
TOOLKIT: DYADS

Grade Level:

Elementary (K-5)

Middle School (6-8)

High School (9-12)

Dyad: a two-person mindful storytelling and listening exercise.

Space requirements:

- Requires sufficient room for the entire group organized into dyads (pairs) to spread out and create semi-intimate spaces where each pair can focus on each other without too much distraction from the other pairs.
- Loose chairs that can be moved around is the best seating scenario.

Instructions:

- By entering this exercise, participants are agreeing that everything they hear from their partner is confidential. Anyone who doesn't agree to this term should not participate.
- For an allotted time period, one of the dyad will speak, and the other will listen. See **Topic** below for topic guidelines.
- The **speaker** should pour everything they are into their story. Make it vivid, like a movie. Paint a verbal picture of their experience, filling in every detail they can recall: how long ago did this happen? What time of year was it? Where were they? What were they doing? What was going on in their life at the time? Etc.
- Openness and honesty are key. The deeper the storyteller goes into feeling and experience, the more both participants will get out of the exercise.
- The **listener** does nothing but listen. No speaking whatsoever. No verbal response. Their job is to be an empty vessel for the speaker's story. Set aside their ego. Imagine experiencing the speaker's story first-hand as they hear it.
- The facilitator will give a signal to begin, then allow the speaker to tell their story for an allotted time period, warning when there is one minute left, and calling to stop when time is up. Time allotment is flexible. Shorter times are better for younger participants, longer times for older, as the total session time permits. Guidelines are 3-5 minutes grades K-5, 5-7 minutes grades 6-12, and 7-10 minutes for adults, but ultimately up to the facilitator.
- Notify everyone when speaker one time is up. Ask dyad participants to express gratitude for the gifts of story and listening they've given each other, then switch roles. Speaker becomes listener. Listener becomes speaker.
- After speaker two is finished, dyad participants express gratitude again. Encourage future connection via social media, and/or even real life. This is an amazing opportunity to make a new friend!
- Bring the group back together. A circle is best, but rows are okay for large groups.
- **Instruction to the group:** participants may share some of their own stories if they are moved to, but **may not** share any of their partner's story.

- Prime group questions:
 - How did that exercise feel?
 - What was it like to share your story?
 - How did it feel to listen to your partner's story?
 - Add topic-focused questions as facilitator sees fit.
- Total time for dyad exercise is 10-15 minute setup and instruction+speaker one time+1 minute to thank each other and switch roles+speaker two time+1 minute thanks and return to group+5-10 minute group discussion or longer per facilitator discretion. I.e. for a session where each speaker goes for 5 minutes, total time would be approximately 37 minutes.

Setup:

- Participants are organized into randomized pairs.
- Halve the total number of participants and count off that number twice, assigning each participant a number. I.e. a group of 26 would count 13 twice. If the total is an odd number, a facilitator can participate to even it up. Then matching numbers are paired, so the 2 ones would be a pair, the 2 twos, and so on.
- Setup intention is to organize pairs of people who don't know each other, or at least don't know each other well.

Topic:

- Typically determined by facilitator before exercise. See option below for group-generated topics.
- Goto topic for this exercise is "Hurt People Hurt People": speaker tells the story of a time when they were hurt, when they hurt someone else, or both.
 - Why did it hurt?
 - What were the repercussions of the hurt?
 - What has changed since the hurt happened?
 - What hasn't changed?
 - What was learned?
 - What wasn't learned, but should be?
- Possible topics limited only by the imagination of the facilitator and/or group! Examples:
 - Talk about someone you love dearly
 - Talk about someone who makes you uncomfortable.
 - Talk about your greatest fear.
 - Talk about your greatest hope.
 - Greatest passion/etc.

Group-Generated topic:

- Present a piece of content, like a video or written piece.
- Ask each participant for one word describing how that made them feel, repeating is okay if that's their genuine answer.
- Write down answers on a whiteboard or presentation pad, noting multiple like responses with chits.

- Chits are essentially votes, so if out of 10 participants, 6 said “angry”, 3 said “sad”, and 1 said “indifferent”, “angry” would be the topic.
- Organize into dyads with topic of something or someone who made you very angry.
- Can be repeated after multiple pieces of content presented as problem/solution. I.e. video on climate change followed by video on ways to address climate change.
 - Repeat feeling response process after each bit of content.

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