



Team Toolkit

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Silence

Type of activity: Icebreaker
Participants: 5-500
Timing: 5-10 minutes
Key themes: Communication, Trust

Overview

This icebreaker aims to focus attention and to dissipate nervous tension at the start of a presentation, meeting or training session.

Pre-Work

None.

Equipment and Layout

None.

Running the Activity

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1. Introduce yourself and say you are about to start your session. Give it a big build.
 2. Then stop talking and remain silent for at least 30 seconds, walking around the room or looking at your notes.
 3. At the end of 30 seconds, thank participants for their patience and, with a big smile, ask them what they learned in the last 30 seconds.

Additional notes

During the silence, you will notice that people become restless and uncomfortable as they begin to suspect that you have forgotten what to say/do. Notice this, but keep the silence going for as long as you can.

Review and Conclusions

The answer to your question – what did your audience learn in those 30 seconds of silence – is, of course, nothing. You should go on to point out that if any of us wants to be understood, we have to say something and communicate with each other. Silence is not an option if we want to be understood.

This exercise will work if participants see that you (the presenter) is the one taking the risks, and that you won't take them too far out of their comfort zone. They will feel relieved that you have broken your silence, just as they will feel relieved that you have not picked on them. They will also be able to relax along with their fellow participants with whom they have just shared the same anxiety.

Follow-up

For further suggestions on follow-up and other team activities, go to www.freshtracks.co.uk or email mail@freshtracks.co.uk

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