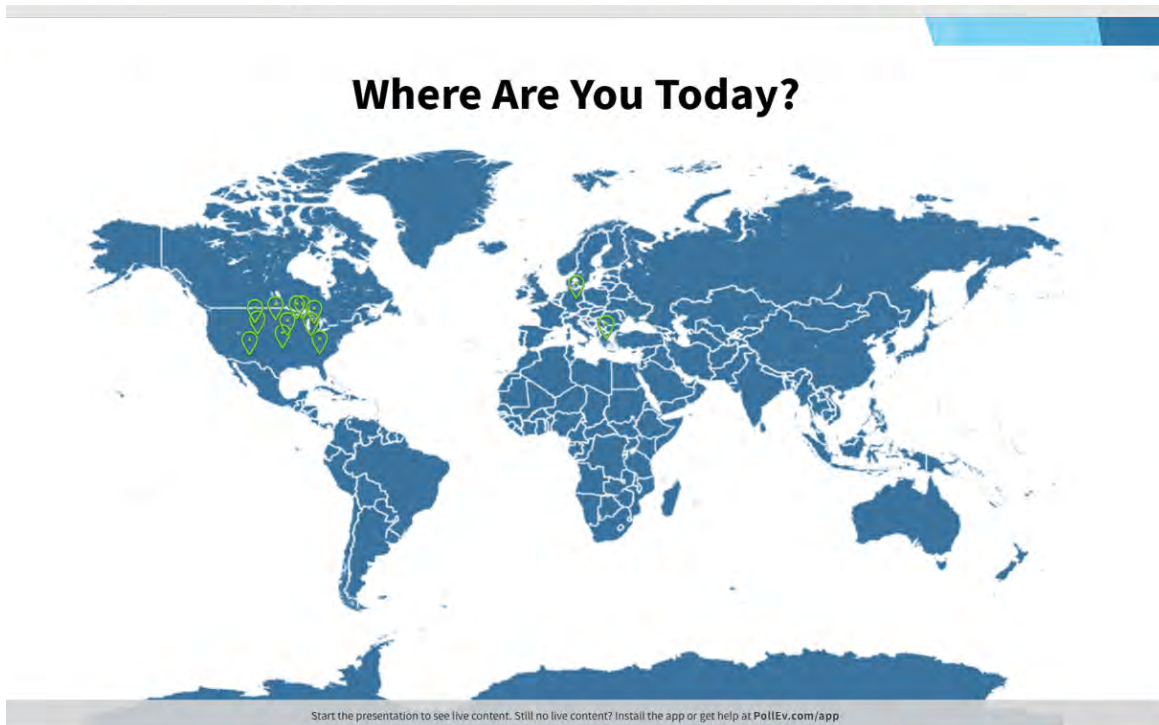
ICEBREAKER BINGO				
DOES NOT HAVE ANY PETS	LOVES COUNTRY MUSIC	IS AFRAID OF SPIDERS	HAS NEVER BROKEN A BONE	WAS IN THE MARCHING BAND
IS WEARING YELLOW	HAS BEEN TO EUROPE	HAS BEEN ON A MOTORCYCLE	DOES NOT DRINK MILK	RAN A MARATHON
HAD BRACES	DRIVES A TRUCK	FREE SPACE	HAS RED HAIR	CAN SALSA DANCE
LOVES TO PAINT	HAS 3 OR MORE CHILDREN	FAVORITE COLOR IS PINK	CAN PLAY THE GUITAR	WAS BORN IN DECEMBER
HAS BEEN TO MEXICO	HAS CURLY HAIR	WORKS FROM HOME	IS LEFT HANDED	FAILED THEIR FIRST DRIVING TEST

Online Polling Platforms

Use Online Polling platforms for instant and interactive answers to questions. Platforms such as www.PollingEverywhere.com and www.Menti.com allow you to use this with both live and virtual audiences. Create questions that will give you a barometer of how people are feeling. Here's an example:



You can also do interactive maps. This interactive map is currently live if you'd like to check it out! Go to www.PollEv.com/michellec499 to add your pin. It should instantly populate!









Dicebreakers! An Icebreaker Activity Using Dice







Directions:

- Instruct participants to bring dice to the online meeting. Most people will have access to a pair of dice. If someone does not have a die, you can roll the dice for them. You can also have dice virtually rolled for you at [Random.org](https://www.random.org). (Thanks for this tip Barry Thompson!)
- Invite one person to volunteer to go first, have them roll the dice and answer the corresponding question to the number on the die.
- For large groups, send them into breakout rooms for 3-5 minutes. Have participants share their responses in their small group. Ask participants to take a screen shot of the questions so they have the prompts once they move to the breakout room.
- For smaller audiences, have each person take turns sharing their responses with the group.







Dicebreakers

	If you were invisible for a day, what would you choose to do?
	If you could choose a unique super power, what would it be?
	What is the grossest food you have ever tried?
	Who is your favorite movie character?
	What is your favorite game to play?
	What is one thing you are really good at?







Dicebreakers

	If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?
	If you were stranded on a desert island, what three things would you want to take with you?
	If you could eat only one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?
	If you won a million dollars, what is the first thing you would buy?
	If you could spend the day with one fictional character, who would it be?
	If you found a magic lantern and a genie gave you three wishes, what would you wish?

Dicebreakers

	What has been your favorite birthday so far?
	What is the best gift you have ever received?
	What is one thing you like to do in the summer?
	What is your favorite activity to do on vacation?
	If you could go back in time, who would you spend a day with?
	If you could meet a famous person, who would it be?

Dicebreakers

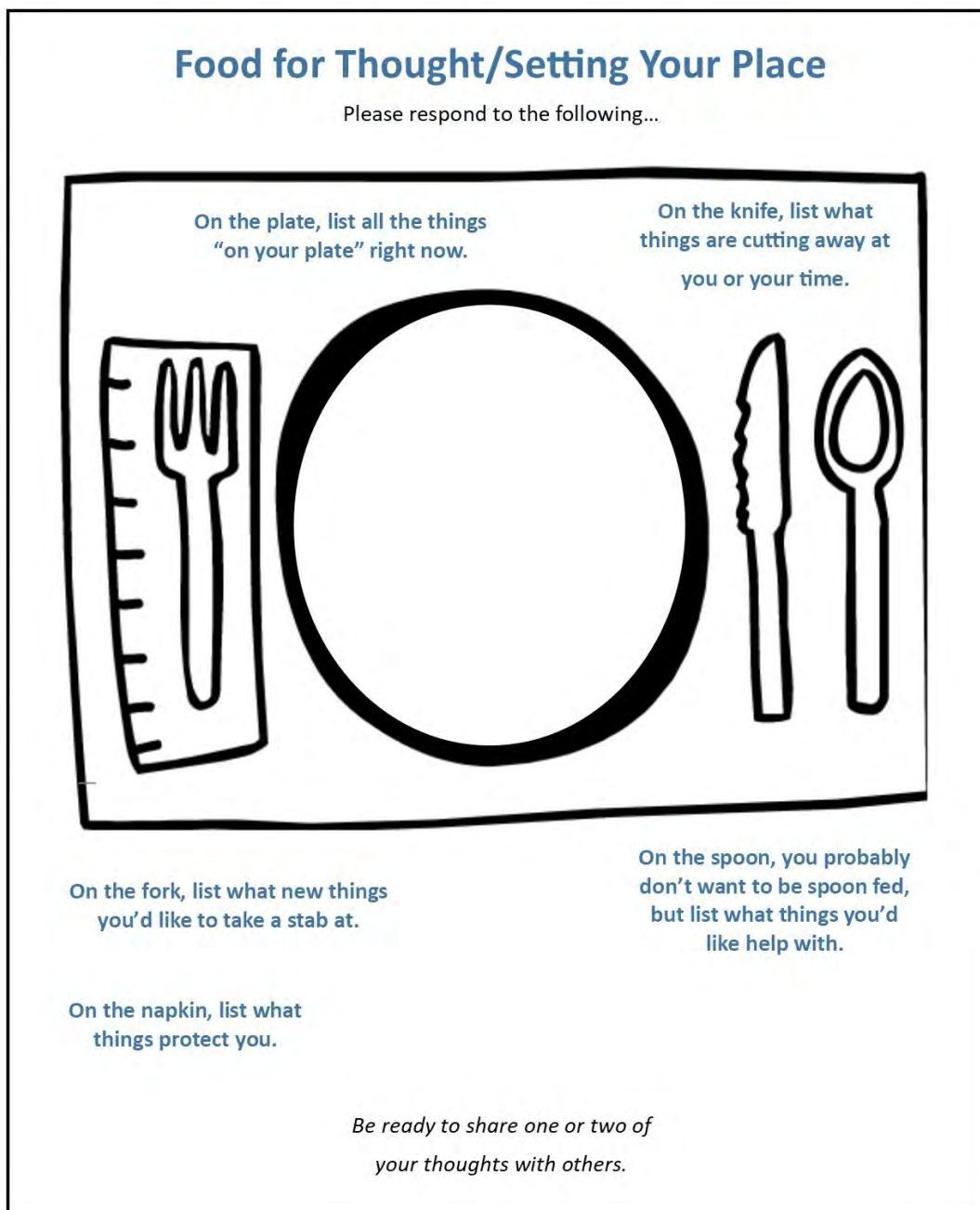
	What is the best \$100 you have ever spent in your life?
	What is one of the best conversations you have ever had?
	What is one of your favorite childhood memories?
	If you could be a roadie for any band for a month, which band would you choose?
	What would you cook if you really wanted to impress someone?
	What is the most creative thing you have ever done?

Food For Thought

Contributor: Jen Gross Laura of Anne Arundel Community College . It is included in the book, [A Teachable Moment](#), by Michelle Cummings, Jennifer Stanchfield and Jim Cain.

Concept: To engage participants in discussing what is going on in their lives.

Directions: Ask participants to print the Food For Thought placemat and follow the prompts for each item. You could also use actual utensils on a video call and provide the placemat in your slides as a visual.



Icebreaker Thumballs

Directions:

- Even though this is usually an 'in-person' activity, with a little out-of-the-box thinking, you can do this virtually. It does require that you have a Thumball in your possession! This helps make your virtual session feel more interactive. If you don't have one, you can create your own with a beach ball and a sharpie.
- Tell the group how the Thumball works. You will throw the ball up in the air, catch it, look under your thumb and announce the question the participants will answer.
- Pick one participant to start, or ask for a volunteer.
- After they have answered their first question, invite them to pick the person they would like to answer the question next and pretend to throw the ball to them.
- Continue this process until everyone has answered one question.
- This works well as an Icebreaker activity, as well as a Debriefing Activity.
- We have over [20 different Thumball designs](#) on the Training Wheels online store. Everything from Icebreakers to Leadership to Conflict Resolution to Debriefing Thumballs! We also have a Numbers Thumball and an Alphabet Thumball, so you could create your own questions in your slide deck and participants could respond to the correlating number or letter. We also have a [Blank Thumball](#) so you can write your own questions on the ball.

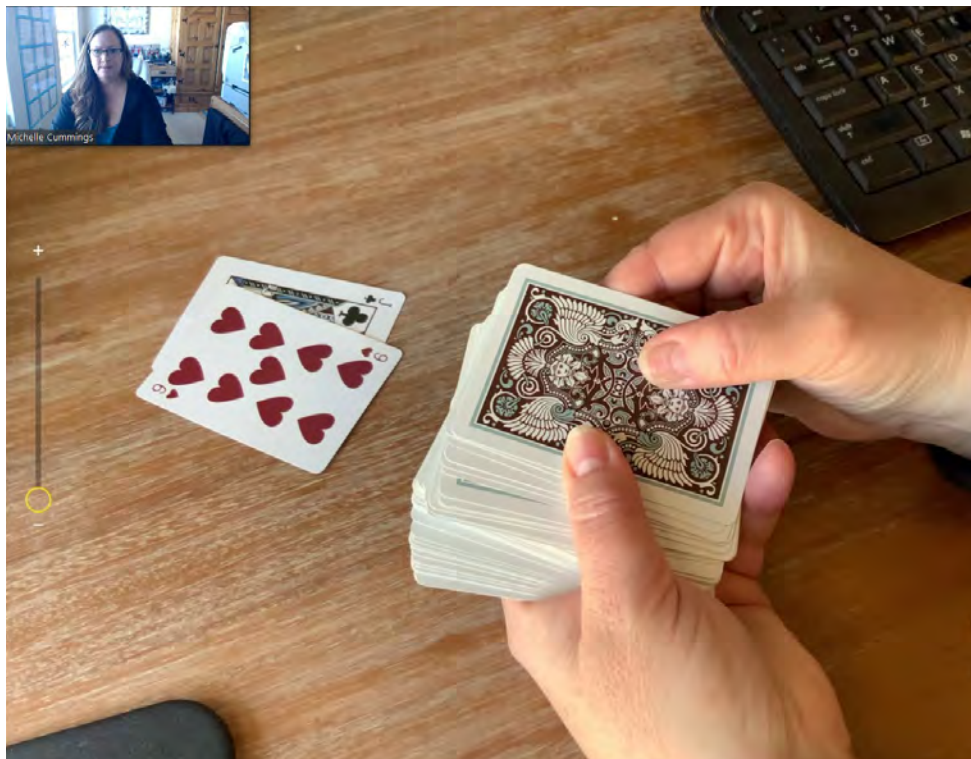


Prediction

Directions:

- This activity is an adaptation from the Prediction activity in the book, [Playing with a Full Deck](#) by Michelle Cummings.
- The aim of this game is to turn over all 52 cards in a deck of playing cards without predicting one correctly.
- Shuffle the deck and make sure you have a webcam focused solely on the deck of cards.
- Explain that before turning over the first card, the person in the first chat window must announce a number/value of a card. For example, 'Five.' They must say the word out loud and be clear. The goal is to try to avoid predicting the next card you are about to turn over.
- If the announcement coincides with the rank of card revealed, the game is immediately over. So if they announced, 'Six' and then turned over the six of diamonds, the game is over. Then the cards are shuffled and the game recommences with the next participant.
- If they did not predict the next card, the person in the next chat window gives an answer.
- The game continues until they either predict a card or you get through the entire deck.
- This game is also made harder by the rule that you cannot make the same prediction in consecutive turns. For example, if someone just said 'Jack' as their answer, the person in the next chat window could not say 'Jack.'
- Also, once it is known that all four of one card value have been played, they may not continuously give this number as an answer.

It's quite fun to hear the whole group squeal with "Ooohhh's" and "Aaaaah's" if they predict a ten card and a nine card is revealed, or with other cards that are close to the predicted number.



Picture or Object Check In

Directions:

- This activity can be an Icebreaker or a Debriefing Activity.
- Use Royalty-free photo sites to avoid violating any copyrights or photos you own the rights to. www.pixabay.com and www.unsplash.com are two royalty-free image sites.
- Use Annotations bar to have participants vote on their photo of choice.
- In Zoom, there is a an Arrow button in the Annotate section. If you ask participants to use the Arrow, it includes their name in the arrow. Then you can identify which arrow belongs to a specific person. This allows you to know which image each participant chose.
- For large groups, send participants into breakout rooms to discuss which photo they chose.
- For small groups have each person share.



Use Your Arrow button to select an image that best describes how you are feeling today.



Creative Categories

Shared by Tim Walther, Grand Dynamics

Creative Categories are discussion topics based on the outcome or focus of the group. You customize and create the categories for your unique content. Categories a facilitator might consider include:

Leadership Actions: Modeled the Way, Inspired a Shared Vision, Went First, Coached

Team Communication: Listened Effectively, Clarified a Role, Offered Support

Community Building: Recycled, Helped a Neighbor, Did my part

Corona: Washed Hands, Kept Social Distancing, Connected on Zoom

Worked From Home: Made a New Recipe, Started a Home Project, Went Stir-crazy

Then, of course the basics of relationship building, "get to know you" topics... family, where from, favorite pet, story of first car, etc...

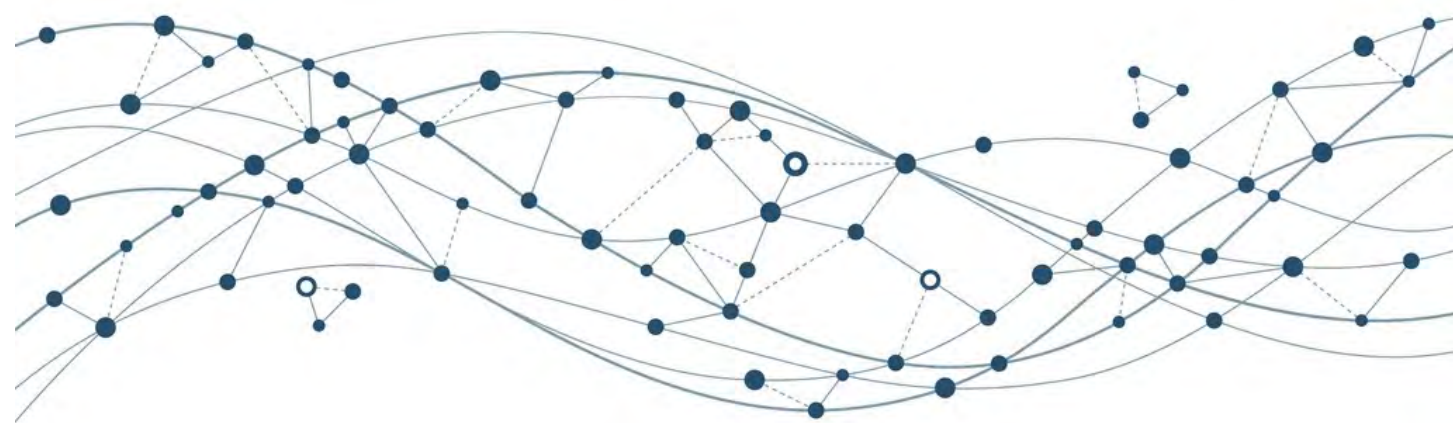
Directions:

- Create graphics or Text boxes in your slide deck with the title of your category and the options they have to choose from.
- Use Annotations bar to have participants select the topic they wish to share.
- In Zoom, there is a an Arrow button in the Annotate section. If you ask participants to use the Arrow, it includes their name in the arrow. Then you can identify which arrow belongs to a specific person. This allows you to know which topic each participant chose.
- For large groups, send participants into breakout rooms to discuss which topic they chose.
- For small groups have each person share.

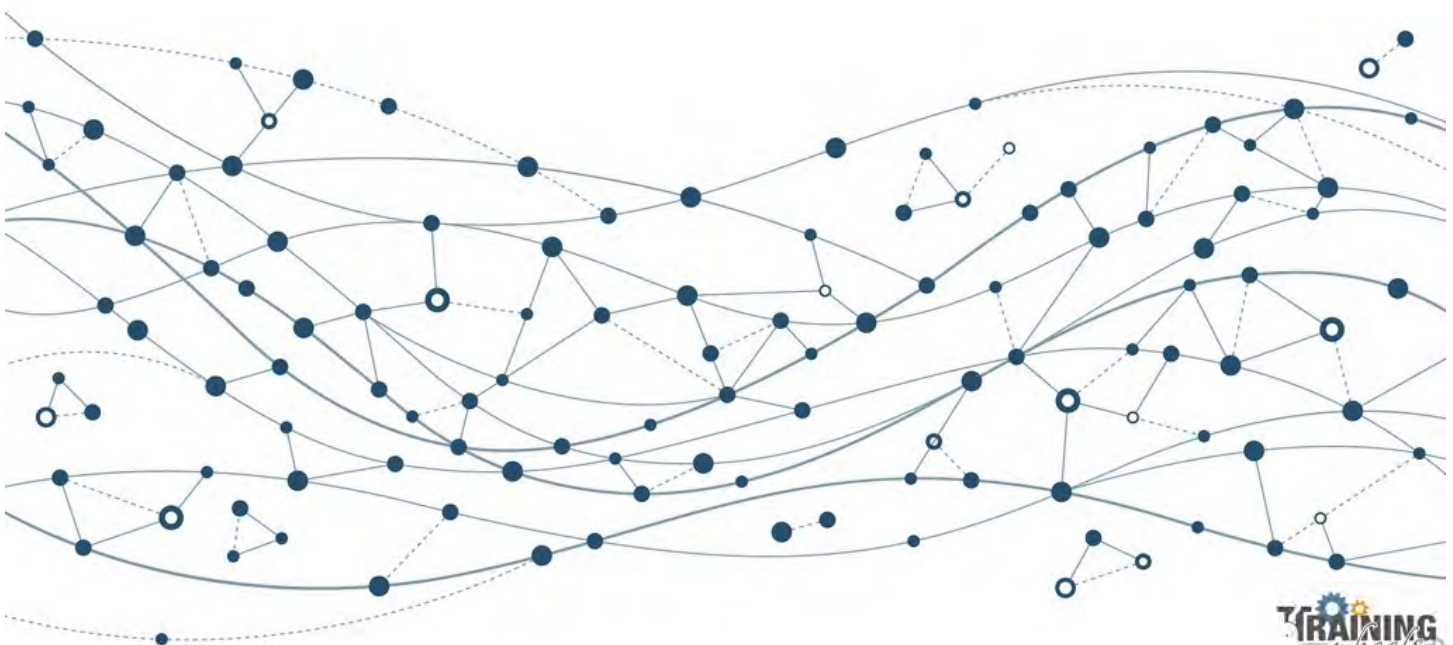
Creative Categories - Working From Home

Made a New Recipe	Started a Home Project
Going Stir-crazy	Deep Cleaned Everything!

Training Wheels, www.Training-Wheels.com Personify Leadership, www.PersonifyLeadership.com



Brain Break and Movement Activities



Move Your Body Thumball

Directions:

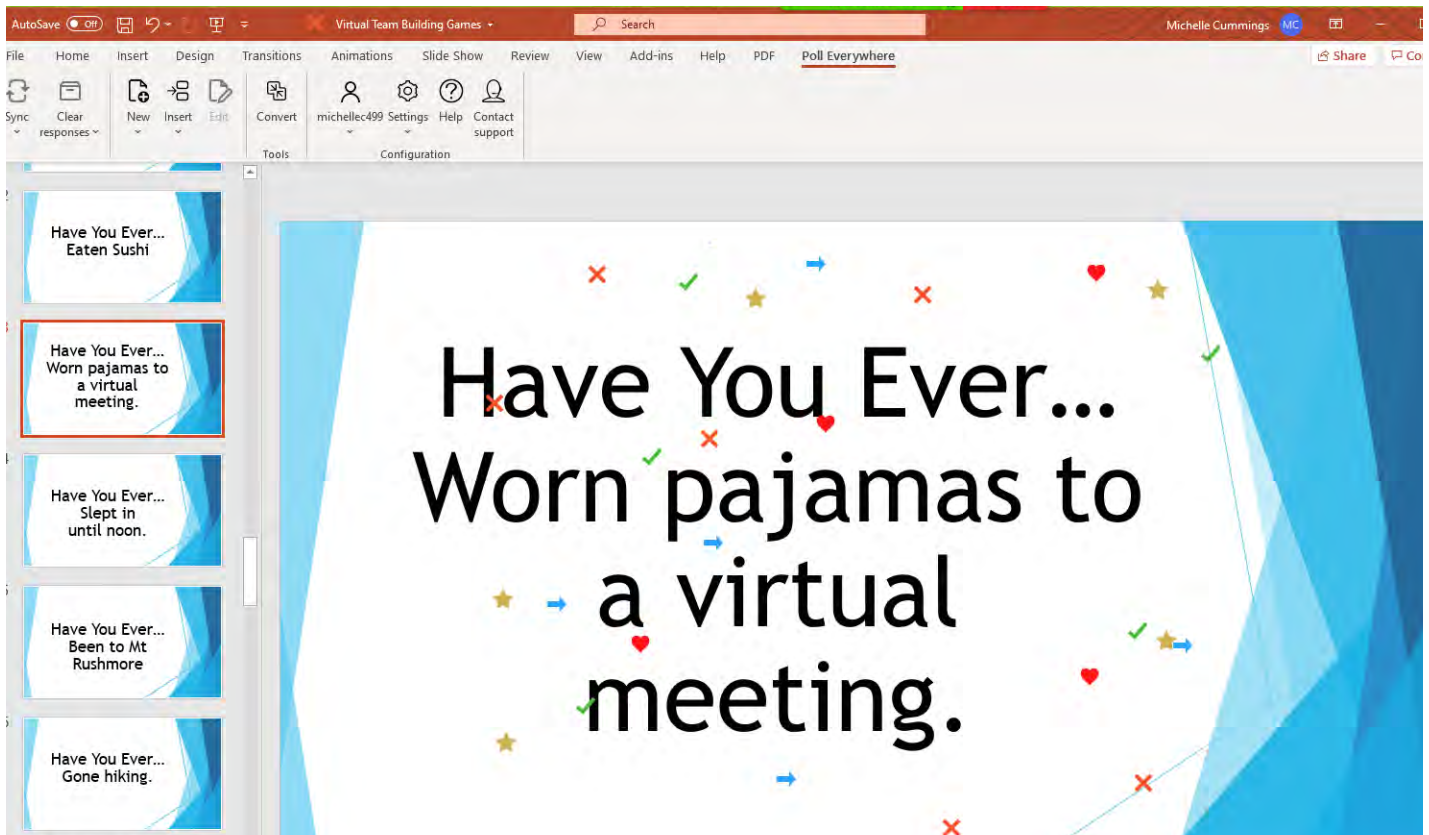
- Even though this is usually an 'in-person' activity, with a little out-of-the-box thinking, you can do this virtually. It does require that you have a [Move Your Body Thumball](#) in your possession! This helps make your virtual session feel more interactive. If you don't have this thumball, you could make one on your own pretty easily with a beach ball and a sharpie. We also have a [Numbers Thumball](#) and an [Alphabet Thumball](#), so you could create your own movement prompts in your slide deck and participants could respond to the correlating number or letter. We also have a [Blank Thumball](#) so you can write your own statements on the ball.
- Tell the group how the Thumball works. You will throw the ball up in the air, catch it, look under your thumb and announce the movement activity that everyone needs to do. Examples: Kick a Goal and Cheer, Twist your waist side to side, Lift barbell weights slowly, Hit a Homerun, Ice Skate Smoothly.
- Ask everyone to stand and do the movement that was just announced. You might want to tell them to back away from the camera a few feet so you don't get belly-button images of all of your participants.
- After 10 seconds of movement, throw the ball to yourself again and announce the next movement.
- Do 5-6 tosses and then return to your regular content.
- This helps wake up the brain and allows for people to refocus.
- These are also great prompts for charades and improvisational games.



Have You Ever

Directions: This age-old game can also work for the virtual world. You can facilitate this in two ways.

1. Create several 'Have You Ever...' prompts in your slide deck. Ask participants to use the Annotation tools to click on the prompts that they have done. Remember to clear the annotations before you advance to the next slide.
2. Invite participants to stand up on the prompts they have done. This creates more movement into your presentation. Encourage participants to move their chairs about 3 feet away from the camera so you can still see their full body when they stand up.



OK Sign

Directions

- This is a quick activity that reinforces the concept that your Actions Speak Louder Than Your Words.
- Make sure your screen is in presenter mode and ask participants to switch from gallery view to presenter view. They need to be able to clearly see you and in full screen if possible.
- Instruct the group focus in and pay attention to your screen.
- Tell everyone to make the OK sign with their hand. (You demonstrate this as well.)
- Then tell everyone to put that OK sign on their CHIN. (However you will put your OK sign on your CHEEK. Make sure your OK sign lands on your CHEEK at the exact time you say CHIN.)
- Most everyone will follow what you **do** rather than what you **say**.
- Smile and say, “Now most people’s chins are down here....” And slide your OK sign from your cheek to your chin.
- The participants will erupt in giggles and disbelief.
- Ask the group, “How many of you followed what I did rather than what I said?”



Here’s a sample Facilitator Script you could follow:

“For this next activity you need to be able to see me, so make sure you are in Full Screen mode and focused on my screen. (Pause until they are ready.) Is everyone ready? OK, I need everyone to make the OK sign with your hand. (You demonstrate this.) OK, good job. Now, I need everyone to put that OK sign on your CHIN. (However you will put your OK sign on your CHEEK. Make sure your OK sign lands on your CHEEK at the exact time you say CHIN.) (Most everyone in the room will follow what you do rather than what you say.) Smile and say, “Now most people’s chins are down here....” (And slide your OK sign from your cheek to your chin while you say this.) (The participants will erupt in giggles and disbelief.) Ask the group, “How many of you followed what I did rather than what I said?” (Raise your hand when you ask this question. Most participants will raise their hand, too.) “That’s what I thought!”

Debrief

- How many of you followed what I did rather than what I said?
- Why do you think you did that?
- Would you agree that it is hard to follow a leader whose actions don’t match their words?
- How can you relate this to the real world?

Change Three Things

Contributor: Maurie Lung

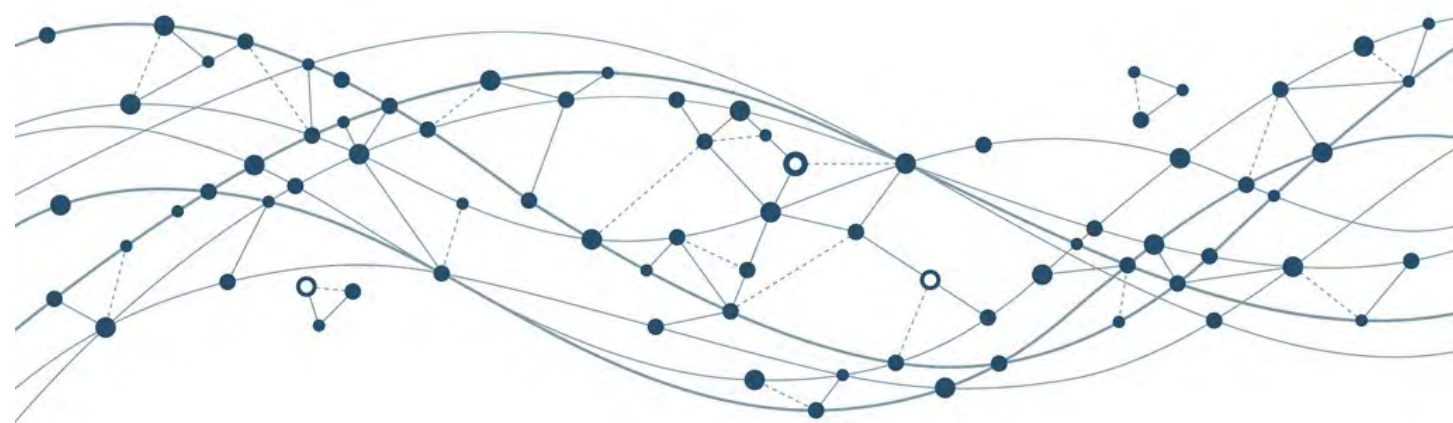
Directions

- This is a quick activity that participants can do in pairs.
- Tell them you are going to send them into breakout rooms with one other person for 6-7 minutes.
- Tell them to study the appearance of their partner for a few moments.
- Have one person go first. Instruct them to turn off their video function for a brief moment and change three things about their appearance. When they turn their video back on, their partner has to try and guess what three things they changed. You could allow the partner to take a screenshot of them before they turn off their video function.
- Then have them switch roles.
- After both have gone one time and if there is still time left before you bring them back to the large group, have them go again and change three more things.

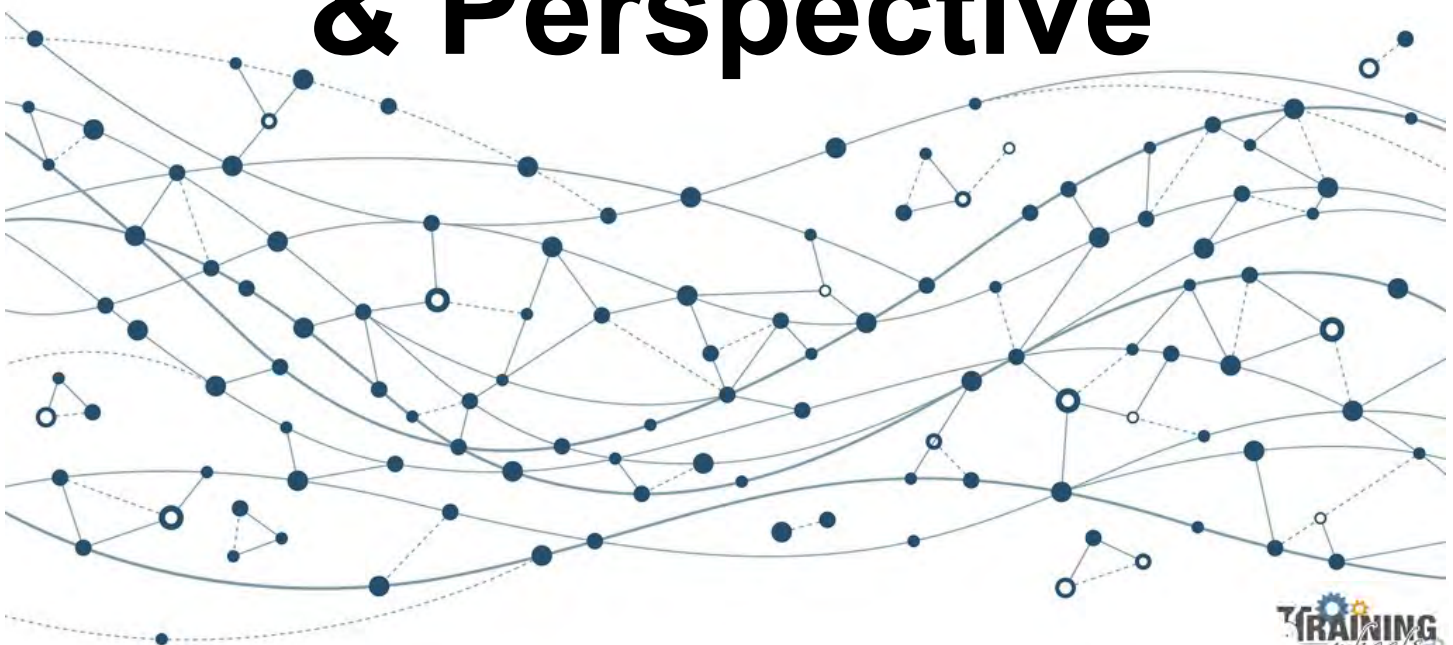


Can you guess which three things I changed?

You could also have them change things in their environment and not just on their person. This is much more difficult!



Virtual Activities that Focus on Behavior Preferences & Perspective



Understanding Behavior Preferences

We all have unique behavior preferences for the various tasks we perform each day. If you think you don't then watch someone else load a dishwasher or fold laundry and see if they do it the same way you do. Most likely they will do it a little differently than you would. We all have areas in life where we are 'wired for success' (gifted) and others where we are not (I have other gifts...). It's not until our behavior preferences butt-heads with someone else's preferences where this can become a problem.

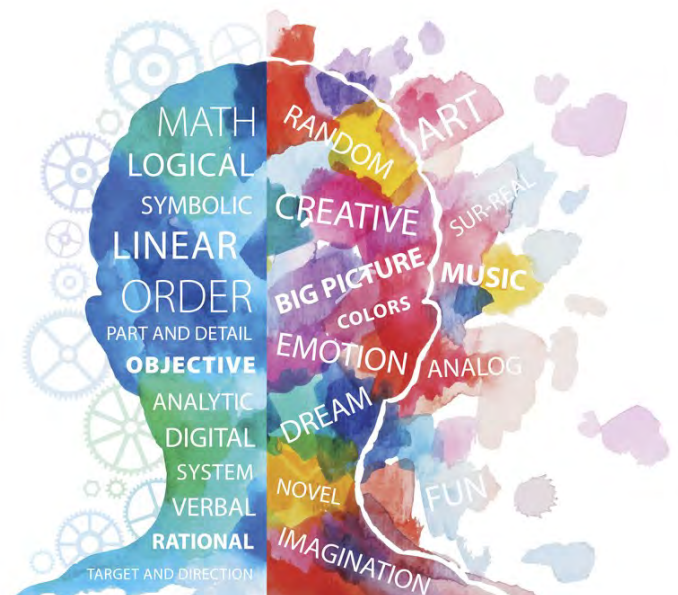
All too often people are unaware of how their behaviors affect others. This lack of knowledge can inadvertently cause conflict and problems among team members. The more self-awareness an individual has around their core strengths and weaknesses, the more apt they are to understanding and embracing another persons preferences.

Psychological Typology has a categorization concept for various behavioral functions and it all began back in the early 1900's with Carl Jung, a Swiss Psychologist and Psychiatrist. His landmark book on the subject was published in 1930 and led to the popular Myers and Briggs model (named after the mother-daughter team that refined the model) that is now the premier profiling approach in use today. There are many other excellent models: Strengths Finders, DISC, MBS, AVA and more, but most owe their origins to Jung's early groundbreaking work.

I have a client in the Denver area that I visit once a quarter. I've been working with them for close to 15 years now. The first time this client called us, they were looking to fix a relationship problem between two employees on their team. It was pretty fractured, and when I did my initial [Needs Assessment](#) with them I could tell it would not be difficult to surface the behaviors through an experiential activity that needed to be addressed.

One of my favorite activities that surfaces behavior preferences and differences is called the [Human Continuum](#). I use a deck of cards called the [Pocket Processor](#). This round deck of cards uses the Ying Yang metaphor and has two different behavior preferences written on each card. For example, one of the cards in the picture has these two behaviors printed on it: Enjoying Chaos / Enjoying Order. I use these cards as my question prompts to allow people to reflect on what their preferred behavior preferences are. Here is how I set up the activity:

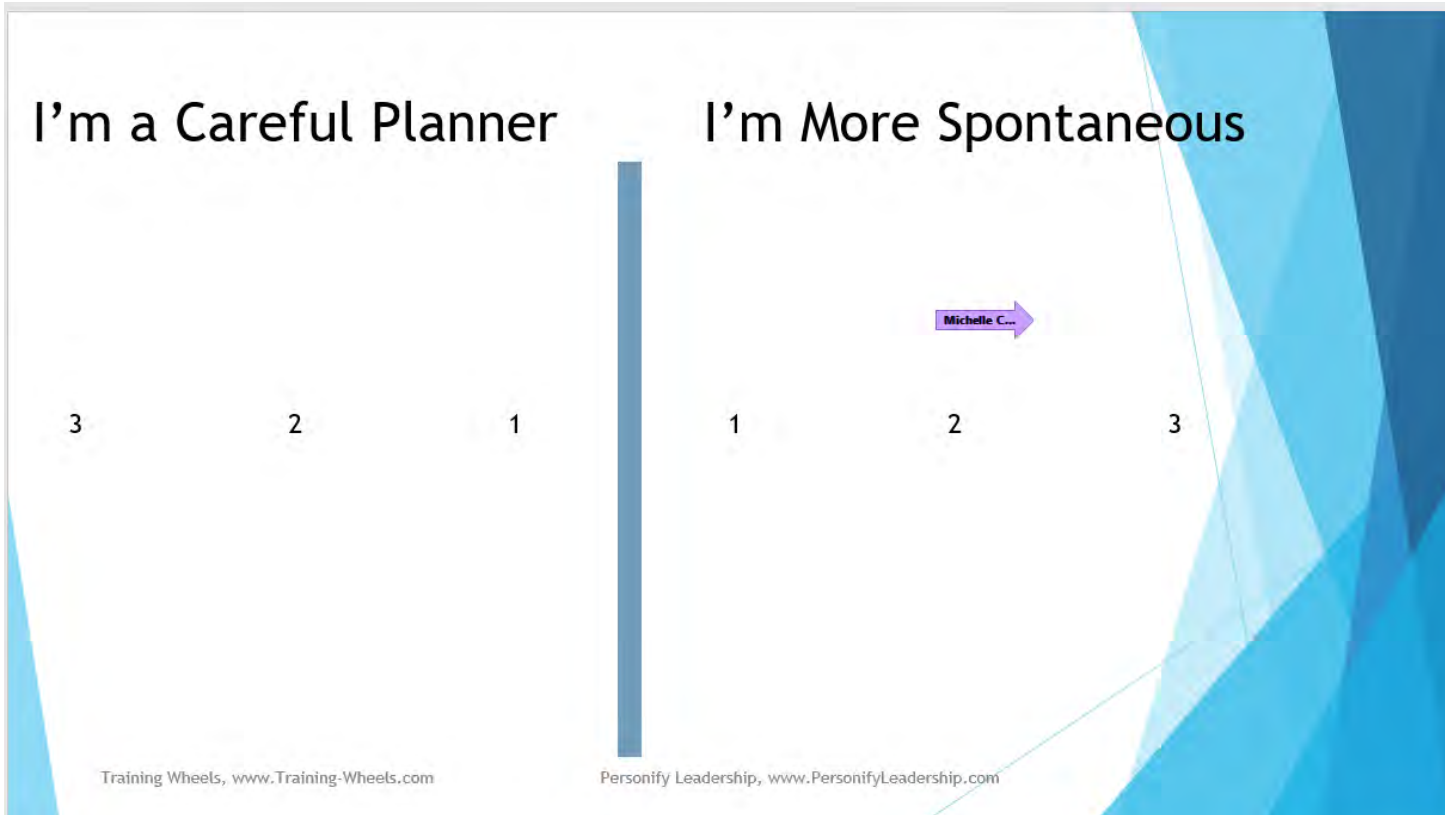
I put a line down the center of the room with a rope (or an imaginary one!) and ask everyone to stand on or near the center line. I then explain that the rope is going to represent the center of the Ying and Yang. Then I'm going to read off the two behaviors on the pre-selected cards (designate which side of the room is for one behavior and which side of the room is for the other), and then ask the group to 'Vote with their Feet' and place themselves on which side of the line best describes their behavior preference. Further explain that the further away from the center they move, the more rooted they are in that behavior preference.



Pocket Processor ~ Human Continuum

Directions for Virtual Activity

- Prompts for different behavior preferences. Create your own or pick up a set of the [Pocket Processor](#) cards.
- Create a slide deck you can show in a Virtual conference setting like Zoom. Put a line down the center of the slide along with some numbers cascading out from the center to delineate how much someone prefers a behavior.



- In Zoom, there is a an Arrow button in the Annotations section. If you ask participants to use the Arrow, it includes their name in the arrow. Then you can identify which arrow belongs to a specific person. This allows you to get to know your team members and their behavior preferences.

Comfort Zone Bullseye

Those of us in the Experiential industry often ask our participants to step outside of their comfort zones. I've used the concepts of Comfort Zone, Stretch Zone and Panic Zone with clients for years. In the 'in-person' version of the [Comfort Zone Bullseye](#), I like to use a giant bullseye on the ground so people can step into the section that matches how they feel about different scenarios. I also have a Table Top Version when I have a seated group. With the [Table Top Bullseye](#), I also like to use small objects that participants can use as Avatars to represent themselves. For the virtual version I use images of the Comfort Zone Bullseye in my slide deck and use an interactive online platform that allows participants to plot where they are on the bullseye with an annotation.

I personally like to use the three colors on the spotlight to represent the three zones. **Green:** Comfort Zone. **Yellow:** Stretch Zone. **Red:** Danger Zone. Here's how I present the topic of Comfort Zones with groups, and how they work and what happens when we push the boundaries of them.

The Three Zones

Comfort Zone: Where you are comfortable and feel 'safe'. Routines are easy, I possess skills that enable me to perform tasks well.

Stretch Zone: Where you are doing something new, allowing yourself to learn, you feel energized and engaged. You are willing to take risks.

Danger Zone: (or Panic Zone) Where you are paralyzed by fear, cannot think straight and are completely and utterly challenged to use your resources.

Our comfort zone is usually where we spend most of our day to day. Usually it's with people you know and interact with on a regular basis. Your work routine is familiar and you are used to your environment. As you are discussing the three zones, ask participants to tell you what each zone looks and feels like.



Comfort Zone Activity

- Hover over the menu and click on the Annotation button.
- Click on the Arrow button.
- Click on the Bullseye where you would place yourself for the different scenarios.

Training Wheels, www.Training-Wheels.com
Personify Leadership, www.PersonifyLeadership.com

Comfort Zone Bullseye

Comfort Zone Questions:

- What does this look like for you?
- What do you think will be easy for you today?
- What are some emotions associated with being in your comfort zone?

Stretch Zone Questions:

- What would it look like if you stretched beyond comfortable today?
- What would we see?
- What would you like to change?
- Where will you start?

Danger Zone Questions:

- What would push you into the danger zone or the panic zone today?
- What are you not ready for?
- What are your roadblocks?



I then encourage them to step outside of their Comfort Zone and into their Stretch Zone with me for the day. New learning takes place in the Stretch Zone. We stop learning once we get into the Panic Zone, and we often go into Fight or Flight mode. That's not a place I want to take people in a 1-2 day training. If I introduce this concept early in the program, I use these terms repeatedly when challenging the group with a new task.

I also like to present different scenarios for the group to discuss. I have them place where they are for each scenario and pick 1-2 people in each zone to give their reasons for being in that zone. I start with scenarios for Physical Risk and do 3-4 rounds. Then I move to Emotional Risk and do 3-4 scenarios here. This widens perspectives of the participants and can help build empathy. It also helps facilitators know the different comfort levels present in that group that day.

Examples for Physical Risk:

- Riding in a car without a seatbelt on.
- Walking along the edge of a cliff.
- Climbing a 50' climbing tower.

Examples for Emotional Risk:

- Singing a song in front of a group of people.
- Giving a speech in front of 200 people.
- Confronting a peer.



Memory Test

Directions

- Ask participants to have a piece of paper and a writing utensil handy.
- Tell them you are going to read off a list of words, but they can't write any of the words down until you have finished reading off the entire list. Participants must try and recall as many words as possible and write them down.
- Read this list in order, do not change the sequence. One word is repeated 3 times.

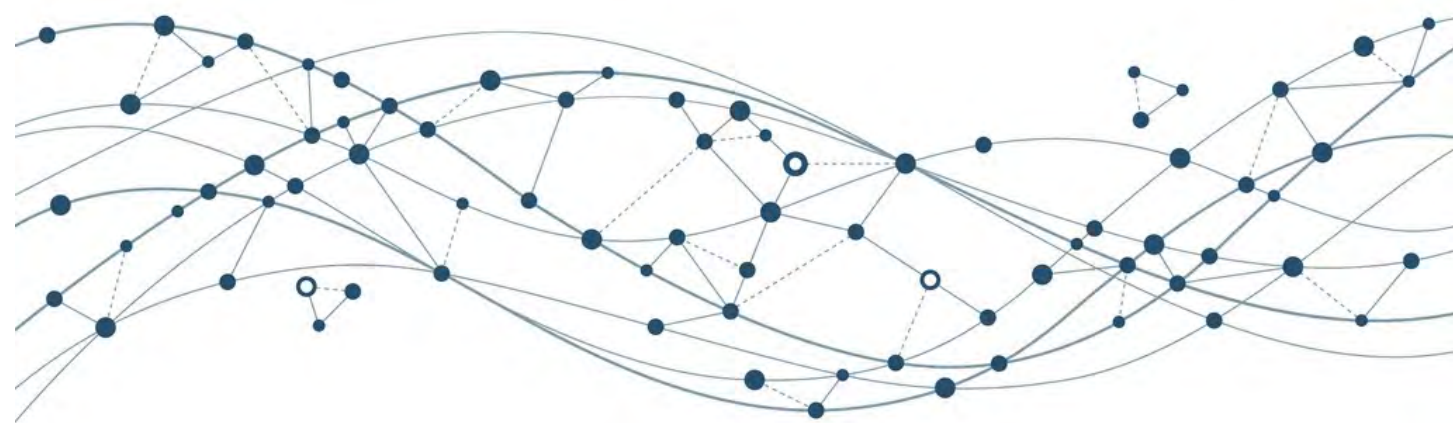
1. Dream
2. Sleep
3. Night
4. Mattress
5. Snooze
6. Sheet
7. Nod
8. Tired
9. Night
10. Artichoke
11. Insomnia
12. Blanket
13. Night
14. Alarm
15. Nap
16. Snore
17. Pillow



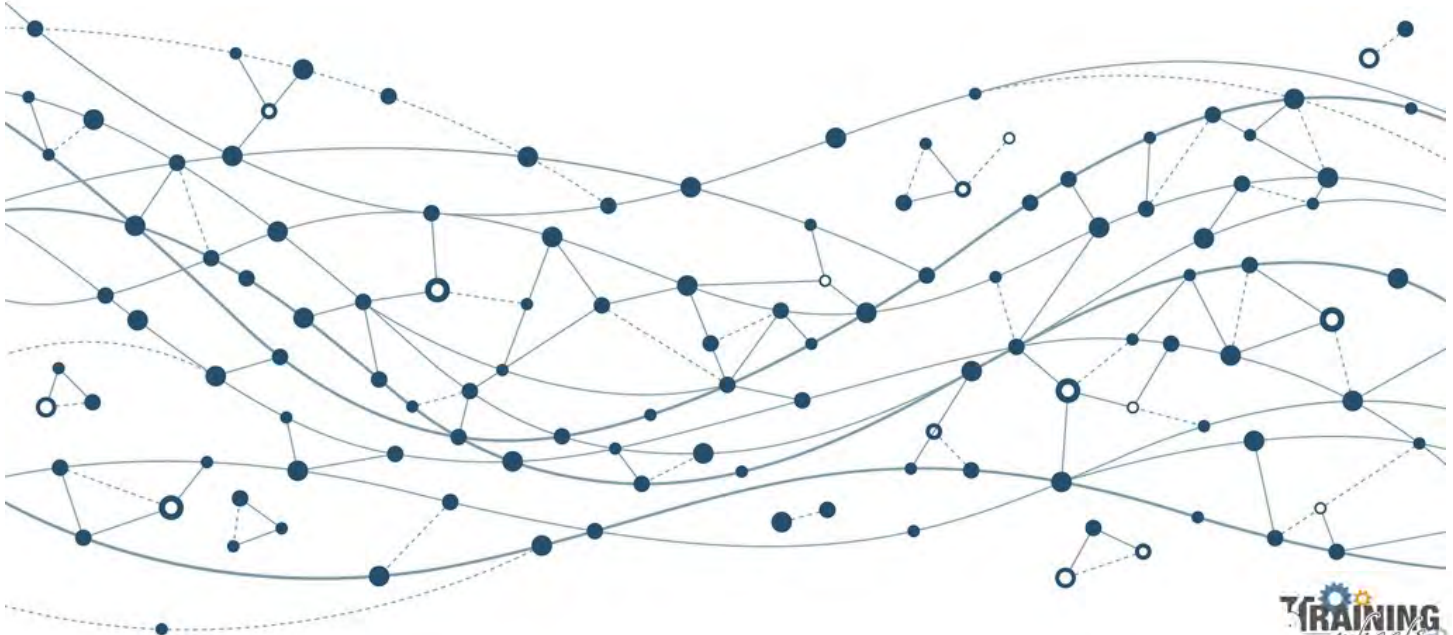
- After you have finished reading off the words, give participants 1-2 minutes to write down as many words as they remember you saying.
- Ask participants to count up how many words they wrote down and write that number somewhere on their paper.

Debriefing Topics

- How did you do? How many words did you get?
- There are a few specific teaching points to highlight from this exercise:
- **1st and last word:** Ask participants if they got Dream and Pillow. Most people will get both of these words. Why? They are the first and last thing you said. Participants will remember the first thing you say and the last thing you say. How does this relate to giving directions?
- **Repetition effect:** Ask if they got the word night. It was repeated three times. Repeat really important directions multiple times.
- **Surprise effect:** Artichoke. Almost everyone will get this. People remember surprises.
- **False-memory effect:** Ask if they got the word bed. (You didn't say bed. And yet people will write it down!) People will fill in the gaps with associated things.



Virtual Problem Solving Activities



Tangram Puzzles

Directions:

- Type of Activity: Problem-Solving, Communication
- Set Up: Instruct participants to print and cut out their tangram pieces ahead of time.
- Information: Tangram shapes are geometric. A complete set is formed from seven polygonal flat pieces. In a Tangram puzzle set there are: 5 isosceles triangles of various sizes (2 large congruent triangles; 1 medium-size right triangle; 2 small congruent triangles), 1 square, 1 parallelogram (the only tangram shape that may need to be flipped when forming certain figures).



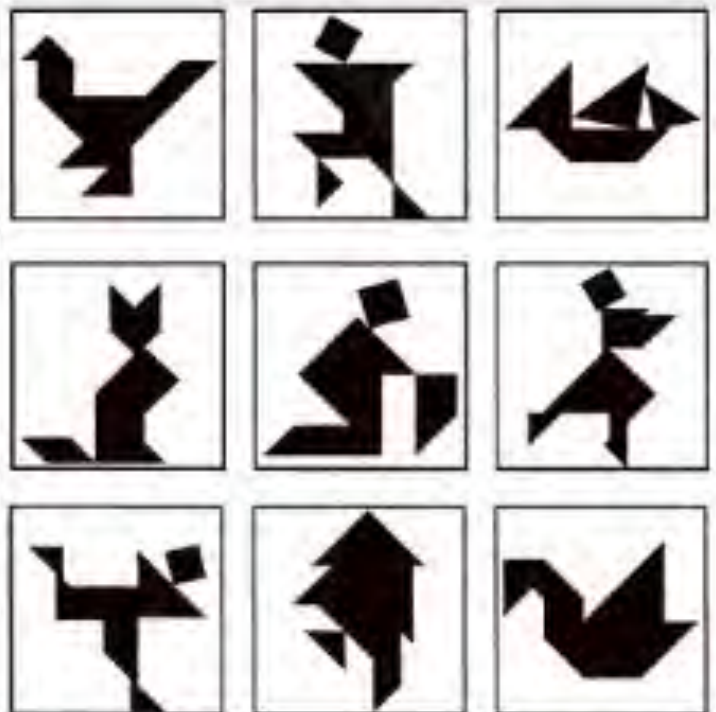
HOUSE

Two ways to facilitate:

1. Show a Tangram design on your screen for 20 seconds and then have the image disappear. In that timeframe participants should try and same shape with their Tangram pieces. Every 2 minutes you can show the design again. Ask participants to move their webcam to show their design.
2. Partner people up in breakout rooms. Give one person a design that they have to describe to their partner without showing them the design. Once they think they have it, ask participants to move their webcam to show their partner their design.

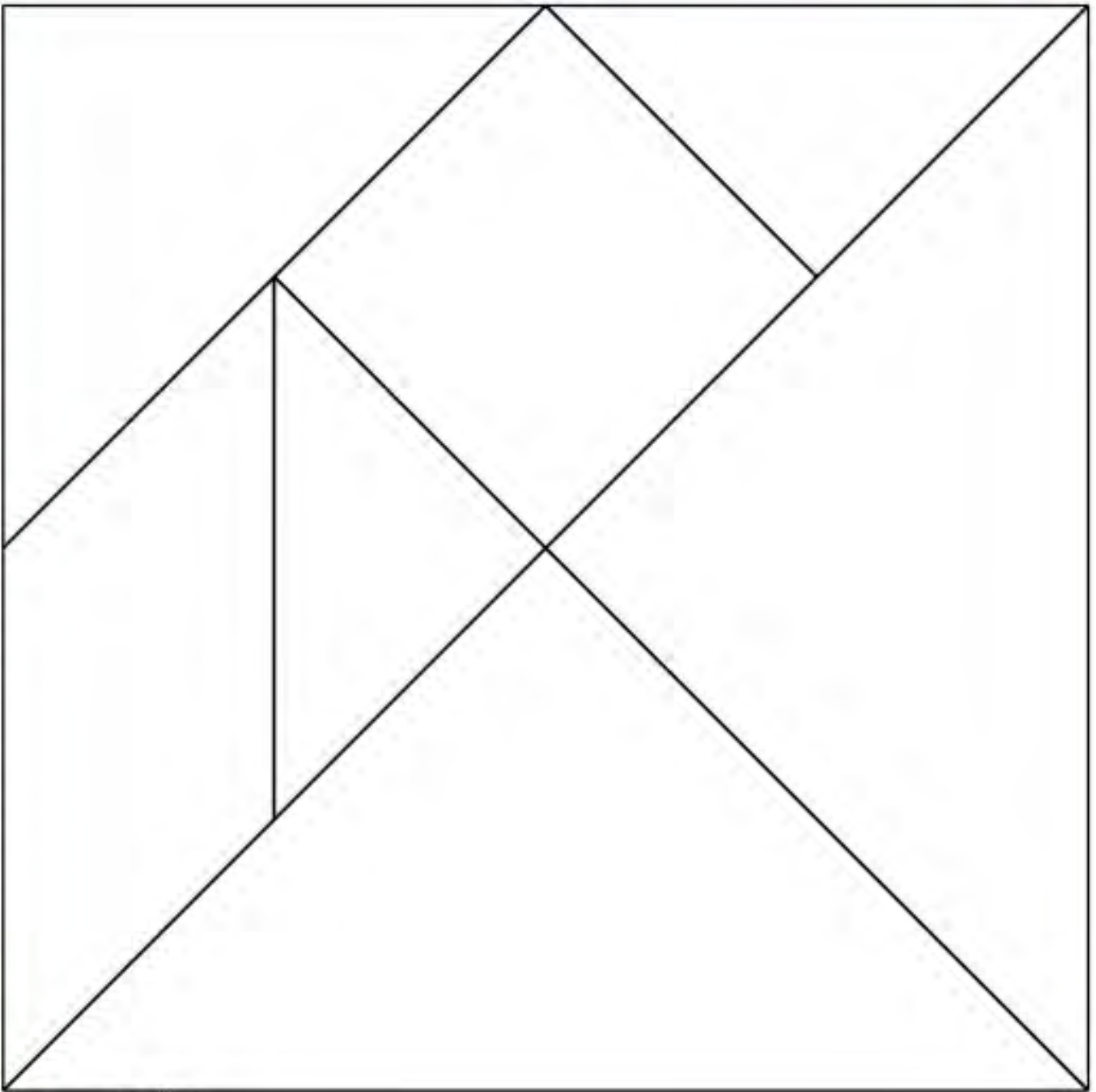
Debriefing Topics:

- ◆ How difficult was this activity for you?
- ◆ What communication challenges did you experience?
- ◆ On a scale of 1-10, how difficult was it to remember the diagram?
- ◆ Was it more difficult for you to communicate a design to your partner or to build the design that was communicated to you?
- ◆ Name a few examples of how this process relates back to the real world.



Tangram Puzzles

Here's a blank Tangram Puzzle so you can print onto a cardstock color of your choice.



Tangram Puzzles

Here's a colorful Tangram Puzzle so you can print onto a white piece of paper or cardstock.



Tangram Puzzles

Here's a [YouTube Video](#) with tutorials for several animal shapes using Tangrams. Here are a few puzzles for participants to try. The colored images are for an easier level, the black and white images are much harder.



CAMEL



SHARK



SAILBOAT



BEAR



GOOSE



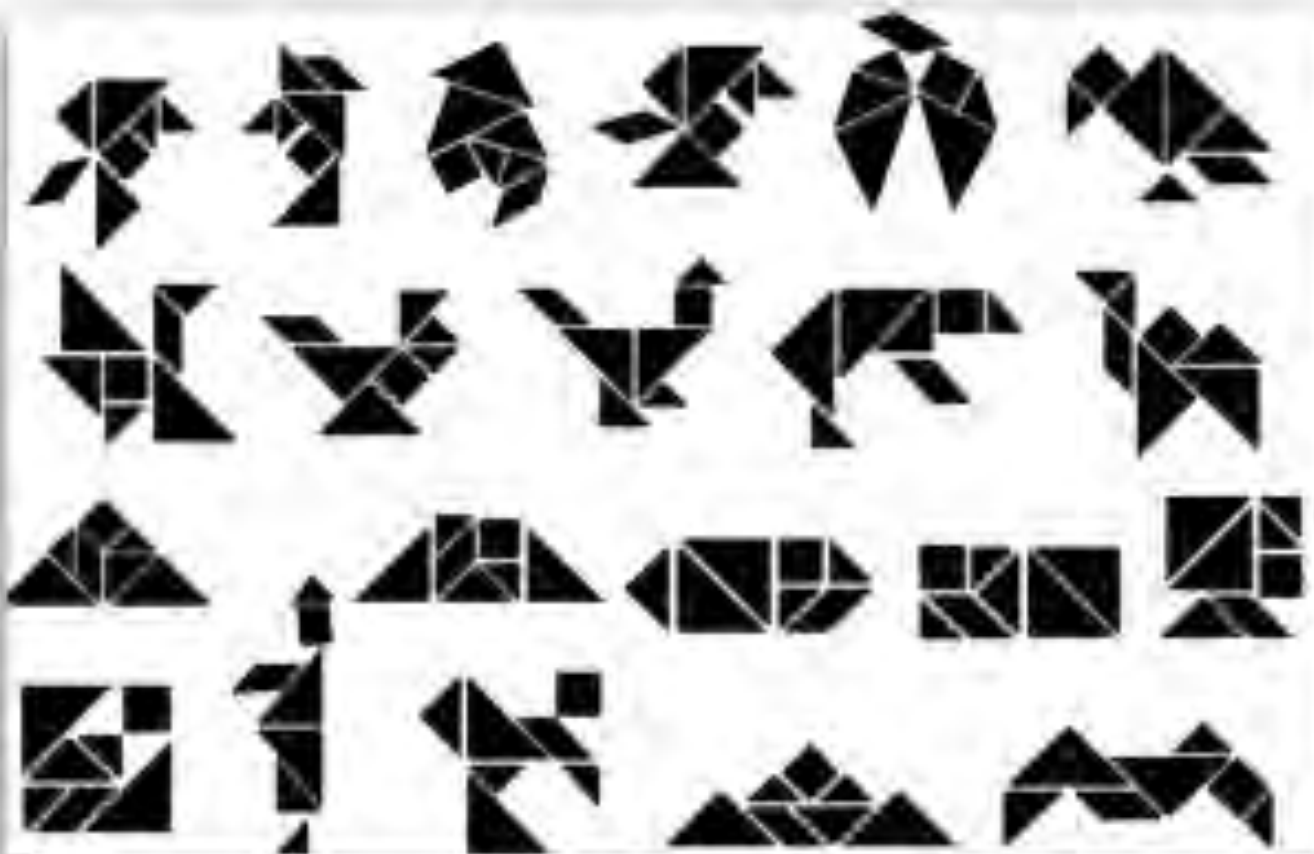
FISH



MAN ON HORSE



CAT



Get 20

Source: Adapted from an activity in the book, [Playing with a Full Deck](#), 52 Team Activities Using a Deck of Playing Cards by Michelle Cummings.

Directions

- Ask each participant to bring a deck of playing cards to the virtual meeting, or provide images of playing cards.
- Tell the group you are going to send them into virtual breakrooms to work on a math challenge. Demonstrate what you are asking them to do with five playing cards.
- The challenge will be to use five playing cards of different values and come up with an equation where your final answer is the number twenty. They may use any math function they want (addition, subtraction, multiplication and division). For example, if one group had this cluster of cards pictured: a King (10), 3, 2, 5 and an Ace (1 or 11), the group would work with these numbers to find their equation. Demonstrate one equation for them. “For example, if I had these cards I could take the King(10) times 3, which would give me 30, divide by 2 to get 15, add 5 to get 20, times the Ace (1) and I still have 20. Voila!”
- Critical point: It’s important that there are no duplicate values of cards in each card set. Meaning, you shouldn’t have two number 5’s, or a King and a 10 card. The five cards should all be different numeral values. Face cards and the number 10 card are all values of 10. Aces could be a number one or a number eleven.
- It’s also important that all participants in each breakroom are working with the same cards. Send them into breakout rooms with 4-5 other participants and have them all find the same five cards in their own deck. Set the rest of the deck to the side so you are only working with five cards.
- See how many different equations they can come up with using the same 5 cards. Have one participant take notes and write down all of the equations they come up with.
- There has never been an instance where a set of 5 cards has not been able to find an equation that equaled the number 20. Some card combinations are harder than others to find an equation. If a group is really challenged, you can exchange a card or two out so they have new numbers to work with.
- Give them 7 minutes in the breakroom to see how many different equations they can come up with. Pop into each room to assist with groups who might be struggling. When they return, ask them to choose their favorite equation to present to the large group.

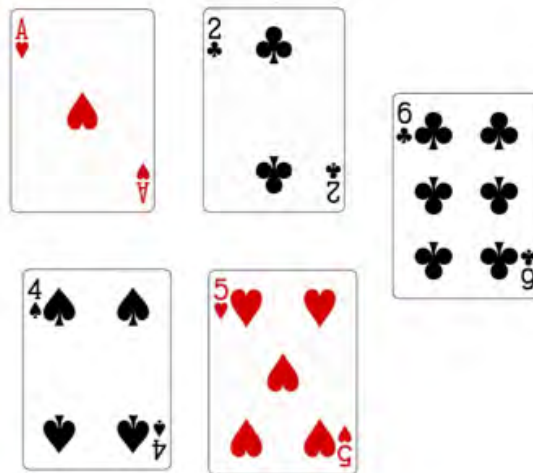


Get 20

Also, there has never been an instance where a combination of five cards cannot find a winning equation, however sometimes it may take a little while to find a successful equation. Sometimes we get dealt a hard hand. On the contrary, some groups may be dealt an easy hand and they add up the numbers on their cards and they equal twenty.

Debriefing Topics

- How did your group work together to come up with 20?
- Were you able to come up with more than one solution?
- How did you involve everyone in your group?
- Who was the leader in your group? What leadership qualities did they portray?
- How did you decide on your 'favorite' equation?
- Who orchestrated the equation presentation?
- How did you leverage the strengths of different members of the group?
- How does this process relate back to the real world?

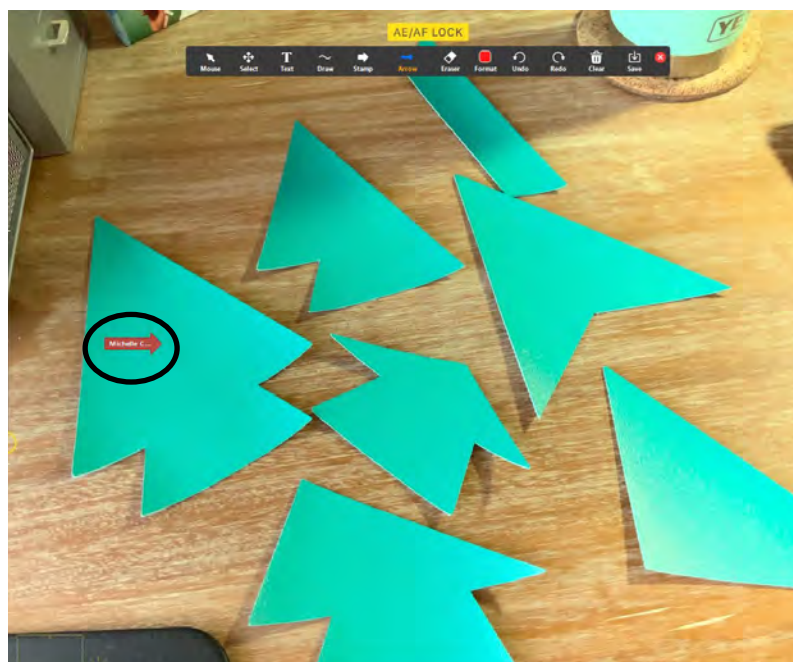


Arrowhead Puzzle

Source: Adapted from the [Arrowhead Puzzle](#) activity in the book, *Teambuilding Puzzles*, by Anderson, Cain, Cavert, Heck

Directions

- Here is a challenging puzzle for exploring the concepts of limited resources. If your team needs to successfully complete a task when there seems to be insufficient resources to do so, then this is the perfect puzzle for you.
- In this puzzle participants are given a collection of puzzle pieces, that when properly assembled, will create a total of five arrowheads, all the same size. One arrowhead is already complete and provides a size template for the remaining arrowheads. Most teams quickly discover that there are only six remaining pieces, which collectively create only three more arrowheads, for a total of four. The challenge of this puzzle is to use the four arrowheads in the proper configuration to create the outline of a fifth arrowhead, thus completing the task.
- You will need a webcam dedicated to the puzzle pieces. Using the Arrow in the Annotate feature, participants can designate to the person who has the puzzle which piece they would like to have moved. The person with the puzzle can also easily know who is talking because their name will be embedded in their arrow.
- After the group has figured out the puzzle, debrief the experience.
- **Spoiler Alert! The solution is on the next page!**
- Debriefing questions and a template for making your own arrowhead puzzle are also on the next page.



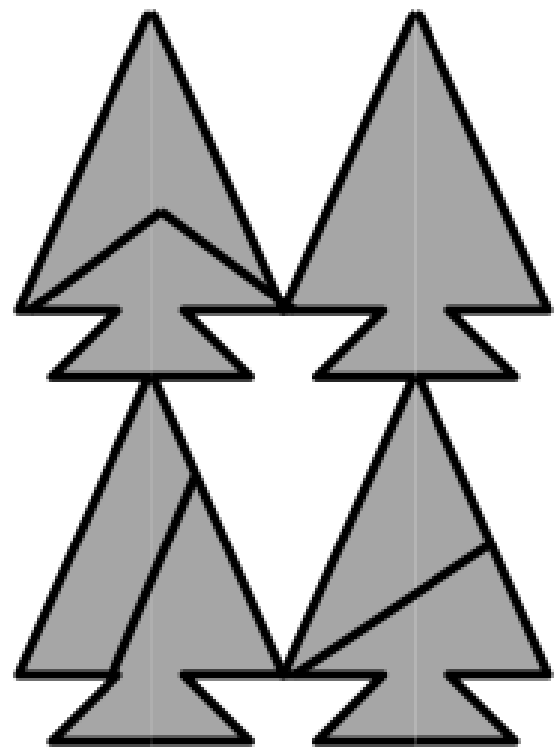
Arrowhead Puzzle

Debriefing Topics

- How did your group work together?
- Understanding how to get things done, especially when limited resources are available, is a valuable life skill. In this case, how was your team able to identify how to accomplish the task?
- Were you able to come up with more than one solution?
- How did you involve everyone in your group?
- Who was the leader in your group? What leadership qualities did they portray?
- How did you leverage the strengths of different members of the group?
- How are the limited resources of this situation like other situations in your life, work, institution or corporation?
- How does this process relate back to the real world?

Template (print onto cardstock and cut out)

Solution (Do you see the fifth arrow?)



Purchase an [Arrowhead Puzzle](#) at this link.

Order Puzzle

Source: Adapted from an activity in the book, [Playing with a Full Deck](#), 52 Team Activities Using a Deck of Playing Cards by Michelle Cummings.

Directions:

- Ask each participant to bring a deck of playing cards to the virtual meeting, or provide images of playing cards.
- You could also have a deck of cards yourself on video and move the cards for the participants.
- **Group Size:** 2-4 people per card set. Once you explain the task, send people into breakout rooms to solve the puzzle.
- There are three ways to divide the cards:
 - First set: Aces, Jacks, Queen, Kings.
 - Second set: Twos, Threes, Fours, Fives.
 - Third set: Sixes, Sevens, Eights, Nines.
- **Puzzle Challenge:** This activity is Sudoku-like. Ask participants to shuffle their small deck and place the cards in a 4x4 grid pattern on their desk or table. By sliding the cards into different positions, they need to figure out the puzzle where no row or column of the grid has the same suit or the same number/rank.
- See the picture for the answer!



Debriefing Topics

- What was difficult about this activity for you?
- What strategies did you and your team come up with to be successful?
- Were all of the ideas listened to in the group?
- How did you communicate your ideas to others?

Number Slide

Source: Adapted from an activity in the book, [Playing with a Full Deck](#), 52 Team Activities Using a Deck of Playing Cards by Michelle Cummings.

Directions:

- Ask each participant to bring a deck of playing cards to the virtual meeting, or provide images of playing cards.
- You could also have a deck of cards yourself on video and move the cards for the participants.
- Once you describe the rules, send participants into breakout rooms and work in groups of 3-5 people. Have one person in each breakout room have the cards. The rest of the group has to be able to see their cards through their webcam.
- **Setting up the Cards:** Separate the cards, (by suit is the easiest way), the Ace-Jack will be used in this activity. Explain that Ace=1 & Jack = 11 in this activity. The cards should be placed on their table/desktop in four rows with three cards each, except for the last row which will only have two cards, (make sure they are NOT in numerical order). If more than one group is doing the activity, I put them all in the same order so all is equal to begin, as most groups become competitive, although that is NOT part of the directions!
- **Playing the Game:** The goal of the game is to put the cards in order 1-11 by sliding cards into the empty spot. The cards may only slide up/down or left/right, (not diagonally). Only one card may be moved at a time. Each group member must move at least one card.
- **Process:** Do not answer questions about “which” order. I often put the Ace in the last spot (row 4, spot 2). Most groups spend time moving the Ace to the first row, first spot, (as that is the way we read, so the assumption is that *must* be where to start.)
- With three or four groups playing together, at least one does it a different way, (with the ace in the 4th row, or working vertically, or with an “s” shape). This will lead to great debriefing.

Debriefing Topics

Communication:

- Why did all groups not come up with the same solution?
- Did the directions say the “order” was 1-11 had to be left to right, top to bottom?

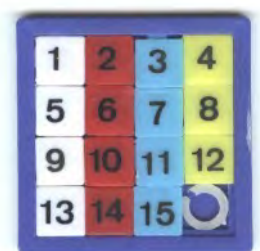
Teamwork

- Did anyone in the group try to do it a different way? What was the reaction of the group to that person’s ideas?

Competition

- Was it a race?
- In what ways were you competing against other groups?
- How did that add to the pressure?

Note: This is like the game typically found as birthday party favors, but using only 12 “slides” versus the 15 pictured here.



Running the Numbers

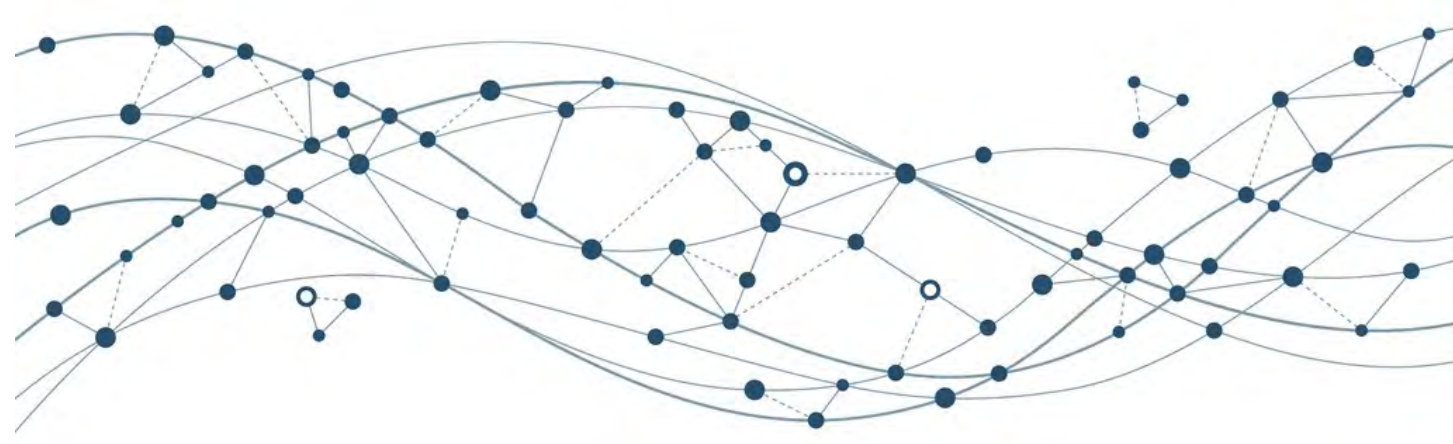
Source: Contributed by Tim Walther, Grand Dynamics

Directions

- Online participants are challenged to put numbers in the chatbox as quickly as possible.
- During this timed event, team members must take turns, not repeat any one person twice in sequence, and if a number repeats in the chatbox, the team starts again.
- No talking during the trials, only in between attempts.
- Participants will need to create a system for who is going when then execute efficiently.
- The same idea can be used in spelling out a phrase relative to that team. IE: Team spells out Team Performance as quickly as they can, each person doing a different letter.

Debriefing Topics

- How did your group work together?
- How did you decrease your times for each round?
- What worked well?
- How did you involve everyone in your group?
- Who was the leader in your group? What leadership qualities did they portray?
- How did you leverage the strengths of different members of the group?
- How does this process relate back to the real world?



Virtual Debriefing Activities



Dice Debrief

A Debriefing Activity using Dice. Most people will have access to a pair of dice. Request that they have one available during your online meeting and have each person roll the dice and answer the corresponding question to the number on the die.

Dice Debrief



Name one new thing you learned today.



Acknowledge someone for a job well done.



Describe a good idea you heard.



Describe a feeling you experienced.



Describe something that pushed you outside your comfort zone.



How will you apply what you learned today?

Virtual Body Part Debrief

Directions:

- This is one of our personal favorites, as the metaphors are easy for people to connect an experience to the metaphor of a body part.
- Frontload this activity by explaining each part and give one example of the type of answer they could give. (Like the photo below, have specific prompts for each body part.)
- Use Annotations bar to have participants vote on their photo of choice.
- In Zoom, there is a an Arrow button in the Annotate section. If you ask participants to use the Arrow, it includes their name in the arrow. Then you can identify which arrow belongs to a specific person. This allows you to know which body part each participant chose.
- For large groups, send participants into breakout rooms to discuss which body part they chose.
- For small groups have each person share.



Body Part Debrief

Select one of the following metaphors and share your response with the group.



- **Brain:** What is something you learned today?



- **Heart:** Describe a feeling you experienced. What did you take to heart?



- **Hand:** Give a hand to someone for a job well done.

- **Lungs:** How was this experience a breath of fresh air?



- **Foot:** Identify a step in a new direction for your self.

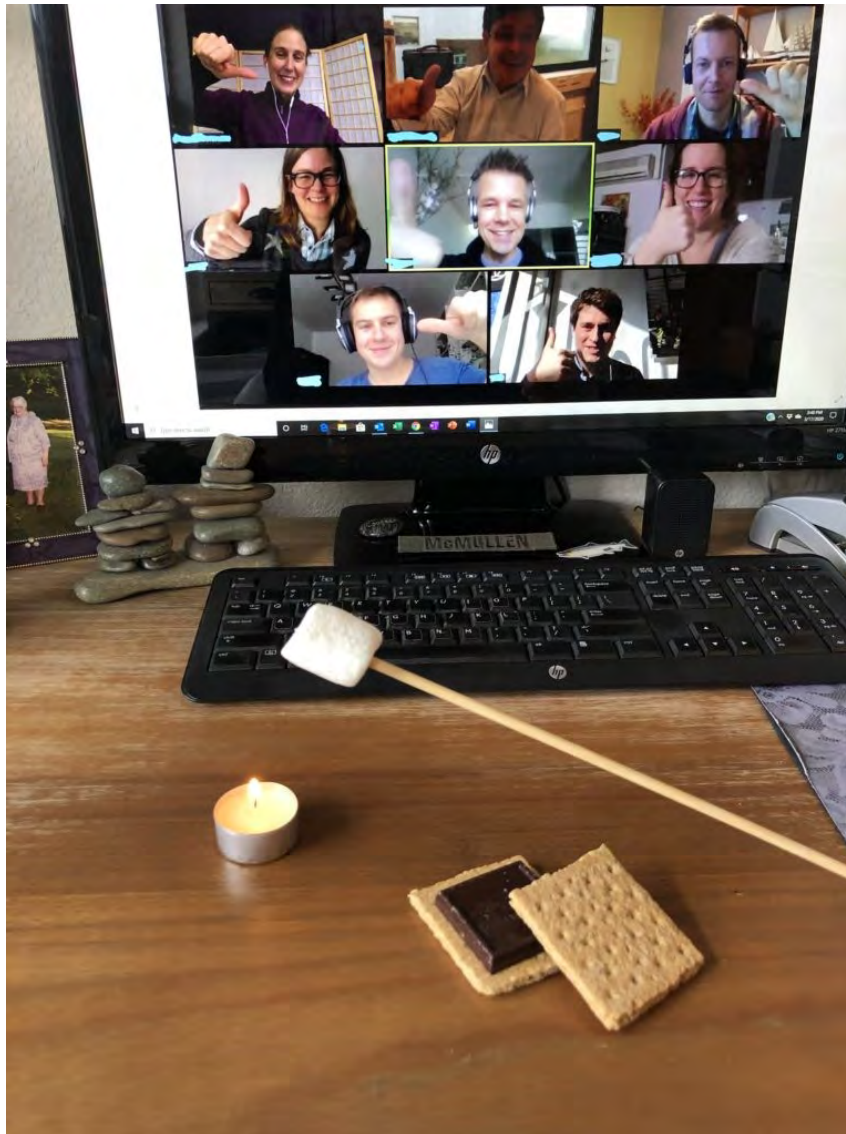
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Tiny Campfire

Directions:

- Who doesn't love a good campfire? Create a virtual campfire by having everyone bring a candle and their favorite S'mores ingredients and share a reflection while making and eating a fun snack.
- Have participants take turns sharing something 'sweet' or a reflection they have with the group.



Virtual Labyrinth

Labyrinths have been around for centuries and are an activity for action and reflection. The labyrinth has only one path so there are no tricks to it and no dead ends. It makes for a wonderful reflection tool that allows participants to enter with something specific in their mind, and reflect on it during the time it takes to wind their way through the maze. Once they reach the center, they can stay there as long as they like before they wind their way back out. The path winds throughout and becomes a mirror for where we are in our lives. It touches your sorrows and releases your joys. Walk it with an open mind and an open heart.



If you happen to live near a labyrinth, maintain your social distancing and get outside and reflect on whatever you'd like. If that's not an option, I found a [Virtual Labyrinth](#) online that you can click through. You can also print off and finger trace the labyrinth on the following page.

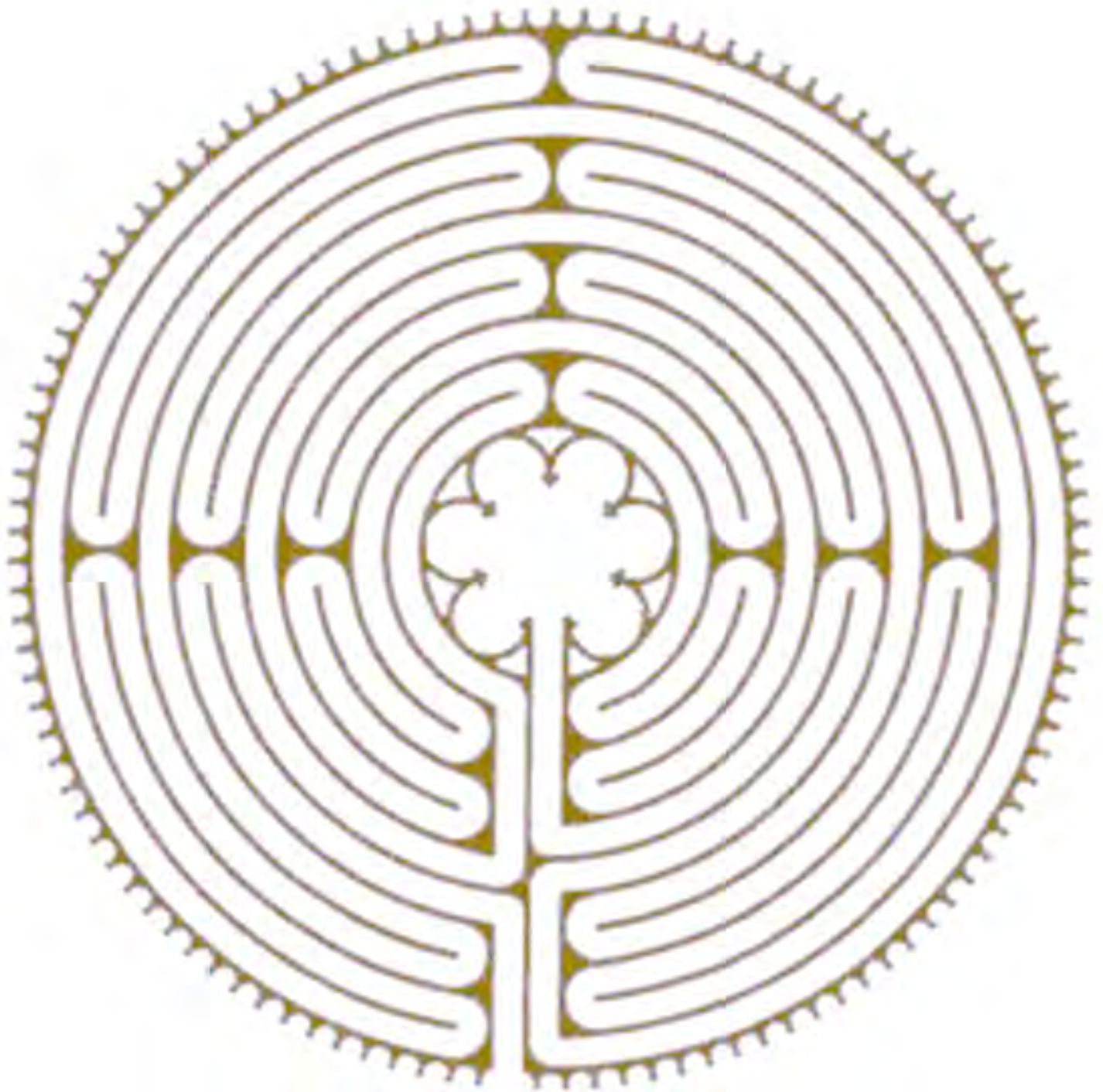
Directions

- Explain the concept and purpose of a Labyrinth
- Have each participant print and finger-trace the Labyrinth on the next page, or visit the [Virtual Labyrinth](#)
- Encourage participants to focus on an experience while traversing the labyrinth.
- The typical goal is to reach the center of the labyrinth, and return to the outside, without crossing any lines, and without talking.
- Movement with meditation and introspection are the key.

Debriefing Questions

- What feelings did you notice as you were traversing the labyrinth?
- What was the journey like for you?
- What are you taking with you as a result of the journey?
- Commercial [Labyrinth Walk](#) tarp available from Training Wheels

Print and Finger Trace this Labyrinth



Object Lesson ~ Debriefing Technique

According to Merriam-Webster's Dictionary, Object lessons are defined as, 'something that serves as a practical example of a principle or abstract idea.' Object lessons are most often applied to difficult abstract concepts which simplify the learning into a concept that is more tangible.

The main thing that an object lesson does is create an emotional connection to the abstract concept, driving it home to the participants under your influence. Instead of jumping right into a lesson plan, you pique the interest of the participants, unveiling an "aha" moment that gets brain cells engaged in the total learning process.

Object lessons do more than tell about what they are teaching. Instead, they show, in an easy to understand way, what it is that you are trying to portray. They are in fact suitable for all ages, and are quite powerful with participants that can discern and draw more powerful insights and connections from the metaphor. Furthermore, because older audiences have more biased viewpoints, object lessons are ideal for breaking through those barriers, which is a distinct advantage in any teaching situation. In order for participants to grasp a concept, they must be open to it in the first place.

Why Use Object Lessons?

As a facilitator, preparation is always a part of the process. Facilitators that are well prepared are able to reach their participants in a much more profound way. Participants realize that they are being made a priority and the learning is enriched. There are many other reasons to use object lessons are part of your facilitation strategy.

- * **Learning Retention:** There is a teaching cliché that brings this concept into focus. When a participant hears something, they may forget it; when they see something, they may retain it; when they experience something, it becomes a part of them, and learning becomes easy. Object lessons assist in the retention of learning, because more parts of the brain are engaged and the participant experiences the lesson as a more wholly involved process.
- * **Simplifying Concepts:** Especially when you are dealing with children and participants, there are a lot of times when you want to bring complex lessons down to a more understandable level. In order to do this, you have to create a connection between what is being presented and something that your participant is already familiar with. Object lessons make this possible.
- * **Increased Involvement:** Participants can become easily bored with the learning process. When you are able to get them up, moving, and involved, the synapses are activated and a more energetic class time is the result.

Advice From a Pencil

Directions:

- Type into a Google Search, "Advice from a..." and pick your metaphor of choice. You will find many examples in Google Images that can spark discussion or reflection time.
- Here is one of our favorites: Advice From a Pencil

The Pencil Maker took the pencil aside, just before putting him into the box "There are five things you need to know before I send you out into the world." he told the pencil. "Always remember them and never forget, and you will become the best pencil you can be.

1. You will be able to do many great things, but only if you allow yourself to be held in someone's hand.

Michelle's additions/debriefing points with groups:

- Connection with others is important.
- Allow others to have access to your gifts.

2. You will experience a painful sharpening from time to time, but you'll need it to become a better pencil

- Going through various problems in life, you'll need it to become a stronger person.

3. You will be able to correct any mistakes you might make.

- The Really Big Eraser is a luxury. Sometimes we only get the small eraser at the end of the pencil. What might the big eraser mean to you?

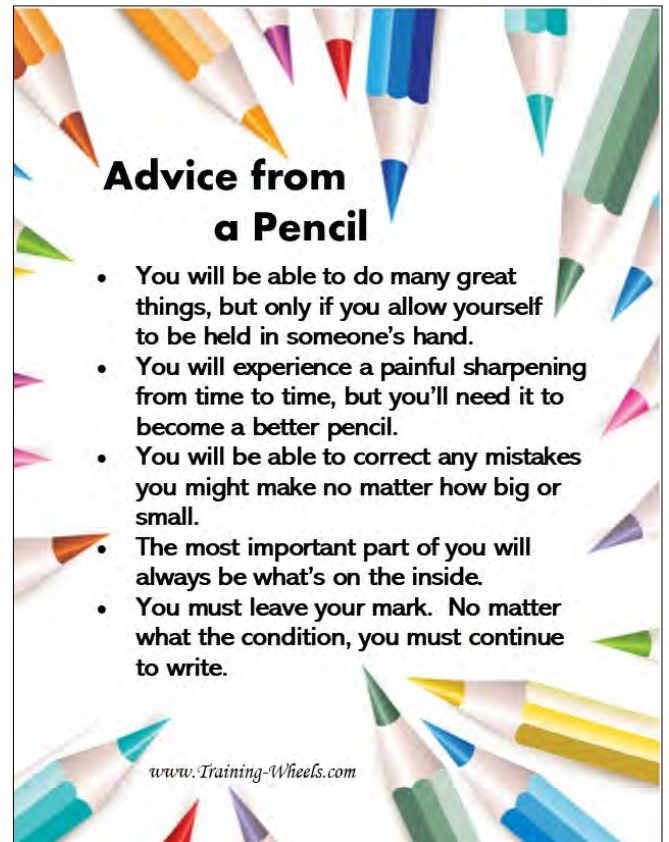
4. The most important part of you will always be what's inside.

- A pencil can be used for many things, but the lead inside is what is most important. What gifts do you have that would be helpful to others?

5. On every surface you are used on, you must leave your mark. No matter what the condition, you must continue to write.

- Our actions affect others. Our interactions have an impact on everyone around us.

Advice from a pencil is a tool to use to let each person know that they are unique and that only they can fulfill the purpose to which they were born to accomplish. Don't allow yourself to get discouraged and think that your life is insignificant and cannot make a change. We might become more useful and even write our own story of success.



Advice From a... Other Examples!

Advice from a Snowflake

- * *Keep Your Cool*
- * *Celebrate Your Uniqueness*
- * *Let Your Plans Crystallize*
- * *Take Time to Chill*
- * *Appreciate Small Wonders*
- * *Look at What We Can Accomplish When We Stick Together!*

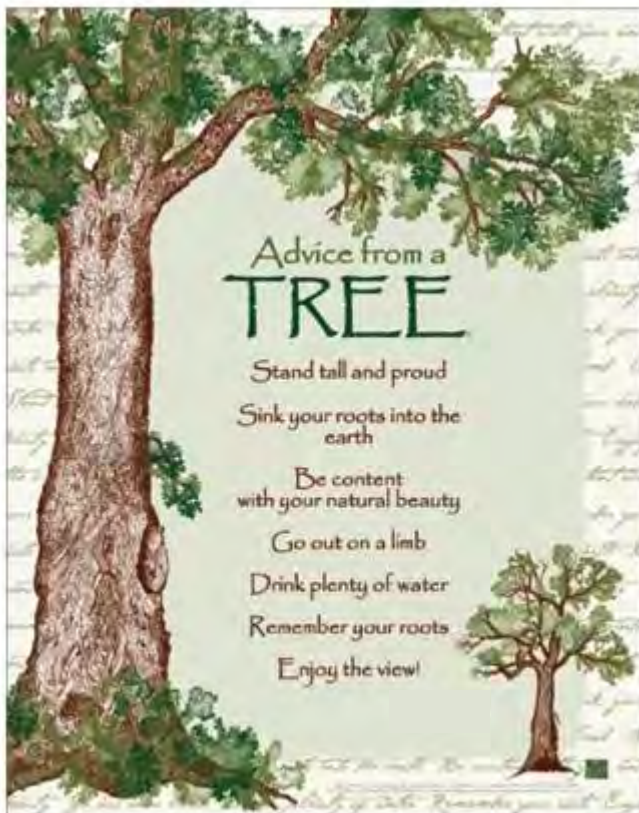
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Advice from a TROUT

- Show your true colors
- Be a good catch
- Don't be lured by shiny objects
- Scale back
- Cherish clean water
- Know when to keep your mouth shut
- Don't give up without a fight!

Your True Nature!



Advice from a TREE

- Stand tall and proud
- Sink your roots into the earth
- Be content with your natural beauty
- Go out on a limb
- Drink plenty of water
- Remember your roots
- Enjoy the view!

ADVICE FROM A Sunflower:

- BE BRIGHT,
SUNNY AND
POSITIVE.
- Spread
seeds of
happiness
- RISE, SHINE,
AND HOLD YOUR
HEAD HIGH.

About Michelle Cummings

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Michelle Cummings M.S. is the Big Wheel and founder of Training Wheels, a known leader in the Team Development industry. She is an accomplished author and sought-after speaker and consultant on leadership, teambuilding, and experiential learning. Michelle has created a wide variety of facilitation, debriefing and teambuilding activities that have collectively changed the way trainers and educators work. Michelle is also the co-founder and Chief Creative Officer for Personify Leadership, a leadership development company.

Michelle has delivered innovative leadership programs for hundreds of camps and non-profit organizations. Michelle works with professional associations, corporations, universities, and non-profit organizations throughout the world. Her online teambuilding gear site has over 350 different books, activities and kits dedicated to the teambuilding field.

Michelle speaks at more than 15 local, national, and international conferences each year and authors a monthly teambuilding newsletter called [*The Spokesperson*](#) that has over 18,000 subscribers in 65 countries. Michelle Cummings has authored six books, 1. [*A Teachable Moment*](#) 2. [*Bouldering Games for Kids*](#) 3. [*Playing With a Full Deck*](#) 4. [*Setting the Conflict Compass*](#) 5. [*Facilitated Growth*](#) and 6. [*Tag, You're It*](#). She has three new books coming out this year, 1. [*Team Building From the Toy Aisle*](#) 2. [*Table Top Team Building*](#) and 3. [*Storytelling as Experiential Education: Building Resilience, Leadership and Community*](#). She also designed a unique course for teaching new facilitators called [*Experiential Facilitation 101*](#).

Michelle also wrote a novel called [*The Reel Sisters*](#), a story about a group of women fly fishers that was released November 4, 2017.

Michelle received her Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Kansas State University and her Masters degree in Experiential Education from Minnesota State University at Mankato. Michelle currently lives in Littleton, CO with her husband, Paul, and two sons.

Sign up for Michelle's free games newsletter to receive updates on these titles and for free activities online at www.training-wheels.com.



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