



Sharing Ideas

Youth build communication skills in a variety of ways. Building ways for youth to stay engaged helps keep group members accountable, and makes it more likely that group members see their role in accomplishing the task at hand. Different methods may work better for different tasks. If meeting virtually, small groups can occur in breakout rooms. Here are several examples.

Fishbowl

Three to eight participants sit in a circle in the front of the classroom and take part in a discussion around a particular topic. All other young people observe. A youth in the circle can exit the “fishbowl” whenever he or she desires. Observers can enter the circle when a space opens up. Adults can participate alongside youth in this exercise.

For example, you could set up a fishbowl discussion on bullying. Five participants discuss for a few minutes. Then Andy, a youth who has been watching, taps Crystal on her shoulder. Crystal stands up and leaves the fishbowl, and Andy takes her chair. He then participates in the ongoing conversation. Fishbowl topics of discussion can involve planning and reviewing projects or activities. A fishbowl can also be used to role play scenarios (such as conflicts that may arise in a group), or to learn or practice skills.

Matter of Opinion

Designate corners of the room as: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. You can do this with posters prepared beforehand. Read a statement, and have young people move to a corner of the room that represents their interests or opinions about the topic or statement. Young people then discuss the topic with the like-minded youths in their corner. After some time, each corner can elect a representative to share with the full group what was discussed.

Some example topics:

- “I believe schools should require students to wear uniforms.”
- “I support corporal punishment; that is, I believe the death penalty is necessary in some circumstances.”
- “I believe cats are better than dogs.”

As a simplified variation, you can designate one side of the room as agree and one side as disagree.

Think-pair-share

This simple exercise can really help get a conversation going, especially when youth don’t feel comfortable sharing in a large full group. Youths review or consider a question, a video clip, or a specific topic. Youth discuss the question, clip, or article with a partner, then with the rest of the group.

For example, you could tell the full group, “I want you to consider this question: What ideas do you have for a service project idea? Think about it yourself first, and jot down an answer. Then talk to your partner about it. Then we’ll have a full group discussion.”

Expert Groups

In this activity, different small groups learn about different aspects of a topic, then share with the full group. Each small group researches and produces information to share—often in the form of a poster.

For example, if the full group is learning about your community, each small group is responsible to learn about and present one of the following subtopics: businesses, entertainment/events, government, services.

Rotation Brainstorm

In small groups, young people start brainstorming on a large piece of paper that is headed with a topic or concept. It is typically good to have each group select a person to scribe. After some period of time the facilitator plays a sound (e.g., slide whistle, tambourine, etc.), calls “Switch,” and each group moves to the next station to continue brainstorming where the previous group left off. At the end, make sure to provide time for participants to read all the sheets. If you have enough wall space, you can place the sheets side by side where everyone can see them and facilitate a large group reflection.

For example, tape three easel sheets up to different walls and label each as follows: Places we could hold our fundraiser; Entertainment at fundraiser; and Food possibilities. Divide into three groups. Have one group go to each station and start brainstorming. Say, “Please have one person list all the ideas your group comes up with – and go as quickly as possible!” After three minutes, ring a bell and say, “Rotate clockwise.” Help groups move clockwise to the next station, where they add to the brainstorm list of the previous group. After three rotations, ask participants to walk around and read over the three sheets.

Source: Akiva, T., & Jones, M. (2007). Youth PQA Handbook, pp. 50-51. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.