

LS Punctuation

Back-To-Back Listening

Practice deeper listening and empathy with colleagues

STEPS

1. Invite everyone to find a partner and sit or stand back to back. Ask them for permission if you want to actually touch backs. It's not required.
2. Invite each person to listen to the music deeply, noticing how you are experiencing the piece through your ears, mind, body, skin, cells, etc. *As the music plays, pay attention to your experience of the music. What do you notice about it? Feel free to close your eyes. It may help you drop into the music.*
3. Play the music* at a nice high volume. (max 2-3 minutes duration).
4. When music concludes, people turn to each other and each person has 90 seconds to describe their experience of the music. *What did you hear? What did you experience? Go into detail.*
5. When both people finish, have everyone turn back-to-back again and put on the same piece of music. This time listen to it based on your partner's description of their experience. Listen to it through their ears.
6. Music concludes, debrief in pairs. *What was the experience like the second time through? What happened?*
7. Finish with a full group debrief, popcorn style. Observations that often come up:
 - It's hard (Yes! Empathizing is) and it is possible.
 - It's liberating (Yes! Empathy unleashes our imaginations).
 - The two experiences weave together (Yes! The other person's story gave us clear constraints and we filled in all the ancillary details)
 - This can be done in preparation for interacting with customers or researching their deeper needs. The empathy element is important but it is far from exclusively that. You can ask, "What might this mean for our work with assessing needs of __ (clients, employees, students, patients...) and improving our work together?"
 - You can punctuate another, more purposeful LS like *Drawing Together* or *HSR* or *WINFY~HH* or *Appreciative Interviews*. B2B is good for practicing empathizing with another person. *Drawing Together* gives you the experience of having someone else empathize with your *visual* story.

Note: it is important to link this activity to a serious purpose. Try to avoid the "fluffy bunny" icebreaker. You are practicing the micro-behaviors that shape the quality of data you get from your customers. You are becoming more capable of learning at the feet of your clients by walking in their shoes.

* Music selections (I prefer to use 2-3 minutes of pieces without many words):

- Collecting Things, Yann Tiersen, Amelie movie soundtrack
- No Hay Problema, Pink Martini (Sympathique)
- Diferente, Gotan Project (Lunatico)