

Feel free to comment on or add suggest changes to this document. If you have something which might turn into a conversation or discussion I think the best place for that is the EA forum post ([link](#)).

Lessons from giving lectures and career workshops in the Netherlands

1. Introduction

The goal of this post is to share my experiences giving EA career workshops and general EA lectures. Both the good ones and the bad ones. I won't focus on how to give good workshops in general and won't focus on the marketing. I won't focus on the content of the workshop (the what) but will focus on the format (the how) of the workshop, for ideas on the content you can visit 80000hours.org. I aim for this to be a very small encyclopedia with ideas which hopefully help other people to set up or improve their own workshops/lectures.

Who is this document for?

Only if you're giving workshops, planning to give workshops, or have too much time on your hands :P.

Notes:

- My primary goal of the workshops/lectures was to learn how to give them in the best way possible (and share this, hence this document). My secondary goal was to scout for and attract talent to work somewhere in the EA network. My third goal was to improve inclination towards and proper understanding of EA. I'm not usually aiming for donations or GWWC pledges.
- Supporting documents (some pictures, some feedback forms, my slides) can be found [here](#). Mostly relevant if you want some more details or you want to see what it looked like. Copyright notice: Feel free to use all my stuff as long as it doesn't pertain to other people (pictures, non-anonymous feedback forms) if the stuff isn't mine it will be labelled as such and make sure you are allowed to use it.
- I aimed to make it possible to start reading anywhere in this document. Therefore you might sometimes stumble upon me repeating myself.
- If I'd had to summarize this document in one sentence It would be: don't assume your audience is rational. Therefore you might sometimes see me advocate an approach which doesn't make sense if you look at the way the world *ought* to be, but actually makes a lot of sense when you consider the way the world actually is.
- At some times I might seem too firm or seem to be exaggerating, I think this is because of three reasons: i. for the sake of clarity and brevity I didn't put full nuance in every sentence but rather mention it once at the top, ii. I am actually rather firm that what is described here accurately describes my experiences, I'm not firm at all that these will be your experiences as well, iii. sometimes reality seems like an exaggeration (as a thought experiment I recommend thinking about modern day politics in some countries and explaining this to someone who lived 20 years ago).

This is usually the point where someone tells you what is coming up. I suggest you look at the outline on the left as I expect things to be rather self-explanatory.

2. Context / background

Relevant if: you're interested to see how my findings can (or cannot) be generalized to your context or if you have a specific audience in mind and want to know how I approached this. I suggest you skip this :).

2.1 My background

Master Applied Mathematics (University of Twente / University of Cambridge) followed by a master's degree in teaching. Taught in a public high school for 1 year and in a private school for the next 6 years. Also have been teaching teachers for 4 years now. I have my own company giving workshops on giving presentations for 3 years.

2.2 Workshops done

All workshops have taken place in the Netherlands. Usually at the location of the audience (they usually arranged a location for me). I feel my workshops cover a lot of different audiences, durations and workshop types. In total I think I spend around 400 hours preparing, giving and reflecting on the workshops. The most noteworthy workshops in chronological order (between brackets are the section numbers of the exercises I did). Note: this is boring.

1. Amsterdam local EA group - 2.5 hours - Career workshop – people who were already familiar with EA – (6.1.3, 6.2.1, 6.4.1, 6.5.2, 6.6.1)
2. De Kleine Consultancy – 3 hours – Career workshop – a university club for people who train to become strategy consultants – (6.1.1, 6.1.3, 6.2.2, 6.3.3, 6.4, 6.6.1),
3. University of Twente – 30 minutes – general EA lecture – students (6.3.5)
4. Effective Altruism the Netherlands Launch – 1 hour – Career workshop – people who showed interest in EA – (6.1.3, 6.2.2, 6.3.5, 6.4.1, 6.5.3, 6.6.1)
5. Erasmus University College – 4 hours – Career workshop – Mainly humanities students – (6.1.1, 6.2.2, 6.3.3, 6.4.3, 6.6.1)
6. University College Utrecht + Utrecht University – 4 hours – Career workshop – students – (6.1.1, 6.2.2, 6.3.3, 6.4.3, 6.6.1)
7. Erasmus sustainability days – 2 hours – Career workshop – Mainly sustainability studies students – (6.1.1, 6.3.1, 6.4.1, 6.5.3, 6.6.1)
8. University College Guidance network – 30 minutes – 20 career counsellors who work for various dutch universities (6.3.6)
9. Jong-VVD – 2 hours – A club for young members of a Dutch political party which supports private enterprise and economic liberalism and is one of the Dutch parties which least favors developmental aid. – (6.3.1)
10. Nedworc – 30 minutes – A professional network of Development Cooperation Experts (think consultants for War Child, Amnesty international etc.) (6.3.4)
11. EAGx the Netherlands – 1 hour – (6.5.1, 6.4.2)
12. Effective Altruism the Netherlands introduction event – 3 hours – An event specifically for new people (usually friends of those already in the network) – (6.3.2)
13. Rotary – 1 hour – General EA lecture – Informally considered the millionaires club who want to do something good for the world. – (6.3.4)

3. Your audience

Relevant if: you're giving workshops to a diverse audience or if you feel like people are resisting EA (why aren't they doing EA already?) but you don't know why.

Notes

* These are generalizations, in reality people will often be a combination of these and might not be as extreme.

* The description of a group of people works only one way (if you are that type of people you usually match the description, if you match the description you're not necessarily in that group)

3.1 The easy catch

Looking for: Effective Altruism, learning, learning how to do good better

Lack: A spark

Frequency: approx. 1 in 15

Every workshop there happens to be always at least 1 person who is very enthusiastic seemingly regardless of what I do. The only way I found to screw this up is by making it too easy which, I guess, makes them feel they landed in a group of children while they were looking for adults.

Recommendation: ensure there is sufficient philosophical depth

3.2 One trick ponies

Are looking for: certainty, closure

Frequency: approx. 1 in 15

Lack: Cause neutrality, epistemic modesty

Some people have the idea that there is only one real problem in the world and all the other problems just follow from this one. Sometimes they think it is overpopulation, gender inequality ([wonderful example on youtube](#)), 'the system', logistics... you name it. I've had someone come up to me after my first workshop saying: "It was a really interesting workshop, but I feel it didn't touch on the core of things. I mean, we have too much food in the western world, too little food in the developing world so the only real problem in the world is a logistics problem."

I imagine these people aren't good at dealing with open ends and uncertainty about the world. Combining this with an online echo chamber and/or social isolation leads them to a firm belief they understand the single cause of much of the world's suffering.

They often don't disrupt a workshop too much. I found they mostly ask two types of questions (and ask them only once or twice):

i. "But aren't you then just treating symptoms?"

ii. "And what is the effect of this intervention on [their pet problem]".

Examples of these questions I've encountered: "But if you are giving people unconditional cash, aren't you just treating the symptoms? Cause what you really want is to help them to be self-supporting in the long run...", "And what is the effect of treating people for Schistosomiasis on the ground water quality. Because of course these pills all end up in nature and [... some anecdote of where ground water quality turned was overlooked and turned out to be super important...]." The hard thing about these people is that they are usually expert on their small kingdom and you just don't happen to know the answer.

Recommendation: I don't feel like these people are the people where EA is looking for so I don't put too much effort in convincing these people. I just try to keep their disruption to a minimum and make sure they leave happy. Usually it suffices to just be really polite about their question and just say you don't know (and don't tell them too directly that you expect their pet cause isn't really that important).

3.3 The traditionalist

Are looking for: recognition, feeling in the loop, consensus, being part of the good guys.

Lack: hypothetical thinking, logical reasoning, critical thinking, an understanding of the pareto principle.

Frequency: approx. 1 in 5

Sometimes they are older people with a history of working for an NGO's, or an altruistic branch of a government or university. Sometimes they are young people studying something with the words "sustainable", "international" or "development" in the title and preferably all three. You can recognise them by their clothing, which is really run of the mill and slightly formal.

I've found these people to be really entrenched in their way of thinking. Somehow they have turned truth into a popularity contest. A logical sound argument doesn't convince, an appeal to authority does. Showing raw data of an RCT hardly convinces, dressing the right way does. Being a statistician and recommending AMF doesn't really convince, being an experienced biologist and recommending AMF does. You have to speak the proper and up-to-date jargon. Your slides need to look the part. You get extra points if you exude that things are trivial to you and if you refer to common knowledge in an offhand way. Personal anecdotes, evocative language and stating your professional experience definitely also work. Finally you have to frequently mention how difficult and complex altruism is. Basically, when you encounter a talk which feels like a commercial or Hollywood movie you know you're listening to a traditionalist.

It might seem I'm exaggerating but I'm definitely not (think politicians during election time and how you'd expect them to be rational and compare this to how they are actually behaving). Just a couple of short anecdotes to illustrate how this affected me.

i. During one of my workshops I had someone attending who was there to figure out if they wanted to host one of my workshops themselves. Before the workshop started I made the mistake asking what was on her laptop. It turned out to be the infographic of the sustainable development goals (which I didn't recognize). You could see in her eyes that at that point I had lost all credibility (took me only 20 seconds! Beat that guys :P). Needless to say, I didn't get invited to do a workshop there.

ii. Another time Sijr Hoeijmakers (co-founder of EAN) and I had a conference call with someone who was interested in hosting a workshop. The first 15 minutes she asked me questions and I tried to answer honestly and in detail. It was clear she wasn't convinced. At a certain point in time she asked a question which Sijr answered... Well kind of answered... I couldn't understand the answer but it contained a lot of difficult words, different countries, Oxford etc. After this she said: "hmmm, I wasn't that convinced, but this actually sounds really good!". I was absolutely sure she couldn't have followed what Sijr was saying.

iii. Again, when talking to someone who was interested in hosting a workshop the SDG's (sustainable development goals) passed the conversation. She was talking about how she really would like an advanced workshop she voiced something along the lines: "You don't want to start all over. Some people don't even know the SDG's!" (with the tone of surprise I would voice when some adult doesn't know how to do multiplication).

I wondered how this truth as popularity contest came to be. I can imagine a couple of reasons but can only speculate: First, in computer science your program either runs or doesn't. In mathematics, a proof is right or wrong. In engineering your bridge either holds or doesn't. I feel that the most common background for traditionalists might be more focused on writing essays. Writing essays might be more biased towards making a persuasive argument (rather than a correct argument). Might be more biased towards writing something your teacher likes (rather than something correct). Later in their life this might continue because they have to write proposals for policymakers for certain grants. Once again, the reward is given for convincing someone, not for the correctness of the idea. Second might be that it is self-sustaining (only those who are popular make the rules) and a final reason: imagine that you've been working in the field for 40 years, how easy is it to face the idea that you might not have been all that effective?

In the workshop these people can be tough. They can judge you in the first 5 minutes and not like you for the remainder of the workshop, based solely on how you present the information (rather than on the information itself). The good news is that they're quite conformist and polite so as long as the rest of the group likes you they'll usually not give you too much trouble.

Recommendations:

I'm saddened at the fact that I have to give these recommendations (I'd rather the world didn't work this way) but here we go

1. Avoid doing workshops for traditionalists groups. I found it to be hard to get right and I think that as EA's we should be extra careful of how we portray ourselves towards traditional altruism. If you really feel like you want to do this I definitely recommend spending some time getting to know them. It is really sad as these people are supposed to be our brothers and sisters in arms. Does any of you know if there are any good articles out there which outline how EA wants to deal with more traditional altruism?

2. In any workshop you frequently have traditionalists. It is therefore worth it to dress well, make your slides real pretty and make sure everything *seems* well organized (notice the emphasis on seems). Avoid dressing like a student, avoid flimsy material. And to be honest I think that getting your local pretty girl, or someone bald with glasses to do the talk will actually be a boon as well (not saying I'm liking this!).

3. Your first 3 minutes are the most important to them since that is when they seem to form their opinion. Most other people don't really care about your first couple of minutes so I usually focus my first 3 minutes solely on traditionalists. Tips: a. brag about yourself but conceal it as giving relevant background information, b. ASAP frame EA as new and upcoming (makes them feel like they are all up-to-date) but already big (over 500 million a year is donated with EA in mind) and imply that more grantmakers are moving in an EA direction. See section 6.3.4 for a lecture specifically designed for traditionalists and more tips on how to start if you expect a lot of these people in your workshop..

4. Mention the SDG's somewhere in your lecture (don't call them Sustainable Development Goals, who still does that, yikes!)

5. Get to know them. This tip isn't something which will bring you lots of results in a short time, but in the end there is no substitute for really knowing your audience. I once decided to join a traditional sustainability conference and it really made me realize just how different from an EAG conference it was. I suggest you try it! Or if you want to have an easier time I've looked up some material which is pretty OK (and I imagine you'll have a good time looking at this).

- [‘Thought Leader’ gives talk that will inspire your thoughts | CBC Radio \(Comedy/Satire Skit\)](#) the comments are fun to read
- [Steve Howard: Let's go all-in on selling sustainability](#) A classical example of a traditionalist talk, I really recommend watching the youtube clip about thought leaders

mentioned above first. Pay special attention to the first 3 minutes and to how much information it lacks. I'd recommend not watching all of it. I do recommend reading the comments there. It is really educational and there are a lot one-trick ponies there as well).

- [Rory Stewart OBE: "Failed states and how not to fix them"](#) (long) Actually a lovely lecture of a traditionalist talk done in the right way.
- www.drawdown.org This seems the traditionalist version of EA. They try to compare different options on reducing climate change. They lack epistemic rigour (no info on discounting, they only look at the scale of a solution, not at tractability) but sell it very well (a lot of evocative adjectives).

3.4 The warm fuzzy altruists

Are looking for: a warm feeling

They lack: a reason to become consequentialists, logical reasoning

Frequency: Approx. 1 in 5

!exaggeration alert! This person just took a gap year and went backpacking (or volunteering somewhere). He/she got closer to nature, got inspired by all the friendly people. Now they have an extra piercing somewhere (or a man bun for men), have turned vegan, got into meditation and are wondering why people are so materialistic and selfish. Their clothing is usually informal. They are really focused on minimizing their own impact, carefully recycling waste, buying local and avoiding the car. Terms like gluten free, revitalized water and alternative medicine are more frequent among warm fuzzy altruists. They really hate big corporations (Shell!). I've experienced these people referring to EA as: "Not my type of altruism" or "too cold and calculating".

They usually are only slightly challenging to have in your workshop as they are usually very well intentioned. The main challenge is that they might confound the discussion by making slightly irrelevant remarks. Couple of examples:

- i. At a completely random moment someone started making a speech on how banks invest your money in cluster bombs and terrible things and that it is really easy to switch to another bank (well intentioned and she was a lovely person, but was off topic).
- ii. When speaking about recycling plastic someone argued that recycling plastic is essential: "just look at the huge plastic island floating around in the oceans and ruining complete eco-systems". (off topic because we were comparing recycling plastic to just putting it with the general waste, we weren't comparing recycling plastic to just throwing it somewhere in nature).
- iii. They sometimes start telling people that "the system" is the problem, they usually cannot really clarify what they mean by "the system" (something with big corporations, corruption, developmental aid having perverse incentives).

Recommendation:

* When they go off topic I noticed little to no effect in trying to point out the logical flaws in their reasoning. Nowadays I usually just let them explain what they like, agree with how terrible things can be, and then try to steer things back on track ASAP.

* I don't feel these people are usually the best fit for EA. I therefore don't put a lot of effort into convincing these people. I usually tease them a little (challenge their way of thinking) and see if it sticks and if it doesn't that's fine.

* I recommend [6.3.1 The everyday altruism quiz](#) if you expect an audience consisting of many warm fuzzy altruists.

* See [section 4.3](#) for more info on a type of question frequently asked by warm fuzzy altruists

3.5 The Capitalist

Are looking for: being successful, being good at what they do, efficiency

They lack: a social circle where altruism is important, the belief that aiming to help other people actually has a significant impact

Frequency: only occurs in specific audiences

Two times I gave workshops to a group of people who were very far from altruism (workshop 2 and workshop 9 in the list in [section 2.2](#)). These people tend to be skeptical about the effectiveness of altruism in general and or don't feel like it is worth a lot. They are more inclined to wear suits, often aim to go into politics or business and expect to earn a lot of money strategy consulting. They sometimes go looking for a discussion just for the sake of it (the intellectual and social challenge). I feel they aren't really against altruism, they just have been in surroundings where other values were more pronounced.

In a workshop they can be really sceptical (also see yellers in section [3.7](#)). But usually they are pleasantly surprised by EA (they probably expected a warm fuzzy altruist to do the talk).

Recommendations:

- * In my experience this is a surprisingly good audience. They quickly take to the efficiency/effectiveness of EA.
- * Don't push them to do altruism (they'll just push right back), instead just focus on "given that you want to do altruism, what is the most effective way to do this?"
- * Say you're not there to preach (this is what they expect and would dislike)
- * Make sure that they know that you choose EA because you like it, not because you didn't have another choice. Usually involves some bragging at the start (disguised as giving background information).
- * Start from a point of happiness as a common ground and mention how being altruistic can help someone to be happy.
- * Take a good and easy example (AMF, coolearth) to deal with skepticism and to prove that at least some charities actually work.
- * Do not be afraid to criticise some charities (if you aren't skeptical about some charities they will see you as someone who doesn't engage in critical thinking)
- * Embrace them being sceptical (this is a personality trait we love!). Sometimes they might apologise themselves or other people will apologise for them (tell them that you love it).

3.6. The (genetic) lottery winner

Is looking for: inspiring people / surroundings / community

Frequency: 1 in 10

Some people are lucky in the lottery of nature. Some of these are even lucky in the lottery of nurture as well. And some of these are even lucky in general as well. Meet what I call the (genetic) lottery winner. Specifically I'd like to look at people who happen to be top 1% regarding intelligence (in a well rounded way), above average in both social skills and looks and who happen to have had a loving family, have a good group of friends and not have life deal them overly many bad cards. I'm not talking perfect on every scale, just (well) above average in a well rounded way. I notice that these people generally develop personalities to score relatively high on: independence, contentment, openness, conscientiousness and low on: neuroticism.

Almost by definition these people must exist. Needless to say, these people are great catches for EA (if only for their [general mental ability](#)). I feel that they actually, compared to other people, are relatively likely to attend your workshop (hence the frequency 1 in 10) and

usually quick to grasp and agree with the EA mindset. So everything seems right with the world. So where is the catch?

I believe there are three challenges, first of all, although they are a great catch they aren't an easy catch by any means. EA isn't the only organisation looking for the genetic lottery winner. And since my goal was to scout talent to work for EA directly, EA needs to compete with companies like google, BCG and your local employer of the year. Assuming the genetic lottery winner cares for job satisfaction (instead of only altruism) this requires EA to compete with all other companies on things as colleagues, hygiene factors, growth opportunities, pay etc. So suddenly your presentation isn't just about the effectiveness of effective altruism anymore but also about being inspiring, friendly, warm, welcoming etc. This adds a whole new dimension, and a hard dimension at that, to your workshops. A dimension which hardly matters for other groups.

The second challenge is that (at least in the Netherlands) we are stereotyping and defining talent in terms of 'similarity to us'. So if you are from a STEM background you get bonus points, if you like riddles or board games you get bonus points, if you simulate neural networks for fun in your free time you get bonus points. These bonus points are all good and well as long as they are bonus points, but I think we fail to realize that this still is a heuristic. I feel that the genetic lottery winner who just happens to like anthropology better than maths, goes to study anthropology, adapts well to the surrounding (meaning having good writing/speaking skills, having good social skills) and comes to a local meetup will not be recognized as a genetic lottery winner. This person will then be and feel judged and be appalled at the lack of social skills and never to return. I know that (in the Netherlands) we fail to see potential looking only at the current level and similarity to us.

A final challenge is that having these people in your group (or not) is kind of self-sustaining as they tend to cluster together.

I've noticed people whom I consider to be in this category saying things like: "I didn't really like the culture". "I feel I can do as much back home, I don't really need a community for all this", "they weren't really my kind of people", "I didn't feel really welcome", "the crowd wasn't really diverse" "it seemed a bit like a bunch of nerds", "Effective Altruism feels so heavy".

Recommendations:

- * When someone seems very different from you (i.e. they spend a lot of time on their looks), force yourself to look extra careful at the level of thinking given their knowledge. Examples, in your evaluation of them compensate for their lack of knowledge, so if someone who isn't from a STEM background takes quickly to the idea of EA this shows more potential than someone who is from a STEM background (who is more familiar with this kind of thinking). If someone says something really smart, consider if they are just relating something they read online (not a good indication of potential) or if they thought of it themselves (good indication of potential). If someone seems to have low epistemic standards, ask yourself is this because they are stupid or because they haven't been trained in it? It feels trivial when I write this, but I know (in the Netherlands) this isn't done enough.

- * It might be interesting to look at the [demographics of EA](#) to get an idea what we might a selection bias towards (note: I'm not putting this forward as evidence of selection bias, it is not).

- * Avoid weird ice breakers (!) see [section 6.1](#)

- * Also focus on just having a good time at the workshop.

- * Read about the socially ill-calibrated EA fanatic ([section 3.8](#)) who seems to be the nemesis of attracting some of the more socially inclined genetic lottery winner.

3.7 The yeller

Is looking for: recognition, confidence

Frequency: 1 in 15

Some people have a fragile ego and seem to find self-delusion at the expense of others the easiest road. They want to be the big fish (never mind that it is in a small pond). They engage in (subtle) struggles for power. They do so sometimes by addressing the whole group usually for an extended period of time with a very serious tone of voice. Sometimes but not always they put a question mark at the end of their statement.

In a workshop these people can be the most annoying of them all.

Recommendations:

- * Make sure they like you. Flattery works.
- * Recognising yellers can be hard, especially distinguishing from the critical capitalist (who is actually just a critical thinker which we love) or distinguishing them from the warm fuzzy altruist (who just cares about the world that they sometimes have to say stuff).
- * The first time they show some kind of power struggle be really kind and thankful to them as a gesture of good faith (a peace offering). Second time keep it short. Third time you know they won't let up and the battle is on.
- * Most of the times (4 times out of 5) you can avoid the battle. In my opinion if you never notice yellers doing battle with you it is just that, you don't notice.
- * If the battle is on, consider them like you would the local high school bully, they will bully you if they sense weakness. Just kindness will (unfortunately) not do it (buying flowers for the high school bully will not work). I don't have many good tips but two: i. usually if you've been kind the first couple of times the rest of the audience might not like this person -> good job you can now be pretty overtly just make sure they don't say too much, ii. react to this person as if things they are saying are really trivial and obvious (hit them where it hurts).
- * If the audience knows each other, it is an informal workshop and you expect resistance I recommend asking at the beginning: "Who is going to be the most troublesome in this audience?" (tone of voice: fun, like you're up for a challenge and friendly). They usually love to answer and it defuses the tension.

3.8 Socially ill-calibrated EA fanatic

Looking for: Truth, being helpful, ego

Lack: experience in ordinary social situations, social calibration, a good way of evaluating someone's potential for EA, not judging or not making people feel judged

Unfortunately not all self-identified EA's are perfect at everything. One type of imperfection worth taking special note of (at least in the Netherlands) is the socially ill calibrated experienced EA. I guess at one point in time they started lacking social experience in ordinary situations which made them avoid these situations and the cycle repeats. They seem to take pride in not caring overly about looks/clothing/fashion even to the point where (paradoxically) they care negatively about these things (so looking more fashionable becomes something negative). They highly value intellectual aptitude, but often in a self-defined way. So if they scored well on an IQ test, everyone else is measured according to IQ, if they have a wide knowledge of EA everyone else is measured based on their knowledge of EA.

There are a couple of challenges with the socially ill calibrated EA fanatic. First and foremost, they scare away talented people from EA (see also [section 3.6](#)). Unfortunately I've seen this happen on countless occasions in the Netherlands (based on self-reports when I talked to these people afterwards). Being socially ill calibrated gives rise to a whole variety of problems when attracting potential EA'ers to the community. Examples:

- First they might love (weird) ice-breakers but don't feel the negative kind of awkwardness underneath for some participants (these participants usually being the

more socially sensitive people in the group who unfortunately happen to be the people not expressing this feeling easily which leads the socially ill calibrated EA fanatic to conclude the ice-breakers are great).

- Second example is that they might be using a lot of jargon without explaining any of this to new people (this is also a way to recognize socially ill calibrated, they use difficult words even when these words are a disadvantage... think: career capital, short feedback loops, pipelining, moral circle expansion, Sparta/Athens, s-risk, epistemic modesty, signalling, bias A, bias B etc).
- Talking/telling too much

The second challenge I find is that they aren't good at scouting talent as they are overly biased to people who look/behave/think like them and prone to stereotyping. I find they look too much at the current person (and their clothes) and too little at the potential of the person (i.e. I find knowledge of EA a very poor indicator of how talented someone is as this is easily remedied, but critical thinking a very good indicator of talent). They also tend not to see the difference between someone who is mediocre at social situations and someone who is excellent. I know that some people visiting our community can feel unfairly judged (once again, usually it is the socially savvy people who feel they are being judged... so again this leads to scaring away especially the people who are strong at a desirable attribute).

A final challenge is that I encounter is that in discussions they have seem two flaws: i. they frequently refer to some article they have read somewhere (which to me resembles an appeal to authority and doesn't bring the discussion any further), ii. they can come to very strong conclusions based on very correct reasoning but undervalue the uncertainty in the assumptions (i.e. some underlying population ethics assumption), I find this doesn't help the discussion along.

Recommendations:

* The most obvious way of dealing with situations where someone is being (unfairly) judged is to agree with the importance of intellectual aptitude (it is important) and proceed to show that the (unfairly) judged person scores well on this. Empirically (n=3) I know this doesn't work. For some reason they care more about someone NOT looking fashionable than about them being intelligent. An example, person A scored 160 on a (fairly well established) IQ test. This person looked down upon person B (who was more fashion-prone). When I mentioned that person B scored really high on the same IQ test person A said: "Yeah, but that person only scored 150...". To me this shows that the most obvious way of dealing with these people, scoring well on their desired attribute, will not work. (note: this last example has been modified very slightly to preserve anonymity).

* The second most obvious way of dealing with these situations is to have an open conversation on this and tell them that you think they might be biased. I tried this once and it didn't work (they felt they weren't biased). I expect this not to work in most cases because there are a quite a lot of biases at work (one would have to admit they have been wrong about a lot of things, one would have to conclude that something they are not good at actually is important (i.e. fashion), etc.).

* The best thing I found is to come to a sort of understanding where this person focuses on people who are already in the EA network and don't involve themselves too much in attracting new people. I think they like this, as would I.

* I think the best way forward would be to have some data on this. Basically I want data on the following question: what is someone's expected value to EA conditioned on how fashionable they look. Is there anyone who knows any data on this (or on anything somewhat related)? (please only data no explanations or thought, I have plenty of those, I'm already familiar with 80k talent survey but I want real data (not a collection of opinions)).

4. Frequently asked questions (by your audience)

Relevant if: you have some time on your hands (not really important but usually useful to know I'd say).

I used to think that people ask questions because they want the answer. While this seems true when teaching mathematics, this doesn't seem to hold for EA workshops/lectures. Questions are often people putting up resistance because you threaten their ego or world-view (as described in the previous Chapter 3). I have found much better results on focussing on the underlying reasons for the questions (i.e. dressing better) than having more logical answers to their questions. So if you get a critical question I recommend treating this as a result of violating some underlying desire as explained in the chapter 3. Still it does matter somewhat which answers you give so this section will cover some of the most frequently questions and some ideas for responses. I realize these answers aren't the best answers (from a pure logical point of view) but are usually the best in a pragmatic way. Generally I find considering questions to be statements with a question mark at the end to be a helpful exercise.

4.1 Immeasurable

Examples:

"How do you measure human rights?",

"You cannot compare poverty to climate change."

"You cannot put a number on the value of a life."

"How do you take into account uncertainty? We have seen many examples where one year a study claims one thing and the next year another study claims something else?"

"Don't you think it is questionable whether or not this scientific/numerical approach allows space for developing personal morality, wrestling with subjective/objective dilemmas, or for being driven by something more fundamental to the individual human spirit even if it's contrary to available impact-based evidence – all things which can help develop long-lasting good habits in doing good?"

Asked by: warm fuzzy altruists and traditionalists

Possible responses (summarized, paraphrased, I noticed other people had much better answers than I did so here they are):

* Natalie Cargill (****): EA isn't about just measuring everything, it is about careful reasoning and analysis. Even when, or perhaps especially when things are hard we need to do this.

* Sijr Hoeijmakers (****): In helping the world we'd prefer to do everything for everyone. Unfortunately we do not yet live in a world where this is possible so we are forced to make choices. Hard choices, sometimes unpleasant choices, but choices we have to make and we can either make them transparently and consciously or make them unconsciously and implicitly.

* Adrian de Groot (***): We need to quantify these as the only alternative is doing things based on our gut feeling and from behavioral psychology we all know how well that works.

* Alje (**): failed (too much new stuff for the audience, doesn't really work) You'd expect two different causes to have a 10% difference in effectiveness. In reality the difference might easily be a factor 10 or even 100. So even with a lot of uncertainty the differences are still big enough to get an accurate picture.

* Alje (*): failed (too complicated, easily misconstrued and they don't like the implication of focussing on things which are easy to measure) Some causes are really hard to measure, some causes are easier to measure. Comparing between causes which are easier to measure will be easier and thereby the comparison between those causes will be better. You'd therefore expect the expected best easy to measure cause to be more effective than the expected best hard to measure cause (assuming no a priori difference in the effectiveness distribution depending on how easy it is to measure). Since money now seems allocated with little regard for how easy it is to measure a cause you'd expect the easy to measure causes to be underfunded. It therefore makes sense at the moment to focus more on things which are easy to measure.

4.2 Holistic

Examples:

"Poverty is much more than a lack of money. We see that everything influences everything else and therefore only an integrated and coordinated approach will work."

"But isn't saving lives by donating money to AMF just treating the symptoms? I mean, we're already overpopulated and the local situation might just not be able to sustain the number of people."

"But aren't unconditional cash transfers just treating the symptoms? We need a way that these people can sustain themselves."

"It sounds nice in theory, but with corruption, lack of education in local partners how do you expect this to actually work in practice?"

"You're looking at an isolated system, completely disregarding that something which might in one place doesn't work in another. We need a more holistic approach where we look at the individual situation and avoid overgeneralization."

Asked by: yellers, one-trick ponies and traditionalists

Suggested response:

(*****) "Ah yes! That is really important. You are obviously referring to the well known problem in developmental aid where everything is linked together. Because people are poor they cannot afford good health care, then because they cannot afford good health care they will be sick more often which will negatively impact education, which in turn will impact economy which etc. And this is just an example, health, education, living conditions, corruption etc. all influence each other. Really well known phenomenon. And this makes it hard to say which is a root cause and which is the symptom as they all affect each other one way or another. So it might seem that an integral or holistic approach where you look at the system as a whole is needed. But actually, because everything is so interconnected, what you actually can do is have a really targeted intervention on a really small part of the problem. Because improving one thing will lead to an improvement in the next and the next and the next, and you can cause a domino effect. So exactly because everything is connected we can look for the single small thing we can do which has the highest impact on the whole system. And we actually see that this works in practice as well."

Rationale:

* I don't like these questions. I usually get them from traditionalists who seem to want to engage in some power struggle (which really annoys me). The example response above is a bit longer than my average answer, but it shows well what I'd do if I really feel someone is just testing me (instead of being honestly interested in the answer).

* I start with "That is really important" because traditionalists will not take you seriously if you do not consider this important

* When referring to this concept I use words like "obviously" and "well known problem" because I want to hit them where it hurts. Assuming it is really a power struggle, they want to outdo you by showing them how much they know. The best response is therefore to imply

they are making an absolutely obvious remark which is super trivial to you and everyone in the audience. Works exceptionally well and they usually behave afterwards. Even if it isn't a power struggle it is good to assert how intimately familiar you are with this concept (they will think higher of you).

* "It is hard to tell what is root cause and what is symptom." Reason: Some people (one-trick ponies) consider a single thing the root cause of all. There isn't one, and therefore it is useful to frame it in a way where everything affects everything.

Recommendations:

* Also works really well proactively (just raising the question yourself and this as planned part of your workshop/lecture)

* Even though this question is often just a struggle for power, it is actually a really good question. To understand where these questions are coming from I wholeheartedly recommend watching the following lecture [Rory Stewart OBE: "Failed States - and How Not to Fix Them"](#)

* For some people this answer is not enough. If they keep the power struggle going, mention that focussing on a small part of the system isn't just theory as randomized controlled trials show that a non-holistic approach can have real results. Be sure you are familiar with the evidence behind some charities (AMF/CoolEarth work well for me). Usually the person will keep going and as you mention any RCT's will ask "but how does A cause B" to which you answer: "the RCT doesn't tell us, it just shows us it works, that is the nature of an RCT". Usually that is a (kind of) happy end.

4.3 Local focus

Example questions:

"So basically you're saying that people can do whatever they want and then just donate money and everything is alright? Doesn't this seem wrong to you? Don't you think it is important for people to take personal responsibility for what they are doing instead of just solving some far away problems?"

"It seems kind of cold and calculating, sometimes you just want to help someone close to you right?"

"It seems kind of cold and calculating, altruism is about the intention as well right?"

"You have talking a lot about donating, careers and charities but hardly about what someone can do as a person."

Question behind the question:

In their peer groups altruism is considered as something quite different from effective altruism and this other kind of altruism is what they have been striving towards for a long time. They consider altruism to be: being vegan, recycling waste, buying local/organic, getting solar panels on your roof, volunteering, not taking airplanes, not taking the car etc. They may even have heard that 'just donating money' doesn't really work (see [holistic section 4.2](#)) or if they do believe donating money works they might not realize how well it works (compared to the things listed above). Finally people asking these questions might subconsciously be more inclined to a deontological point of view where the intention what matters. I generally find these questions to be genuine and well intentioned. They are usually asked by warm fuzzy altruists (and sometimes traditionalists).

Possible responses:

(****) Recently at Schiphol airport they faced the following problem. They were looking for a new air conditioning system for one of their terminals. They had the choice between a cheaper air conditioning and one which was more expensive and more efficient and thus more environmental friendly. The people telling me this were really happy that in the end they got the more efficient one. But then I wonder, what else could they have done for this

money? Perhaps a neighbouring airport has a really really old air conditioning which needs replacement a lot more. Why look for solutions only in your own backyard? The world doesn't care where CO₂ is saved. Is it not the best idea to spend the money where the most CO₂ is reduced?

(**) Does the end justify the means? One might be tempted to just minimize their own impact? But is this really the best thing for the world? For example, can you take the airplane to a climate conference? I'd say yes because [...].

(**) You might be tempted to put solar panels on your roof. And that is really good, hooray! But... why do you put the solar panels on your roof? I mean, the world doesn't care if they are on your roof or somewhere else. And perhaps the roof of the neighbour actually catches more sun because it has a better angle. We are all so focussed on making the impact ourselves that we might sometimes forget that there are better opportunities a little farther from home. I mean it might feel good to have solar panels on *your* roof, but the world doesn't care. I mean I'm all in favor of getting solar panels on your roof, but let's not pretend this is *the* best thing you can do.

(**) Yes, taking care of you family and friends and neighbours and fellow countrymen is really important. I'm not saying we shouldn't do these things. It is really natural to care for these things and you should dedicate a part of your time and money to this. However I think it is also good to take a part of your time and money and dedicate this solely to helping the world as a whole. These two things don't exclude each other and are both very important. Effective altruism is all about focussing on what is best for the world. This makes sense because you cannot have a worldwide movement which cares more about certain local problems than other local problems.

(?to test) I find that some people don't know how donating to an effective charity compares to their personal efforts at minimizing the impact. I'm going to try and put some numbers on this for them. I expect this won't work (as this is too rational). A number I calculated (the calculation is pretty easy) is: recycling a plastic bottle saves greenhouse gasses equal to the amount of greenhouse gasses saved by approximately donating 0.0001 euro to CoolEarth (note: 1 euro is approximately equal to 1 dollar).

(?to test) Someone I recently met said she used to be all about minimizing her own impact. She said she changed towards EA once she realized that this would imply that no matter what she did she would always have a net negative impact in her life. I'll experiment to see if this line of reasoning resonates with others as well.

Recommendations:

- * Probably obvious but: be sure to let them know very explicitly that you aren't against being vegan, recycling waste etc.

- * Anecdote or examples seem to work best as answer to these type of questions.

- * I recommend using CO₂ examples (or greenhouse gases) as it is well measureable, these people care about it and it is really really clear that it doesn't matter where you emit the CO₂. This saves a great lot of follow up questions.

- * The tone that worked best for me was: really in favor of doing the small things, really understanding of why people might do this, but also quite firm in the message: "let us not kid ourselves that this is *the* best thing".

4.4 The unpredictable questions

Examples

"What is the effect of treating people for Schistosomiasis on the ground water quality. Because of course these pills all end up in nature."

"But I heard that many people actually use the bed nets for fishing. The poison used to kill the mosquitos then ends up in the lakes killing all the fish and disrupting whole ecosystems."

"But I heard that when a charity comes in with a lot of bed nets it will put the local bed net suppliers out of order. I heard that there were whole bed net factories in [some country]

don't remember] which were forced to close because of the big malaria prevention charities?"

"But I heard that these bed nets are actually fabricated using child labor, is this true?"

"But I heard that people don't actually use the nets. They are much more often used as soccer nets or to keep the chicken pen etc. What do you know about this?"

[any question which you did not, and probably could not have prepared for]

Question behind the question:

I feel these questions are usually asked because someone has a pet project (one-trick ponies see [section 3.2](#)). Sometimes I feel they are just a result of general distrust of. Sometimes they just want to test you (which means you didn't do a good job 10 minutes before) or they feel you are too mainstream (you only read stuff that the corporate elite wants you to read). Infrequently they did read an article somewhere and genuinely want your opinion (this does happen, but most people will opt for not asking the question at all or asking it to you personally after the workshop rather than in front of the group).

Possible responses:

(**) Mention you frequently get these kind of questions and give them examples. Tell them that you don't know the answer to this question but that you'll look it up. Mention that the research is generally really thorough and that you haven't encountered anyone in a workshop who came up with a question that hasn't been thought of before so you feel safe to say that it probably will not be an issue.

(?to test): Something better. I don't know yet. Perhaps mention the importance of track record? Perhaps mention the importance of transparency? Perhaps not taking on the responsibility of answering this question? (But rather tell them to look it up themselves and let you know if they find anything)? Anyone any ideas?

Recommendations:

- * These questions usually don't really contribute anything for the whole group and I'd recommend trying to keep this answer short.

- * The first couple of times I spend 4-6 hours looking up the answer of a single question.

Because the questions are usually really specific there usually aren't clear cut answers to be found. For example I once looked up the poison which is used to impregnate the nets and possible effects on water ecosystems. It does turn out to be really poisonous to fish (luckily not to mammals, except cats if I remember correctly). The nets do appear to be (very infrequently) used for fishing. Calculating things show me that massive fishing in a smaller lake with new nets does tend to make the concentration of the poison in the lake rise close to dangerous levels. However the half life time of the poison in water is about 3 days. This made me conclude that there any serious effects are unlikely. Now, this would have been worth my time if I'd have gotten this question more often (but I haven't). So I stopped looking up these random questions. I recommend you not looking up every question you get until you know for sure it is something you'd be asked more frequently.

- * I switched to climate change examples as I found these to yield fewer random unpredictable questions. I feel (non-extreme risks) climate change isn't the most popular cause area in EA but as an example it is excellent.

5. General workshop tips

Relevant if: you're inexperienced in teaching/giving workshops.

Although this document is mainly aimed at people already experienced in giving workshop I feel some low hanging fruit may be worthwhile. Here we go:

* Learn all names. It is surprisingly easy to learn the names of the participants and it guarantees you a much better atmosphere as things feel more personal. When they are introducing themselves just make a map of who is sitting where. Sometimes you know who is coming in advance and it helps just spending 15 minutes learning the names. I think everything up to 20 people and over 30 minutes is definitely worth it.

* Logistics is key. Never underestimate the importance of a good room, enough time and some food/drinks for participants. Enough time is usually achieved by making a flexible planning (not a fixed planning). My worst workshop I gave was one where I had 30 minutes, the beamer didn't work, during a lunch break (people were eating) in a room where I was barely audible.

* Expectation management. People often expect you to deliver the world in a single workshop (which you can't). In case of a career workshop they somehow expect a really neat answer to a lot of the problems they have been struggling with in the past 2 years... in 2 hours. Good expectation management starts with the promotion (paint an accurate picture of what will be going on) and continues in your introduction (where I think it is a good habit to remind people that you can do only so much in 2 hours). I once had a girl say at the end of the workshop in the feedback form: "Overall impression: mediocre. The workshop was good, but not perhaps what I had in mind. I would recommend this to people if they're interested in cognicence when being altruistic." She expected things to be less rational (!?).

* Be pragmatic in clothes/slides. As stated in [section 3.3](#) it does matter a lot. So put your best foot forward, which in this case is your most vain and superficial foot.

* When looking for organisations to host your workshop, leverage your connections. Sijr and I found that doing an approach where you didn't know anyone was nearly impossible. But having one enthusiastic person in a company makes it much easier. Just mentioning someone's name can literally open doors.

* Promotion does matter a lot. One time at a really big university ([workshop #6](#)) we had 15 participants. Another time someone else did the promotion and we had around 50 applications for only 20 spots in a much smaller university ([workshop #7](#)). This last one had a selection based on resume. Just one datapoint, but it might be worth noting that announcing a selection based on CV can be a good idea.

* When giving workshops professionally I've found that if you ask more money you are on average actually more likely to be hired. Rather surprising, but perhaps this is because they feel you're more of a professional if you ask more. As an indication, around 9/13 workshop I did for free (because I felt it would be really effective). When I do the workshops professionally I currently ask around 1250 euro for 4 hours (excl VAT).

* How many people come and talk to you afterwards seems a fair indication of quality.

* When doing a workshop/lecture for an unfamiliar audience I find it always really helps to try and find some video clips or written documents (notes of a meeting). This usually really helps me to determine how to dress, behave and which workshop style to go for.

* If your talk is part of something bigger (a meeting, a conference) someone might be writing a summary of your talk afterwards. Try to get your hands on these as they give you an idea of how someone in your audience has perceived your talk. Sometimes this makes you happy and sometimes really sad. My saddest anecdote is about notes which included the following line: "according to effective altruism the top-3 charities are: Against malaria foundation, no poverty and SCI (Service Civil International)". I have no clue how they got this idea, I never said that these are the overall top-3 charities, I'm completely unfamiliar with any charity called "no poverty" and Schistosomiasis Control Initiative somehow became Service Civil International.

* Avoid the *mathematics teacher's fallacy*. Stories like the one above, articles like [this one](#) and basic common sense show us the importance of being accurate, having high fidelity and being nuanced in how and what you communicate. There is one caveat however which I call the mathematics teacher's fallacy. Imagine someone teaching multiplication to primary school children in the following ways:

- “Multiplication is an arithmetical operation, defined initially in terms of repeated addition, usually written $a \times b$, $a.b$, or ab , by which the product of two quantities is calculated: to multiply a by positive integral b is to add a to itself b times. Multiplication by fractions can then be defined in the light of the associative and commutative properties; multiplication by $1/n$ is equivalent to multiplication by 1 followed by division by n .”
- “Multiplication is a mathematical operation that at its simplest is an abbreviated process of adding an integer to zero a specified number of times and that is extended to other numbers in accordance with laws that are valid for integers.”

As we can see these explanations are really accurate, properly nuanced and have high fidelity but at the same time they suck when explaining multiplication. Teaching someone complex stuff cannot be done in one pass and often requires some stepping stones before reaching full detail. The mathematician teacher’s fallacy is like forcing your video encoder to do it in one pass, YouTube deciding to only support the 4K resolution and non-progressive JPEG. I therefore consider the mathematics teacher’s fallacy to be a severe overfocus on fidelity, details and nuance at the expense of clarity.

The true challenge, when teaching complex stuff, therefore is to keep things as simple as possible while still ensuring that your audience will not misconstrue your message. A couple of suggestions:

1. just avoid making any hard claims
2. using examples work well (use simple charities)
3. use metaphors to link abstract concepts to things they know
4. focus on quality not quantity (make a good selection of what you intent to tell, it is really easy to try and cram too much into a single workshop)
5. focus on the basics, save the fancy stuff for later (so yes, that often means that the interesting stuff like the scale, neglectedness, tractability framework and far future will have to wait)
6. tell your audience that you will not be going into the details and this is just a general picture which is only mostly accurate
7. negation is usually pretty easy (just debunking popular misconceptions is really safe: “effective altruism is NOT just about earning to give”)
8. simplify the things which can be safely simplified, sometimes you don’t have to be correct, as long as you’re close to correct (see example below)

Example: one of the hardest questions to answer properly in your workshop is: “Effective Altruism is...”. Hard because it is important to get right and important to have a clear answer. There exist many really accurate definitions ([Effective Altruism is a Question \(not an ideology\)](#), [CEA’s guiding principles](#)) Many of them fall prey to the mathematics teacher’s fallacy in my opinion as I expect them to be insufficiently clear. The two ways I handle this in my workshop are:

- Effective altruism is: ‘just’ critical thinking (this isn’t true as it neglects to describe the ‘commitment to others’, action and the current manifestation of people who self identify with the CEA’s guiding principles but I feel these inaccuracies will not lead to any weird headlines in the newspaper)
- You can think of effective altruism as an ideology and movement, of course it is slightly more complex than that, but it is close.” (Again, not entirely accurate, but it definitely is in the right ballpark and will be a lot clearer than many other more accurate, definitions).

6. Workshop ideas

Relevant if: you're looking for ideas for your workshop/lecture or just want to learn from my experiences (the good and the bad)

I collected everything I tried and sorted them depending on the goal (see the outline on the left). My goal is to go into enough detail so that you can build your workshop around this. I sort them by their purpose so you can mix and match to create your own workshop. I also often provide some background information (rationale) which might help you understand what I was going for. Some slides and background material can be found [here](#). I'll be giving stars to most things to indicate how much of a success I considered something.

In everything I do I always aim for a proper balance between three things.

1. Enthusiasm/likable (inclination) You like to make people suffer in a safe surrounding ;) mainly important in your introduction
2. Come across as competent
3. Educational value (awareness)

6.1 Warming up / introduction (****)

In the Netherlands we have a saying: "een goed begin is het halve werk". This roughly translates to "a good start is half of the work". I feel this is definitely true for a workshop. I think the introduction determines about 90% of how much they like you and thus has a significant impact on how easy of a time you'll have the remainder of the workshop. So other than introducing EA I think this is the most important part of your workshop.

I've got a couple of goals in my introduction: i. get to know your audience, ii. get a positive vibe going iii. expectation management. Let us look into these in a little more detail.

i. Get to know you audience. There are two reasons for this. a. The best workshops are those best tailored to the audience. Audiences can be very different and therefore you need to know your audience ASAP (hence: in the introduction). Examples of things I find useful to know: how are they feeling today, what drives them, are they shy or not, what was their expectation coming in, how much do they know of EA, do they know each other etc. (I usually don't manage to get answers to all of these questions) b. referring to stuff people have said earlier in your workshop shows that you're paying attention and shows that this isn't an impersonal gathering where you're just doing the same trick you do every time. So knowing the names, perhaps some fun facts about some people (which can be turned into an inside joke later) is useful.

ii. Get a positive vibe going. I find the following is very important: making your introduction uncomfortable, surprising and requiring input from the audience on one hand but still feeling very safe. Being surprising and making people uncomfortable is pretty easy but I see things often going wrong on the feeling safe part so I'll expand on this a little. Why would people find something unsafe (or dislike it): a. they think it is weird (weird introduction implies mediocre social skills of the host which implies unsafe) b. they have to expose themselves for the whole group which is scary because they might feel judged. I basically have 1 tip to make it feel safe... make it useful. So don't do ice-breakers where the only reason is to break the ice (seriously... don't). Use your creativity and think of something useful! Not that hard to figure this out (or just read along and you'll find some ideas).

iii. expectation management / set the tone. Generally expectation management is a good idea. So providing structure, explaining what is coming. Let them get to know you (and the things you like/dislike). This is the moment for them to gauge what you like (I always try to convey: I like critical input, if you want to leave / go to the restroom while I'm talking, be my guest, I'm not there to preach, I'm there to make them happy, if EA is not for them that is OK). As a career workshop a certain challenge is extra pronounced: I feel people really frequently underestimate how hard career choices are. I think this is why people don't like making these choices (they feel like they put waaay too much time into a choice which should have been easy). This underestimation leads to them to expect giant leaps forwards in your 2 hour workshop. Unrealistic, or at least I cannot deliver this much. So I usually tackle this head on by explaining that in 2 hours you won't suddenly know.

6.1.1 25 things you'd do with 500 million (**)**

Use case: Longer workshops where you can give people a preliminary assignments, audiences where you might expect resistance.

Duration: 20 minutes

Explanation:

Preliminary Assignment:

In order to get a head start on exploring what really motivates you we have an assignment to complete before the start of the workshop. Imagine you have 500 million dollar and lots of leisure time, what would you do? Take the following into account:

1. List 25 things you would do. Just write down whatever comes to mind first, even if you think it doesn't sound very spectacular.
2. During the workshop you will have the option to choose which answers you want to share with others.
3. Write down the things you really want, even - or maybe especially - if it is socially unacceptable. Giving politically incorrect answers is encouraged. For example, this person is doing well: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvE84AGMWpE> :).

In the workshop I then give them 5 minutes to discuss their answers with their neighbours. They can share whatever they want to share with their neighbours and I give them three questions: i. what is your most socially (/politically) incorrect answer, ii. is there a common theme or underlying principle connecting your answers, iii. are there any things you could start right now (e.g. that don't take all that much time and money). During the discussion I walk around and listen (and learn their names :P). Afterwards I discuss their answers and move on to happiness.

Rationale:

- * This is surprising and personal while being safe. Safe because it is 1 on 1, because they get to choose what to share and the exercise feels like it serves a purpose (getting to know yourself).
- * People seem to really like the exercise. Possible because it actually really hard to get 25 entries on your list (people usually make it to around 15 or so).
- * Even if you wanted to you'd be hard pressed to put 25 selfish things on the list. Therefore there will be many altruistic things on many people their lists. This is an advantage for tough crowds.
- * Finding the most politically incorrect entry of all is always great fun. In 2 out of 3 times it completely broke all tension. The winners in those cases: i. "I'd buy a big estate in the US, with a big white castle on it. On the grounds I'll build a railroad and let loose lions so that I can hunt lions with a gun from inside the train." ii. person a: "I'd hire an assassin to kill someone who is really harming the world!" person b: "Is there any specific US president you

had in mind?”. Well, it is always great fun as you can imagine and it lets them know you’re in for a laugh (likable) and won’t be judging them (safe).

Recommendation:

- * You can also let them make the list during your workshop, but this takes a lot of time.

6.1.2 Stand and choose (**)**

Use case: shorter workshops, medium formality

Duration: 10 minutes

Explanation:

Ensure you have a enough space in the middle. Ask everyone to stand up and move to one side of the room if they agree with [your question] and the other side of the room if not. You can also turn it into a scale (instead of binary) or do it in two dimensions (left/right, front/back). I ask a couple of people about their choice, let them sit back down and I remark on something remarkable :P. The questions I ask really depend on the audience and/or the rest of the workshop and usually either to give me information on the audience or introduce something which is coming later in the workshop.

Rationale:

- * It works well for showing off confidence and thus competence.
- * It keeps people active, forces them to interact while still being safe because of the sufficient anonymity (they just have to stand somewhere).
- * You get information on your audience (can be really valuable later on)

Recommendation:

- * everyone mixes up again (-> harder to know their names!),
- * I haven’t found a really natural way to move to the next part (other than remarking on something remarkable to make it seem relevant and then brute forcing my way).

6.1.3 Vanilla introduction (*)**

Use case: smaller groups, informal setting, longer workshops

Duration: 20 minutes

Explanation:

Just ask them to introduce themselves.

Rationale:

This is very safe as they have done this kind of thing 1000 times.

Recommendation:

- * Be sure to ask some interesting question. I like asking what they wanted to be when they grew up because: i. it usually gives you fun answers, ii. it already makes people realize that following your passion isn’t always the best advice (useful later on).
- * A good habit is to ask at least one clarifying question to each person. Shows you’re interested and aren’t just doing it by rote)
- * If you ask the wrong questions you’ll get really really long answers (once for 20 people this took me 50 minutes!). This is boring. Wrong questions are: what is your current background (superboring and people will want to tell you all the details and nuance of what they are doing or they don’t know and start telling you everything they are considering), what is something altruistic you care about (people can get really into this making it hard to keep it short).

6.1.4 EA is growing fast (**)**

Use case: slightly more formal lectures with limited possibility for interaction attended mostly by traditionalists

Duration: 5 minutes

Explanation:

See [section 6.3.4](#) for this.

6.1.5 personal anecdote (?? expect **/*****)**

Use case: many, perhaps especially effective for lectures for a bigger audience.

Rationale: I haven't tried this (I haven't any proper anecdotes) but have seen this used to great effect. Someone I find who does this to great effect is Kellie Liket (unfortunately I could only find talks in dutch, [example](#))

6.2 Happiness / job satisfaction (*)**

Sometimes in order for a university (or group) to host your workshop they want you to include something on happiness (they call it student welfare). Some form of job satisfaction / happiness quickly seems relevant to include anyway. Especially for less altruistic crowds I focus quite a lot (30% of total time) on happiness (as they usually agree this is something they want). I sometimes stray into general happiness (not just job satisfaction) as this is subject I'm passionate about and happen to have read a lot about.

6.2.1 put it on the board (*)**

Use case: if you have a whiteboard/blackboard and too much time preparing

Duration: 30 minutes

Explanation:

Ask them to think what makes people happy in jobs. Keep going for 10 minutes and write it all down on the blackboard. Then one by one tell them what research has to say about their guesses.

Recommendation:

* This takes a really long time to prepare (as you basically need to know and understand most of the research on this). I don't remember where I got all my info from (I haven't done this one in nearly 2 years) but I do recommend 80000hours.org (obviously) and reading everything in https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Motivational_theories

6.2.2 Just tell them (*)**

Use case: most

Duration: 10 minutes

Just telling them works pretty good on this subject.

Recommendation:

* Show some of the nice pictures from the 80.000hours website (also see [the supporting material](#) for the things I use)

* Usually your local government has done some research on their population's happiness and the underlying causes. Since this seems closer at hand it might feel more relevant to your audience.

* Always make sure they guess first. If you don't the things will feel obvious ("oh, I knew this already") whereas if they guess first they can come up with a list of 10+ things and then it is surprising to them to hear which of these have the highest impact.

6.3 Introducing EA (****)

6.3.1 The everyday altruism quiz (***)

Use case: warm fuzzy altruists, (possibly young traditionalists), excels in short workshops, excels when the workshop is marketed as something fun

Duration: 30 minutes

Explanation:

A quiz in groups of two. Start with a couple of disclaimers: i. if you find some answer of mine is wrong, come to me after the quiz and you'll win eternal glory retroactively, ii. there usually is a really big difference between the answers so small changes will not affect the answers. Example question: Assume you have a 10 year old freezer and a 10 year old washing machine. Which is better to replace when regarding electricity usage? The freezer or the washing machine? (correct answer is the freezer... because: i. turned on 24/7, ii. technology for freezers has improved a lot more than for washing machines in the past 10 years) [All questions](#) page 10-14. As a last question you can have them guess how many correct answers they have (on average they seriously overestimate this). Afterwards you give the answers and the group with most correct answers wins eternal glory (or a copy of William MacAskill's book :P). After the quiz you introduce EA by showing that the principles which led to the correct answers in the everyday altruism quiz also hold on a bigger scale (different orders of magnitude between answers, counterintuitive answers etc.).

Rationale:

- * The questions are designed to: i. touch upon things they do everyday, ii. make them realize that thinking about this is actually useful.
- * For some reason after this quiz they treat me like I'm really competent they suddenly are much less critical of what I say.
- * The disclaimers in the beginning are important to avoid discussions

Recommendations:

- * Ensure it doesn't take more than 30 minutes (I once took 45 minutes out of 2 hours and not everyone liked that)
- * This exercise also works well as a warming up (possible combining with introduction described in section 6.1.2) and thus save time on introductions
- * Don't forget to make fun of the losing team for the remainder of the workshop (for example when you're saying something like "[something EA...] can have very counterintuitive results" pointedly look at the losing group with a big smile :D).
- * Make sure you're really sure about the answers ☺ otherwise it will not come across as convincing

6.3.2 Applied philosophy (****)

Use case: introduction events, attracting talent, mixed audience of new and experienced people when the new people are pretty smart,

Duration: 3 hours

Rationale: Many of the formats I explain here are really focussed on *telling* them about the *conclusions* of EA. But I think when looking at the paths many experienced EA people took getting to the point they are now it involved many more twists and turns. We usually start out

as some form of (slumbering) utilitarians/consequentialists and then we slowly move through a lot of questions, looking things up online and discussion with other people. This format aims to reflect this path. It allows time for discussion on the foundations of EA. I really like this because it allows for accurate self-selection: if people don't like discussions at a fundamental level, I'd argue that they aren't a good fit for EA, while on the other hand if they do like these discussions, they likely are a good fit for EA.

Explanation:

After an introduction I usually tell them that EA is an ideology and movement and that we're going to look at these separately ("you can believe in god, but not in church, you can believe in equality of men and women without joining feminists for anything, you can agree with EA without joining the movement"). I then explain the ideology by using the guiding principles of CEA.

I then have 3 rounds of discussions (which I call entrée, main course and dessert).

First round is the child in the pond and I usually follow the explanation by Peter Singer in the following clip closely: [Singer: The Drowning Child](#). The corresponding question is "If you're going to condemn the person not saving the drowning child, then shouldn't you yourself also condemn people who aren't donating to charity thus not saving people in developing countries? Are these cases morally equivalent or not?"

Second round I give them the option of choosing between three questions:

- i. [Jacob Rees-Mogg and Rory Stewart Debate Human Rights](#) (start to 6.53) "Would you agree that it is not justifiable to kill one person in order to harvest their organs to save five other individuals. Would you furthermore agree that if a child was in a possession of information of a ticking bomb which is going to destroy a million people in the city that it is justifiable to twist the thumb of the child to find out where that bomb was (hence saving the city). If you agree with the statements above, what about the space in between? How do we make decisions there?"
- ii. Anything to do with discounting lives (and population ethics). I wasn't really happy with how this turned out so I suggest you figure out your own question here. I used: "Would you rather save 1 live this year of 50 lives in 50 years?" and "would you rather live another 10 years in great happiness, like a 9.5 out of 10 or live another 50 years kind of mediocre?"
- iii. Cause selection. Instead of just telling them the scale, tractability, neglectedness framework I let them come up with it themselves. The question: how do you compare donating to avoiding climate change to donating to research about male baldness to donating to research on malaria? I put an experienced EA'er in charge I call this comparing the incomparable. The experienced person can then lead things (but only asking questions and answering questions concerning facts). I used an introduction from Sjr (he allowed me to share this with you on youtube <https://youtu.be/pyrFiZYw-aw>).

Finally, dessert is about feeling guilty. The problem statement: "Basically once we have agreed that saving a child in a pond is morally equivalent to saving a child somewhere around the world from malaria then we might start to see metaphorical childs in ponds around us all the time. If that is what you believe, then situations metaphorically happen where there is a child drowning just outside your window and you say: 'nah man I can't be bothered now, I just don't feel like it... I'm watching netflix!' We might experience guilt. And these situations will occur no matter how much we try to do good, we can't do it all. So we need to find a way to deal with this guilt. How are you going to put (E)A into your life? How do you find the right balance between helping others and helping yourself?" I let them answer this in pairs.

In between rounds we summarize their findings. Near the end I take about 20 minutes to explain some answers to the questions they face as generally considered by the EA community.

Rationale:

- * Distinguish the movement from ideology is a way to make people feel less threatened.
- * I use the guiding principles primary for the more experienced EA'ers in the room as a reminder of being open, welcoming and not to lean on their experience in the discussions. I was really pleased how it helped set the tone for the discussions. (I even just read the first sentence of "collaboration" aloud).
- * I found that many people are slumbering utilitarians and I really felt a shift from the audience towards utilitarianism/consequentialism which made me happy as I feel this is an important change. Once you consider yourself a utilitarian or consequentialist it is only a very small step to being thoroughly convinced of the need for EA. I noticed this shift because they were coming up with answers like "Rule utilitarianism" and "we tried to evaluate different causes and figured that in the end it is all about happiness. We don't really know what function to use to evaluate this all but...".
- * The middle round has 3 options to choose from. I feel that people having a choice are more likely to like their choice (sense of agency?).
- * I feel that it is important to have at least 1 question about some far future/population ethics thing because this is a significant part of EA.
- * I used the [clip of Sijr](#) as I feel this really adds another dimension to the workshop (visual, personal, practical, it shows the audience that working for EA isn't just really effective it is also fun!) and I think it would be great if we have some clips of some people working for an EA organisation where:
 1. they introduces him/herself (1 min),
 2. they shows us around in their workspace (2-4 min)
 3. the tell us about a problem they encounter in their work this week (2-5 min).

If any of you knows anyone who might be willing to make such a clip (or if you are working for an EA organisation and could do this). Please let me know! I think it would really improve things.

- * Ending in pairs with the question on guilt serves three purposes: i. make them reflect on the workshop, ii. to avoid coming across as preaching or heavy iii. make them look ahead a little as well. I was really happy with this end (on the evaluation form someone wrote: "and the best things was, it was not depressing at all!").

Recommendations:

- * I did this workshop only once and I feel like there is still a lot of room for improvement! So don't stick too much to what is here. This is also the reason it has 4 stars (I believe this easily can become 5 stars)
- * After 3 hours I noticed people started to get tired. I feel this makes a lot of sense because they're having intellectually challenging discussions and it was socially challenging to boot. I feel that this workshop would benefit from something entirely different somewhere halfway.
- * I think this is one of the more challenging formats to host because: i. you're asking them very hard questions which is easy to become confusing instead of fun, ii. you're leaving a lot in the hands of your audience, if there is one person who is kind of disagreeable their influence can be pretty big, iii. you need experienced group leaders who really know what they are doing
- * Make sure you put a lot of thought/effort into making the questions really clear and concrete.
- * Make sure you have enough examples on why these questions are actually really relevant and practical.
- * Be prepared for lack of hypothetical thinking. Some people in your audience will lack this ability. I witnessed the following conversation.

Participant 1: "Let us disregard all other stuff, there are just 2 buttons, if you press button 1

you'll save one life this year if you press button 2 you'll save one life in 50 years, which would you press?"

participant 2: "yeah, but I don't know if that is really realistic",

participant 1: "Yeah but it is a thought experiment, hypothetical. This way we can first look at it in its simplest form and then we can add in uncertainty later. [... some more like this...]"

participant 2: "yeah, but I don't think this is even possible"

participant 1: [very frustrated].

* You can also mark this as a "bring a friend" event. Worked well for us.

* The youtube clip of the child in a pond has pretty good comments which can prepare you for what you might encounter. Can be worth reading.

* I'd recommend sharing [this picture](#) (on annual spending on malaria research and male baldness research) after the group comparing different cause areas has discussed their findings.

6.3.3 The 5-charities pitch (****)

Use case: People with little/no familiarity with EA, mid to long workshops

Duration: 1.5 hour

Explanation:

There are 5 groups, who will all get assigned a charity and given information regarding that charity (also see [supporting material](#)) "You have 30 minutes to prepare a 3 minutes pitch (strict strict timing). The goal of this pitch is to convince as many people in this room as possible. Basically if anyone goes home after the workshop and the first thing they did was donate to your charity, you did great! There is absolutely no need to be nice to the other charities... you're here to win! You are not to lie about statistics (but making up an anecdote about your nephew is fine). Discussion will be after all the pitches. Pitches can be given by 1 person in the group or by all. This contest is also completely unfair because some charities will have easier information than others. Good luck!"

I recommend putting a big countdown timer on the screen (i.e. [online-stopwatch.com](https://www.online-stopwatch.com)) both for the time until the pitches start as well as during the pitches. Afterwards you ask everyone to vote on a single other team to determine who won. Alternatively you might do a giving game at this point. You discuss a little, ask for their reasons and usually they give you exactly the kind of reasons you want. When a certain point comes up which resembles something you've prepared (more on this in the next paragraph) you tell them that information. The goal of this is to make the interaction feel natural. At a certain point you might point at the time and proceed to tell the things you still want to tell. I usually end with introducing what effective altruism is (it should follow logically from the data presented and the discussion). Do remember to put emphasis on the fact that EA is about much more than just money. This is important because after 80 minutes of just focusing on charities and money they might not realize this is just the start.

The 5 charities I always use and the corresponding point I make are listed below. I don't have a preset order for them to pitch in (again, I like it natural). Also in the discussion I let the group determine the order. When in doubt I stick to the order below. The material I give them can also be found in the [supporting material](#).

- Scared straight! I usually give them 2 popular press pages printed in color. I use this as an example of how: i. some charities have a negative impact (so it is important to do EA) ii. this only becomes clear after quality research.
- Make-a-wish: I don't give them any information. I tell them to look things up online. I use them as something to compare AMF against. And if I have a really sceptical audience I might show them charity navigator and show them how much money is

spent on fundraising and that you can have your questions whether or not this is effective.

- Against Malaria Foundation: I give them good information. I use AMF as I feel the robustness and understandability of the evidence is high. I also like how it gives an indication on the order of magnitude how much money you need to save a life. Finally I feel it helps to convince sceptical capitalists ([section 3.5](#)).
- Male baldness research foundation: I usually give them this printed:

The male baldness research foundation: Welcome! The bad news is: your foundation doesn't really exist. The good news is: you get to invent it yourself. The male baldness research foundation is about ordinary male hair loss due to old age (so not due to any illness). The foundation's mission is to find a 'cure' for male baldness by supporting promising research labs all around the globe. Feel free to invent the things you need to make a good pitch (but avoid lying about cold hard statistics). Good luck!

I use them to show how weird money can be allocated worldwide as malaria gets less money than male baldness ([picture](#))

- Schistosomiasis control initiative: I usually give them waaay too much information (usually a givewell report). I use them as an example to: i. show how in-depth givewell's research is, ii. to illustrate fat tails (there can be an order of magnitude in effectiveness between charities), iii. to show that sometimes the best option is something surprising, iv. to laugh slightly about the complete lack of sex appeal of some charities (and how this, unjustly might lead to less funding) -> avoid basing decisions on your gut feeling.

Rationale:

* No need to be nice to other charities... Reason: it is great fun to be mean in good spirit. By stating that this is allowed they will usually overdo it which takes out any possible venom. Also it lets them think more on comparing their own charity to others (which is actually what you want).

* No lying about statistics... reason: you want the exercise to feel real and people being able to trust what they are told (not educational otherwise).

* schistosomiasis pitch is really fun because they usually cannot even pronounce it! Also their information is really complicated and the name is totally unsexy. Make sure to give them some extra love for this afterwards (while laughing at the same time) (so basically giving them recognition that they had a really hard task, kind of sorry not sorry)

* Why tell the contest is unfair? Reason is because it actually is unfair. Telling them this will make people okay with it.

Recommendation:

* I found that 15 minutes preparation is too short (boring pitches), 45 minutes was great (the pitches were great fun!)

* This is also a good moment to bring in food (if your workshop is in the evening... dinner!! worked really well).

* Make sure you know how to pronounce schistosomiasis control initiative yourself :).

6.3.4 New and upcoming (*****)

Use case: full traditionalist audience, lecture, 15-60 min, improving inclination towards EA, get people to donate effectively

Duration: 15-60 minutes (for the full workshop)

Rationale: Having noticed in earlier workshops that for some people truth seemed a product of some ill-calibrated heuristics (rather than a conclusion of careful reasoning, see also

[section 3.3](#)) I designed this workshop with the intention to score as well as possible on those heuristics (while still being sufficient content-wise). The results were excellent and I believe this lecture is the most effective one I designed for its use case.

The overarching goals are to: i. frame effective altruism as new and upcoming (makes them feel privy to important information of the future of altruism), ii. distance EA from their traditional approach, this is because you don't want them to evaluate you based on *their* criteria (on which you'll not be able to score really well for they are not really good criteria) basically they like big fishes, but you cannot fake being a big fish in their pond, so you convince them you are a big fish in another pond iii. behave like they would want their children to behave or behave like their idealized 25 year old self (reason: they will not like you thinking new stuff, but reminding them of themselves at their age makes this somehow OK...)

Explanation :

Tick the following boxes:

- * Pretty slides (graphs, statistics, pictures, numbers, clean, few animations etc.)
- * Pretty clothes (aim for formal but young... think the formal side of preppy)
- * Hype yourself (brag, but frame it as giving relevant background information)
- * Be modest (I usually say that I'm not there to convince anyone and I'll just introduce them to our way of thinking which they can then use to decide if they like it, this seems to disarm a lot of scepticism right from the start).
- * Frame EA as being especially popular in universities, often technical studies, kind of nerdy. Be sure to drop the name Oxford in there somewhere.
- * There are many different EA organisations around the world (I recommend a slide with the logos of some of the bigger EA organisations)
- * A graph where we are growing really quickly (I graphed the [openphil grant database](#) totals per year link, [result](#))
- * Explain how EA fits the trend of the last 30 years. The trend where society is moving towards using evidence and planning. Be sure to mention evidence based medicine (and make sure you know the history of this).
- * Tell them that \$500 billion dollar per year is spent worldwide on improving the world. Less than 0.01% of that is spend on [planning](#) how to do this effectively (source: <https://80000hours.org/problem-profiles/global-priorities-research/>). Follow up with some real-life examples of how we all know how planning is really important (e.g. when you go on holiday, when doing a project for work etc.). "So we know that planning is essential if we want to get to the best end result. I noticed that framing EA in terms of planning makes them so much more likely to like it (when compared to framing EA in terms of making choices).
- * Tell them about RCT's and quality of research (30% of people will know this and will give you credibility, I know it is not the most relevant thing content-wise but it will help convince them)
- * Preemptively answer the holistic question ([section 4.2](#)). This combines well with first telling them about RCT's.
- * Mention how for every sustainable development goal (SDG) you can do this kind of planning. Give them a couple of examples.
- * End with a practical example of something really innovative. I notice that [Coolearth](#) still works best for this (even though newer research might indicate that it isn't the absolute top charity anymore I feel the additional likability easily outweighs the current possible ineffectiveness)
- * You can just have a lecture of 15 minutes and usually there are plenty of questions afterwards

6.3.5 Just tell them (*)

Status: failed

Use case: never
Duration: 20-30 minutes

Explanation:

One time I thought it was a good idea to just tell the audience the rationale and the relevant research. I didn't have much time and I thought just telling them things as logically as possible would be great! Well it wasn't, they weren't really enthusiastic (especially the warm fuzzy altruists didn't like it). I learned that for some reason making it very logical actually produces a counter reaction (some people seem to be allergic to logic or something). I thought that perhaps the reason people don't like logic is actually that they're just missing the feeling. It wasn't, see below (section 6.3.6).

6.3.6 Start with what they like ()**

Status: failed

Use case: non-altruists (traditionalists, fuzzy warm), lectures, very short, but mostly never

Explanation:

step i: Evoke the emotion in your audience: "I don't want people to die from [X]"

step ii: Ask them what they really care about. Do they want to avoid people dying from [X] or do they want to avoid people dying in general? Is it really worse dying from [X] then dying from [Y]? their answer: "I just don't want people to die regardless of the cause".

step iii. Explain that: "this is the first step of EA. Finding out the essence of what people care about. Usually this is something pretty fundamental and not something cause-specific. This allows people to collaborate on finding the best way to achieve that fundamental principle.

So without any predetermined route or cause to get there."

step iv. give examples

Rationale:

* I noticed that sometimes people felt my workshops were too rational. I therefore thought I'd emphasize the emotion some more.

Recommendation:

* Although I tried it only once, I wasn't happy and didn't see a lot of potential in this one. I'd not recommend taking this approach. It still gets 2 stars because I tried it only once and I could just have been unlucky (or misread the audience).

* I feel the reason this format didn't work well was because once the feelings of the audience got involved the capacity for rational/abstract thinking seemed reduced. They might even have been because they rationally felt that their earlier emotions were wrong. This is not a pleasant state to be in (cognitive dissonance) and this state might be most easily remedied by simply disagreeing with the logic which tell you the emotions were wrong.

* Really stress the collaboration part. People seem to like that.

6.4 Introducing EA->careers ()**

General recommendation: people seem to like the following clip as an introduction to this: [Is Your Work a Paycheck or a Calling](#).

Introducing EA-> careers gets only two stars because I haven't found a definite good way of doing this, although pointers and spoilers (6.4.2) seem promising. Still I feel this needs more experimenting and I expect you'll find this one of the harder parts of your workshop to optimize.

6.4.1 1-vs-1 (*)**

Use cases: many, especially if you want to keep it kind of short

Duration: 10-30 minutes

Explanation:

Pick two careers and ask them which has the most potential to have a positive impact on the world if chosen by an altruistic person. Ask them to explain their thinking. Afterwards spoil some facts.

Rationale:

* I dunno, not much :P. I once tried it with many different careers and discussing what they thought about the difference but that got a bit chaotic so I thought I'd narrow it down to 2 professions.

Recommendations

* I chose biology high school teacher and strategy consultant. Reasons: i. a couple of my friends are biology teachers and one of them is unemployed because there are too many biology teachers in the Netherlands (I show them the statistics), this helps me explain the importance of looking at your marginal impact, ii. I can explain earning to give, iii. I can explain career capital

* You might want to let people stand on the side of the room representing their point of view and keep them standing there for the entire duration of the exercise (so works best if you're keeping it around 5 minutes)

6.4.2 Pointers and spoilers (**)**

Use case: Many, especially suited for mixed audience of people already familiar with 80.000hours material and those who aren't.

Duration: 10-20 minutes

Explanation:

Somewhere in the introduction of your whole workshop you explain to them that this workshop isn't focussed on transferring knowledge... they can just find that online and don't need a workshop to explain it to them (in fact... the best explanation of 80.000 hours material is probably 80.000 hours themselves!). So they agree with you that you aren't going to do stuff in the workshop that they could also do back home. This frees up time to do [whatever you have planned]. You are however going to give them pointers where to look for certain types of information, and spoil some of the most interesting findings. You're going to do this quickly in order to save time for other stuff.

Recommendations:

* I recommend starting with spoiling and at a certain point in time you can say: "Now you might feel: 'hey you're not telling me a lot. I need to know more!' well, that is how you *should* feel... therefore read the book" and then proceed to spoiling.

* I recommend spoiling the following (incomplete list): marginal contribution (they like this one), career capital, EA is like the gold rush (even after a workshop some people still feel that EA is a company where they can just apply for a job in the next town and that's it. I like to let them know that it is often more adventurous than that and that it usually involves personal initiative).

* I recommend pointing to at least the following (incomplete list)

General information: [80.000hours.org](https://80000hours.org) and their free ebook

Specific jobs: 80000hours.org/job-board

Career capital: <https://www.centreforeffectivealtruism.org/careers>

Choosing careers in general: waitbutwhy.com/2018/04/picking-career.html

6.4.3 On the line ()**

Status: failed

Duration: 40 minutes

Explanation:

- * Divide the group into smaller groups of about 5 people
- * Explain to them 8 different professions (we used: PhD in AI, Politician, TV presenter, Doctor, Math teacher, Founding an NGO, Software Engineer).
- * Ask to rate them high impact to low impact. Note: be really explicit that this is about comparing potential impact for someone who has a fair amount of talent for each of those professions and is a really altruistic person.
- * Let all groups write their list on the blackboard
- * Tape a line in front of the classroom.
- * Choose 4 professions and discuss these in turn by getting 1 person per group to the front and stand on the line depending on how their group evaluated that profession (where left is if they rated that profession as the most important, the right is if they rated this least important).
- * Use the discussion as hooks to information you want to give them.

Rationale: All the other ideas on introducing careers tried up until this point were kind of boring (not some fun format). We tried to make something fun out of this.

Recommendations (failure mode, based on 2 attempts):

- * One time a group completely couldn't agree. It really got the mood down in that group.
- * It feels like too much fluff and too low in information density (especially since this usually isn't at the start of the workshop). So you get fun at the expense of actually learning something.
- * Use well known people to give a face to a certain profession.

6.5 Making it personal (**)

Theoretical information is all fun and good, but what it is all about in the end is their careers and how they are going to apply this information in their careers. This is challenging because now instead of having 20 people you tell information to which is relevant for everybody, now suddenly you have 20 people who all want specific tips & tricks. I didn't do well at this (hence 2 stars) but I feel my last attempt was actually really successful.

6.5.1 Hard choices (*****)

Use case: career workshop/lectures. Especially suited for audiences already (partly) familiar with 80.000hours material.

Duration: 1-2 hours (for the complete workshop so including introduction, pointers and spoilers etc.)

Rationale: after a couple of less successful attempts (see below) I tried to figure out why I couldn't make the personal part feel relevant to the audience. Aside from the general challenge of serving personalized information to 20 people I figured that it was because of two reasons: i. people expected too much from a single workshop, ii. the real problem people face isn't a lack of information, it is making choices. I know a lot of people have a hard time making choices in general and so I feel the real bottleneck is there (which explains why just giving them information doesn't really help). I feel the 80.000 hours website lacks information on how to make these choices (they provide a way to ascertain which careers do the most good, but not on how to choose between those or between jobs which aren't in the list).

Explanation (See [supporting material](#) for the slides):

Part 1. Right of the bat force people to make choices publically (stand in a certain spot depending on their answer) and make sure there are no easy answers (for example by requiring half the group to give one answer and the other half the other). Pick your own questions, my examples are in the slides.

Part 2. Ask them about making choices. There is always someone who really really dislikes making choices. Let him/her tell the group about some silly choice they can agonize over waaay to long (i.e. choosing dinner, choosing what socks to wear, etc.).

Part 3. Together with the group conclude that making choices can be hard. Next ask them why career choices might be harder than [the example someone mentioned in part 2]. This can be a long list (again see slides).

Part 4. Together with the group conclude that making choices is hard, but that career choices might be the hardest of them all! Expectation management time: ask them how they expect to make any meaningful progress in [time remaining]. Allow for a long silence here as the realization hits that their expectations might have been a little high :). Possible fun way of saying this: "Okay, so making career choices is really hard... but we have only 60 minutes remaining. How are we going to make any progress on this? I mean, there might very well be someone here who spend 60 minutes on choosing his/her clothes this morning...". Make sure you clearly answer the question how you think you can make any meaningful progress at all in such a short amount of time. I proceed as follows.

Part 5. In this workshop we will focus just on things you cannot do back home. There are a couple of things you need in order to make a career choice, i. know your options, ii. find out what you like. Finding your options you can do back home (I'll give you pointers), finding out what you like is really hard and we are going to focus on that here. Finding out what you like can be divided in two parts: a. what do people like in general, b. what makes you special (how do you deviate from people in general). (a) you can do back home, I'll give you pointers and spoilers for this in the end. So we are just going to focus on what makes you special.

Part 6. "Why is it hard to find out what makes you special? Usually people give you advice which sounds really easy in theory (find out what you like! Follow your passion) but is actually really hard in practice. In this workshop I'll do the opposite, I'll ask you questions which are really hard in theory, but are easy in practice."

Part 7. Proceed to ask them questions about themselves which are really really hard. The format is the following, ask them to get a paper and pen and finish the sentences you ask them (give them a warm up round starting with: "My favorite color is..." and "This morning when I woke up I felt...". In between you might take a moment to give some background information on the upcoming question. If you're doing things right there will be lots of silence (where they are thinking/writing or just waiting for the next question).

Example questions:

- * Ask them to list 3 things they find important in their job, and then to get rid of one.
- * Ask them to list something which is really stupid but they really enjoyed. (for example, some people like walking in the rain)
- * Ask them for their dark motivation (it is really easy to choose a job based on a really noble picture of your motives, it is much harder to acknowledge undesirable motivations)
- * Ask them what their parents expect of them ("It is really easy to follow the route everyone expects you to, it is really hard to follow your own course. Identifying what others might expect you can help you correct for this")
- * More examples -> see slides/ask me

In all cases make sure you make it really clear how these questions might help them make a career choice.

Part 8: finish with pointers and spoilers (see [section 6.4.2](#)) and end in pairs (see [section 6.6.2](#))

Rationale:

- * From previous workshops I notice that people like being challenged ☺.

* Even though things might be challenging the workshop will still feel safe because: i. the questions are useful, ii. there is relatively little sharing, iii. sharing that is done is done 1 on 1 and one can choose what to share.

6.5.2 Specialized groups ()**

Use case: mid to long career workshop, very mixed audience

Duration: 20-25 minutes

Explanation:

After having introduced EA careers divide the group into 3 subgroups: i. people who have no idea what options they have, ii. people who have already narrowed it down to a couple of options, iii. people who have too few options (stuck in their job). For each of these groups I have a different assignment. Group iii I just let them discuss, group ii I gave a list on which they can score their options and group i (see [supporting materials](#)), group i I gave them a lot of information regarding the most pressing problems according to the 80.000hours website.

Rationale: I figured it might be useful to have people in a similar positions in the same group.

Recommendation (failure mode):

* It doesn't really work because the group of people who don't have a clear picture of what they want (group i) really didn't get anywhere. I feel that this group just contained too many people weren't really good at making choices or setting up a constructive group setting. I The other groups were okay. I gave this 2 stars (instead of 1) because I only tried it once.

6.5.3 Discussion in groups (*)

Status: failed

Use case: only when the audience already knows each other and when the questions are really clear

Duration: 15 - 30 minutes

Explanation: I just gave them a couple of questions and let them discuss in groups.

Rationale: not anything really, consider this a baseline :P.

Recommendation:

* Don't do this. I noticed that groups take a lot of time to get to know each other (5 to 10 minutes) and then take more time to understand what they are going to talk about (another 5 to 10 minutes). I'd always prefer pairs to groups and specialized groups (with a specific question which differs for every group) to every group being similar.

6.6 Ending your workshop ()**

I found this to be quite challenging (hence 2 stars). Ending in pairs did seem to solve this.

6.6.1 Feedback form (**)**

Use case: workshops and longer lectures

Recommendation:

* On top put: "Name (optional):....." so that it can be anonymous but people can put their names on there as well (it can be really useful to have someone's name)

* I recommend having them rate the usefulness on a 1-10 scale and taking the average afterwards (this is a good sanity check). Take special note of the lowest mark and see if you can identify who this was and what went wrong. In Dutch workshops the average is between

7.8 and 8.5 (but we always work with a 1-10 scale for grading so expect things to be very different for your country). If a workshop (and expectation management) went well there should be no marks close to the mark which is the lowest mark with which you pass (in the Netherlands you pass with a 5.5, and I usually consider anything lower than a 7 to be a sign of something I could have and should have avoided).

* For shorter workshops I recommend just giving them a post-it and ask them to write down: i. a tip (something to improve), ii. something they take back home from this workshop. This is really low-key but I found the answers to be surprisingly useful. It also works well to give them 1 post-it for a pair.

Rationale: to improve, obviously ☺

6.6.2 End in pairs (***)**

Use case: this is a recommended ending

Duration: 5 to 30 minutes

Explanation: End in pairs giving them some sort of final question (can be anything) and/or some reflection on this workshop “What is something you take home from this workshop”. Ask them to fill in the feedback form. Tell them there will be no official end and that they can now go whenever they like.

Rationale:

* As also mentioned a couple of times on the EA forum ([example](#)) pairs work really well and I wholeheartedly agree! Thanks for the heads up guys :).

* People like to reflect with a single person in the end, I guess because they aren't alone but are still a really big part of the group (about 50% :P).

* It also avoid an awkward silence and a “what now” kind of feeling in the groups. To me this always felt like a natural end where people slowly trickle away, join other groups etc.

7. Closing remarks / more info

I'll be responding to comments in the [corresponding forum post](#). Also Catherine graciously offered to let me share her email address and her invitation to help here. Feel free to contact her :).

Hello wonderful group leaders!

If you or your group members are keen on running intro to EA presentations in your community I am available to help coach you.

About me: I manage Students for High-Impact Charity, I've been a teacher for over a decade and have trained many new teachers over that time. I've also run over 80 intro to EA presentations for a wide variety of audiences, and I've learnt a lot while doing these, so I'm keen to pass on the knowledge I have!

Help I can provide: Depending on your needs this help could consist of sourcing and modifying materials, giving feedback on practice presentations and guidance on reaching out to groups who might be interested in learning about EA.

If you are interested, please get in touch with me by facebook messaging me, or emailing catherine@highimpactstudents.org.