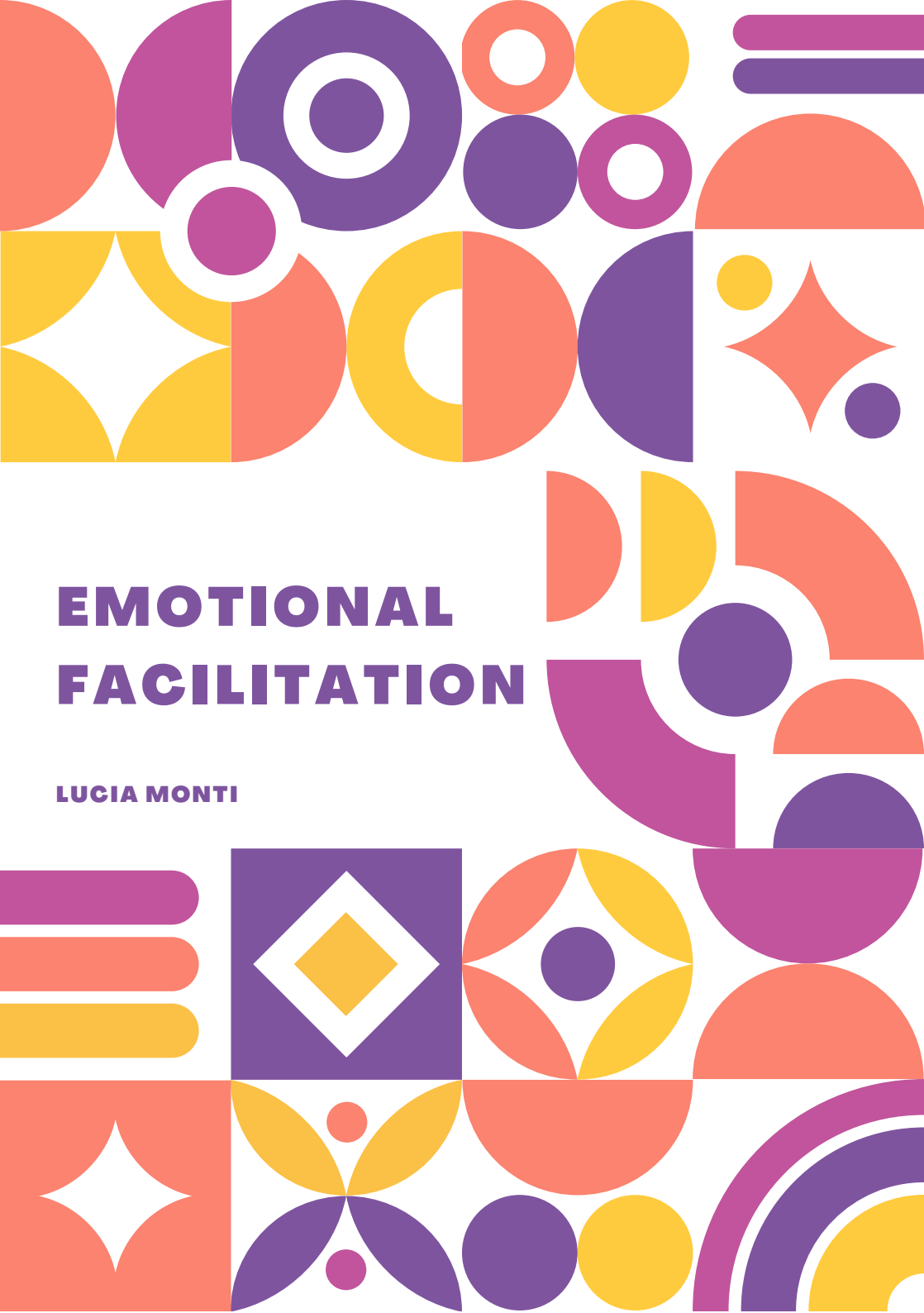




EMOTIONAL FACILITATION

LUCIA MONTI

This project is the outcome of a collective journey
nurtured within Almacube and the Oper.space ecosystem.
It reflects years of experimentation, collaboration, and
shared learning in the field of facilitation.

Promoted by:



Emotional Facilitation is a project born from an inner drive, the convergence of deep passions, and an ongoing quest for a meaningful professional path. This journey has been enriched by the contributions and inspirations of the brilliant people I have been fortunate to meet during the first five years of my career.

The path that led to the creation of this work was made possible primarily thanks to the support of Almacube, Bologna's Innovation Hub, part of the Oper.space ecosystem, the Innovation Factory of the University of Bologna. Over the years, I have had the opportunity to experiment with and refine tools and methods alongside students and companies, continuously improving the proposed activities.

Special thanks go to key individuals who have played a significant role in this growth:

- Almacube's Open Innovation Unit, my fellow travelers, who supported and contributed to my work with their experiences.
- Professor Matteo Vignoli, founder of Oper.Space, professor and researcher at University of Bologna, first supporter and thinking buddy of this project.
- Benoit Christophe, founder of HACT, innovation consultancy based in Paris, who guided me through my first Employee Experience project, laying the groundwork for a broader vision of facilitation work.
- Marco Marchegiani, theatre teacher and expert, who taught me valuable insights and techniques on theatrical improvisation applied to experiential learning.
- The facilitators, educators, coaches, and designers who are part of the Design Factory Global Network and the SUGAR Network for Design Innovation, with whom I have collaborated over the past four years. A special thanks to Felipe Gárate Sepúlveda.
- The partners and professionals from the organizations I have collaborated with throughout my career; in particular, the Michelin plant in Alessandria, whose people allowed me to put my knowledge into practice and discover the value of participatory design, providing the foundation for this project.
- Professor Massimiliano Ghini, expert in emotional intelligence and an invaluable consultant for Almacube's team dynamics processes.

This project is the result of shared experiences, experiments, and ongoing dialogues, and represents only the first step toward a broader and collective journey. I hope that this toolbox will be a valuable resource for those who, like me, seek to ignite the spark of facilitation in every learning and growth context.

This booklet is for anyone who leads or manage a team, for anyone who wants to moderate a work session promoting these values, and for anyone who simply works with people, thus for all of us.



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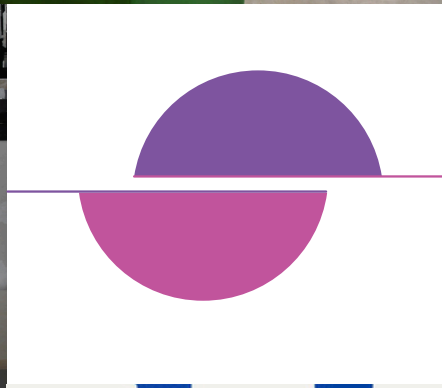
LUCIA MONTI

Design Thinking Facilitator,
Innovation Coach,
Program Coordinator,
Chief Happiness Officer

I am a former tourist
entertainer,
educator, and
dancer. I believe in
the power of
mindfulness and
introspection. As a
facilitator, I aim to
combine these skills
to foster a safe
environment for
myself and the
people I work with.
Emotional
intelligence is my
driving force, design
is my method, and
happiness is my goal!

My name is Lucia.

I am a passionate and energetic individual with a master's degree in Service Design and expertise in Design Thinking. For the past four years, I have worked in the field of innovation as a coach and facilitator for corporations, while also coordinating Open Innovation Programs for students in collaboration with Universities from all over the world. I have always placed great importance on the process as well as the result. In my work, I try to integrate the practices that have helped me find myself and live a fulfilling life: performance and theater, mindfulness, introspection, and emotional intelligence. The roles of a coach and facilitator are diverse and complex, which is why I chose to deepen my studies in Team Building and Team Dynamics. In this small toolbox, I have summarized the most significant concepts I have learned from my experience, along with a selection of tools that have helped me navigate complex situations.



**CAN'T
WE JUST
WORK?**

**THIS IS
WORK!**

CREATIVE THINKING

Warm-ups, fire starters and all the team building activities mentioned in this toolbox complement Creative Thinking processes effectively by cultivating key attributes like curiosity, open mindset, and collaboration.

THE PERFECT RECIPE

ENTERTAINMENT

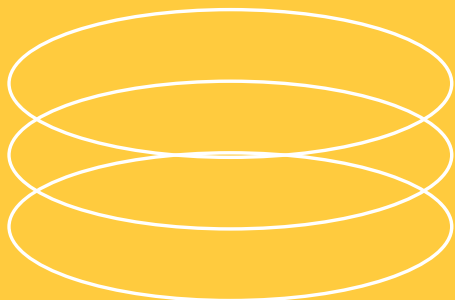
Entertainment-based practices range from brief warm-ups to sustained activities that keep sessions engaging. Both help sharpen presence and communication, making facilitators more confident and empathetic while guiding group energy with impact.

IMPROV THEATRE

Quick thinking, adaptability, and creativity are all ingredients of improv theatre. These skills allow facilitators to navigate unexpected situations. They also emphasize active listening, essential for creating spontaneous collaboration and an inclusive, responsive environment.

MEDITATION

Meditation can inspire facilitation by fostering self-confidence and a calm presence, allowing participants to face a session with focus. It encourages introspection and respect for emotions, helping to create a supportive and empathetic environment where participants feel valued and heard.



This project is thoughtfully structured into two distinct yet interconnected parts, each addressing different phases and depths of team engagement.

The section 1, "**Facilitation Fire Starters**", introduces a collection of dynamic activities specifically designed to initiate sessions on a positive note. By focusing on emotional intelligence, meditation, and improvisation, these tools aim to create positive interactions, foster team dynamics, and quickly establish a safe and comfortable space for participants, setting a vibrant mood and breaking the ice.



The section 2, "**Team and Personal Development Activities**", guides the facilitator through longer journeys and more demanding sessions. These activities require greater time and commitment, moving beyond enthusiasm generation to address specific goals related to productivity and team well-being. While the Fire Starters are about energizing the atmosphere, these deeper interventions are aimed to cultivate emotional awareness, and prevent potential conflicts.



FACILITATION FIRE STARTERS



A set of quick exercises
to start a session in
the right mood

FACILITATION FIRE STARTERS

WHY THIS TOOLBOX

Facilitation Fire Starters are activities designed to kick off a session on a positive note, focusing on team dynamics and building positive interactions through emotional intelligence, meditation, and improvisation. The goal is to create a safe and comfortable space for students, participants, employees, and corporate teams, fostering happiness and emotional awareness for effective teamwork. Facilitators play a crucial role in understanding team limits and selecting appropriate tools to enhance dynamics and “start the fire” (or “break the ice”).

These activities are suggested for creating a supportive environment where participants feel safe and free to express themselves.

Focusing on fun and emotions can be a barrier for those who believe that a work meeting should just aim at results and productivity, wrongly thinking that spending time on these moments does not benefit this goal. In particular, a question that often arises in response to such a proposal might be: "can't we just work?" This behavior is tied to the notion that working means producing, and producing means fatigue and boredom; thus, to be truly productive and achieve the goal, there is no room for fun and for the self. Mind that, it is not just about bringing fun: gratification and pleasure are requirement to build trust, which is in turn a requirement to be productive.

One of the greatest challenges in this area is precisely to convince even the most skeptical of the value of fire starters or team dynamics activities, which are also useful in preventing potential conflicts that may arise later. Another important challenge is dealing with different personalities: how can we engage introverts and alleviate the sense of shame that may arise in those who do not feel comfortable sharing their emotions and seeing those of others?

The focus on playfulness might clash with environments where these concepts are undervalued or misunderstood. Facilitators are the central pivot in bridging this gap sensitively, ensuring participants recognize the relevance and benefits of these approaches.

WHEN MAY I USE THESE EXERCISES?

When facilitating a workshop, conducting a meeting, or giving a lecture, and you want to ensure the team's atmosphere is positive and stimulating. When you're in front of a group of people who don't know each other well and you want to create an atmosphere of trust and safety.

Each fire starter is sorted by:

- the **time** required to successfully play it
- **complexity**, based on the materials required, time spent explaining it, facilitator's skills as a master of ceremonies/improvisation and physicality
- minimum **number** of participants

These exercises have been used over the past 4 years with students and professionals from different countries and background.

DISCLAIMER!

FACILITATING RESPONSIBLY

Energizers are designed to foster positive interactions. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that not all participants may feel comfortable with certain activities. People have different comfort levels, personal boundaries, and cultural perspectives that can influence their engagement.

As a facilitator, it is your responsibility to ensure that every activity is suitable for your group. Before conducting any Energizer, consider the following key factors:

- **Know your participants:** understand the composition of your group. Are there individuals with physical or mental disabilities or other specific needs that should be considered? Adjust exercises to accommodate different abilities and ensure that everyone can participate safely and comfortably.
- **Group formation and dynamics:** How long has the group been together? A newly formed group may have different comfort levels compared to a team that has worked together for years. Consider the existing relationships within the group. Are there hierarchical structures or existing tensions that might affect participation?
- **Age and background of participants:** While age and background do not necessarily dictate activity choices, they influence the tone and approach of facilitation. The language and style of facilitation will differ when working with university students compared to corporate executives. Adapt your communication style accordingly.
- **Physical space and environment:** Evaluate the setting where the activity will take place. Is it spacious enough for movement-based exercises? Are there any physical limitations, such as furniture arrangements, that may pose a challenge? Ensure the environment is comfortable and conducive to open expression and interaction.
- **Respect boundaries and cultural sensitivities:** Always ask participants for their consent, particularly for activities that involve physical interaction. Be mindful of cultural and religious beliefs. In some cultures, physical touch (such as handshakes or close proximity) may not be appropriate. Offer alternatives for those who prefer non-contact participation and emphasize that opting out is always acceptable.

Energizers should always be conducted in a way that prioritizes psychological safety and inclusion. Facilitators play a crucial role in ensuring that activities enhance team dynamics rather than create discomfort. By taking these precautions, you contribute to a positive and enriching experience for all participants.



ACTIVITIES

TO GET IN THE MOOD

ROCK, PAPER, SCISSORS **TOURNAMENT**

IN PERSON

⌚ 10'
complexity: ●○○
participants: ≥ 9

Goal: to foster a sense of fun, support, and positive energy within the group.

Activity:

Everyone walks around at their leisure. The moment you meet another person you play one round of “Rock, paper, scissors” against each other. The loser becomes the winner’s biggest fan. S/he follows the winner and cheers loudly as the winner proceeds to the next opponent. “Snakes” will evolve and get longer. By the end, two people will play for the title each with a massive cheering session.



IN PERSON

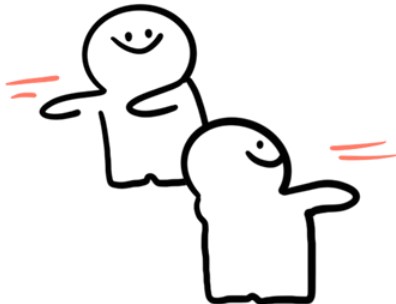
DANISH **CLAPPING GAME**

⌚ 5'
complexity: ●○○
participants: ≥ 2

Goal: to build synchronization, trust, and improve focus.

Activity:

Everyone finds a partner. Position yourself opposite to one another so that you can look at your partner’s face. You will start this game at the same time: clap both your hands, then each of you is free to move both your hands either left, right or overhead. Clap your hands again and then move again in one of the three directions. Repeat. Every time your and your partner’s hands are pointing the same direction, your next move (after clapping your hands) must be to give your partner a double high five. Continue, constantly, increasing speed.



THERE ARE MOSQUITOES IN THE ROOM

IN PERSON

🕒 10'
 complexity: ●●○
 participants: ≥ 12

Goal: to encourage focus, quick reactions, and teamwork while promoting a sense of fun and alertness.

Activity:

Arrange people in a circle and standing. Person A and Person B, with their arms extended laterally, clap simultaneously above the head of Person C (who is between A and B), who must duck when they hear the clap. If Person A, B, or C does not comply with the instruction, they are eliminated.



IN PERSON

WATAH, WATOH SKABUSH

🕒 10'
 complexity: ●●○
 participants: ≥ 12

Goal: to improve focus and quick decision-making while fostering group engagement and energy.

Activity:

In a circle, one person starts by moving their right hand downwards (like a ninja) and shouting “WATAH”. The person to their right must continue the round. There are three possible moves: “WATAH” - move your right hand, and the turn goes to the right, “WATOH” - use the left hand with the same gesture to change the direction of the round, “SKABUSH” - cross arms in front of your chest and make the next person skip passing the move to the following person. Whoever makes a mistake is eliminated from the circle.



1,2,3

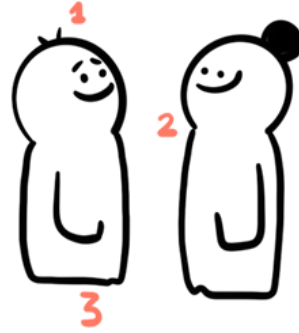
IN PERSON

⌚ 5'
 complexity: ●○○
 participants: ≥ 2

Goal: to reduce pressure and judgement on making mistakes.

Activity:

In pairs, people must recite 1 2 3 alternately.
 In the second round, 1 becomes a clap while 2 and 3 remain the same.
 In the third round, 1 is a clap, 2 is a jump, and 3 is normal.
 In the fourth round, 1 is a clap, 2 is a jump, and 3 is a greeting saying their name and making a silly move.



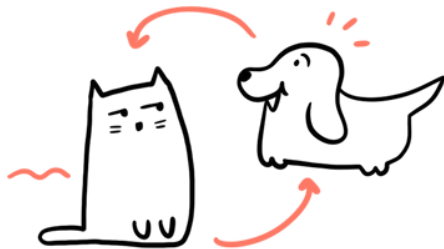
IN PERSON

HELLO KITTY

⌚ 5'
 complexity: ●○○
 participants: ≥ 8

Goal: to encourage creativity, humor, and resilience while fostering playful interaction and emotional awareness.

Activity:



Set up by drawing a line in the middle of the room with tape. Split the group in two and have them stand on opposite sides of the line. One side are the kittens. The other side are the puppies. Kittens cannot smile or laugh.

Puppies must say hello to the kittens in any way possible and try to make any of them smile or laugh. Puppies may not cross the line on the floor, everything else is allowed. When a kitten smiles or laughs, it automatically becomes a puppy and must cross to the other side of the line. Continue until only one kitten is left standing as the winner!

MUSIC

IN PERSON

⌚ 10'
 complexity: ●○○○
 participants: ≥ 8

Goal: to encourage meaningful connections, active listening, and spontaneous interaction in a relaxed environment.

Activity:

Each participant in the room walks around looking at their feet, with background music. When the music stops, everyone looks up and asks a question to the person in front of them (for example: what is your favorite dish?; where did you go on your last vacation?). After about 1 minute, the music restarts in the same way. The exercise is repeated for about 10 minutes.



IN PERSON

COMPOSITIONS

⌚ 10'
 complexity: ●●●○
 participants: ≥ 12

Goal: to promote creativity, quick thinking, and collaboration while encouraging a fun and dynamic group atmosphere.

Activity:

A facilitator in the center of the circle randomly points to people. Once a person is indicated, that person and the two next to them on the right and left must form a figure declared by the facilitator when pointing. Superman: the person in the center raises their right arm with a fist, while the people next to them simulate a cape in the wind. Washing machine: the person in the center rotates the torso as if it were a washing machine, while the other two mime the walls of a box with their arms. (ATM, Instamodel, Mixer, Elephant..)



BLIND MAN'S BLUFF

IN PERSON

🕒 10'

complexity: ●○○

participants: ≥ 3

Goal: to build trust and communication while enhancing the ability to give and receive clear instructions.

Activity:

An angle of the room is identified from which a blindfolded person starts. Another team member must guide the person across the room. There may be various obstacles in the way (e.g., chairs, boxes, and other materials): guidance can occur in different ways: by hand or holding the shoulders of the blindfolded person, speaking from afar, thus giving only vocal instructions. (As a constraint, you can say to use only three directions throughout the journey.)



IN PERSON

THE BLUE AND THE RED BALL

🕒 5'

complexity: ●○○

participants: ≥ 10

Goal: to enhance focus, memory, and quick thinking while encouraging playful interaction and attention to detail.

Activity:

A person starts holding an imaginary ball, described as Blue, and throws it to anyone in the circle. This continues until the facilitator adds another imaginary ball, Red. The game continues with these two imaginary balls, and at some point, the facilitator stops the play and asks where the blue ball is and where the red one is.



THE HUMAN MACHINE

IN PERSON

🕒 15'
 complexity: ●●○
 participants: ≥ 6

Goal: to promote teamwork, synchronization, and creativity while fostering group cohesion and engagement.

Activity:

Stand in a large circle. Each individual will become one moving part of the machine. One person enters the circle and begins making a repeating sound and a physical movement (eg. a “whoop whoop” sound while flapping one arm.) After 5 seconds, another person enters the circle and connects to the first person, also making a sound and a movement. Continue building the machine until everyone is connected, everyone making their movements and sounds throughout.



IN PERSON OR ONLINE

COUNTING SOULS

🕒 5'
 complexity: ○○○
 participants: ≥ 5

Goal: to build relationships of trust, listening to the energy in the room.

Activity:

A participant starts by shouting the number 1, then another participant (not chosen) must follow by saying the next number (2). A third participant must shout the number 3. Participants cannot signal or agree on the order; the group loses if two participants announce the number simultaneously. Variant: eyes closed.



1 EURO, 50 CENT

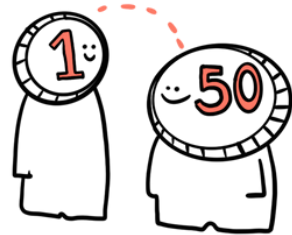
IN PERSON

🕒 10'
 complexity: ●○○
 participants: ≥ 5

Goal: to encourage collaboration, creativity, and teamwork while promoting inclusion and strategic thinking.

Activity:

People walk around the room scattered: each person represents either one euro or 50 cents, you decide based on the number of people present.
 For example, if you're running a workshop with students and professors, the students can represent 50 cents, and the professors one euro, or you could differentiate by gender. Remember to assign one euro to the minority.
 At a certain point, the facilitator (you) announces a cost that is a multiple of 50 cents, for example, €2.50. People must form groups and embrace each other to reach the announced amount. Anyone left out loses.



IN PERSON

THE RAFT GAME

🕒 10/15'
 complexity: ●●●○
 participants: ≥ 1

Goal: to improve listening and concentration, challenge habits and automatic responses, and create a fun and dynamic atmosphere.

Activity:

Everyone walks around at their leisure.
 On the facilitator's command "Stop!" everyone stops. "Go!" everyone goes. Now we swap the meaning of the two commands (stop=go ; go=stop)
 Other actions to add: Clap & Name, Jump & Dance..



QUESTIONS ONLY

IN PERSON OR ONLINE

🕒 10'

complexity: ●○○

participants: ≥ 2

Goal: to develop active listening skills and train quick thinking.

Activity:

Participants improvise a conversation where every response must be a question. If someone answers with a statement, repeats a question, or hesitates too long, they're out. The game starts in pairs, with each taking turns to begin the exchange. To add variety, facilitators can introduce topics like holidays or sports. Later, pairs merge into groups of four, with an added rule: each new question must start with a different question word than the last. The game continues for several rounds, challenging participants to think quickly and creatively.

This exercise trains quick thinking, adaptability, and engagement in a conversation, making it an excellent warm-up for qualitative interviews. By focusing on listening and formulating meaningful follow-up questions, participants practice the essential skills needed to navigate open-ended discussions.

HOW ARE YOU?

HOW DO

YOU THINK I AM?

IS THAT BECAUSE..?

TO GET IN THE MOOD

THE HUMAN TIC TAC TOE

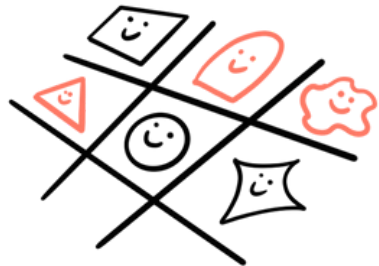
IN PERSON

🕒 10'
 complexity: ● ○ ○
 participants: ≥ 6

Goal: To promote teamwork, memory, and strategic thinking while encouraging friendly competition and engagement.

Activity:

Place 9 chairs in 3 rows of 3, like a tic-tac-toe board. Divide the group into two teams. Give each player a number. Assign a number 1 on each team, a number 2 on each team, a number 3 on each team, and so on. So each player will have, on the opposing team, a counterpart with a matching number. Each player needs to remember his or her number. To begin, call out a number. The two players with that number on each team run forward, and sit on a chair. Then call out another number and another one more. The first team to get three in a row wins!



IN PERSON

BANANAS

🕒 5'
 complexity: ● ○ ○
 participants: ≥ 6

Goal: to charge up the group.

Activity:

Stand a circle.
 The whole group crouches down and begins to whisper "go bananas - b-a-n-a-n-a-s". This is repeated over and over again, each time a bit louder. Along with the increasing volume, the group slowly stands up until, in the end, everyone is jumping energetically and screaming: "GO BANANAS - B-A-N-A-N-A-S!"





complexity: ●●○

participants: ≥ 1

Goal: to experience problems associated with unlearning previous associations.

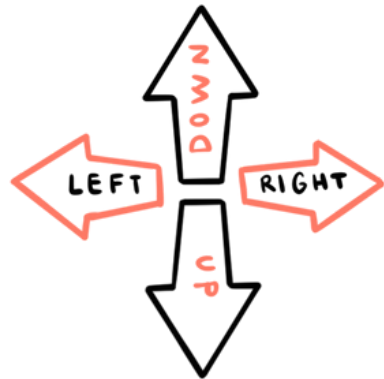
Activity:

Ask all participants to stand up. Tell them that you are going to give them instructions on which direction to look. They have to turn their head (only their head, not the body) and look in the appropriate direction. Give directions. Say the words up, down, left, and right in a random order and encourage the participants to follow your instructions. Keep giving directions at a fairly rapid pace.

Change the meaning of the words. After about a minute, tell the participants that you are going to make a change. From now on, up will mean down and vice versa. Explain that the meaning of the words left and right remain the same. You will see many “mistakes” and lots of embarrassed laughter.

Learning Points

- It is difficult to learn new concepts without unlearning some old concepts.
- The old way of doing things interferes with learning new procedures.



I WENT TO THE SUPERMARKET..

IN PERSON OR ONLINE

🕒 10'
 complexity: ●○○○
 participants: ≥ 8

Goal: to enhance memory, focus, and team cooperation while encouraging playful interaction and creativity.

Activity:

One participant starts by saying, “I went to the supermarket and I bought ... (e.g., 4 tomatoes)”, then passes it to another participant who must repeat the same phrase, adding another purchase to the shopping list (e.g. “I went to the supermarket and I bought 4 tomatoes and 2 eggs”), and so on.



IN PERSON

SHAKE DOWN

🕒 5'
 complexity: ●○○○
 participants: ≥ 3

Goal: a good energizer when time is limited and the main aim is to get people moving.

Activity:

In this short and very physical energizer, the group shakes out their bodies one limb at a time. Starting with eight shakes of the right arm, then eight shakes of the left, eight shakes of the right leg, then eight shakes of the left. It continues with a round of four shakes of each limb, then two, then one, ending in a big cheer. A good energizer when time is limited and the main aim is to get people moving.

This energizer is short and efficient. For it to be effective, the person leading it needs to role model a high level of energy.



TAKE A PICTURE OF YOUR SHOES

ONLINE



complexity: ●●●

participants: ≥ 2

Goal: get to know a little more about the people you work with, and feel more connected as a team.

Activity:

This activity is best for videoconferences, but it can also work on voice only calls if everyone has access to a screen.

Ask the members of your team to take a picture of their current footwear and upload or share it with your team. Then, ask each team member to discuss their choice of footwear, and to discuss the "story" behind their choice. For example, one person might be wearing running shoes and this might lead to a discussion about their fitness interests. You can vary this exercise by asking team members to take a picture of an object on their desks, and asking them to talk about it.



THE HUMAN KNOT

IN PERSON

🕒 20'

complexity: ●●○

participants: ≥ 10

Goal: to help a group realize that solutions lie within itself: omplex problems are best solved through shared experience rather than pure analysis, as only those who live the problem can truly “untie the knot.”

Activity:

Step 1:

Ask a volunteer A from the group to leave the room and wait to be brought back in.

Ask the rest of the group to form a circle holding hands. Tell them to not let go of hands unless the facilitator asks and to form the most complicated human knot possible.

Bring the person A who was outside into the room and ask them: “You will have to untie this knot without touching people, telling them one by one exactly what they must do. The group making the knot cannot speak or help person A.” Start a stopwatch as soon as person A begins untying the knot.

Step 2:

Once the first knot is untied, invite person A into the circle. Ask the group to form a second human knot. Remind them of the rule: do not let go of hands unless the facilitator asks. Prepare the stopwatch and ask the group to untie themselves a second time. Stop the stopwatch once the knot is untied.

Debrief: Invite participants to form a permanent circle.

Tell the group the time it took to untangle the knot the first time and then the time it took the second time. Ask the group how they feel and make them understand the meaning of the exercise



CHANGE 3 THINGS

ONLINE



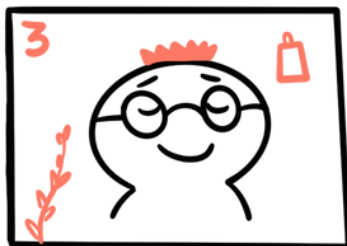
complexity: ●●●

participants: ≥ 2

Goal: to sharpen participant's observation skills

Activity:

With cameras on, everyone spends a short moment observing each other. Then, cameras are turned off while each person changes three small details about their appearance, such as removing an accessory, adjusting their hair, or putting on glasses. When cameras are switched back on, the challenge is to identify what has changed. This playful activity fosters engagement, enhances focus, and encourages participants to be more present and aware.



IN PERSON OR ONLINE

4 QUADRANTS SKETCHES



complexity: ●●●

participants: ≥ 2

Goal: to break the ice with a group, using sketching instead of words



Give each participant a piece of flip chart paper and some markers. Ask them to divide their flip charts into four quadrants. Ask them to draw (not write) their response to four questions (one for each quadrant). Give them about 5 minutes to work individually (it has to be rough and fast). Then, regroup and ask everyone to share their chart and responses with the group.

Example of questions:

1. What do I bring to the group?
2. What do I need from the group?
3. What is your hobby?
4. What is your vision for this group?

MIME GAME

IN PERSON

🕒 15'
 complexity: ●●○
 participants: ≥ 8

Goal: to develop non-verbal creativity and encourage the group to let go.

Activity:

The group stands in a circle. A person enters the circle and begins miming an action (e.g. brushing hair or frying an egg). They continue until another member of the group enters the circle and asks: "What are you doing?" The first person responds by describing any action other than the one she is doing. For example, if she is pretending to brush her teeth, she might say something like "I'm playing soccer." The second person must then begin to mime playing soccer. Continue until most or all members have had a chance in the middle. Encourage participants to be creative with the actions.



IN PERSON

BRUNO THE FOLKLORIC ELF

🕒 15'
 complexity: ●●●
 participants: ≥ 5

Goal: to break down people's barriers and highlight how often we try to conform to undefined rules.

Activity:

Bruno gives orders only when the facilitator specifies "Bruno says," and people must execute only Bruno's orders. The facilitator will make sure to challenge the participants, for example by saying things like, "Bruno says to raise your right arm, and also the left one."



CHIHUAUA OR MUFFIN

IN PERSON OR ONLINE



complexity: ●○○○

participants: ≥ 1

Goal: to foster a playful atmosphere that also stimulates thinking, engaging people by challenging them

Activity:

This activity takes inspiration from a famous meme. Energize your team asking them how many (for example) chihuahua they can spot. Show the collage for few seconds and ask everyone to write down in the chat or on a piece of paper the number. This exercise is very fun and create a playful and witty tone.



Check this link:

[Pinterest pictures](#)



ACTIVITIES

TO GET TO KNOW EACH OTHER FOR THE FIRST TIME



PAPER AIRPLANES

🕒 10'

complexity: ●○○

participants: ≥ 4

Goal: getting to know each other

Activity

Ask each person to write three pieces of information about themselves on an A4 sheet of paper. Example questions could be:

- The animal that represents you
- Your idol
- Something that distinguishes you aesthetically at this moment or in general

Once they have written the three pieces of information, ask them to fold the paper into a paper airplane. At your signal, everyone throws their airplane into the air in the room and then picks up one in return. Each participant must then identify the person they believe wrote the paper and start a conversation with them.



IN PERSON

NAME SWAP MIXER

🕒 15'

complexity: ●○○

participants: ≥ 12

Goal: to create a fun atmosphere while promoting active engagement, memory, and social interaction.

Activity:

Go up to someone:

A: Hi, I'm Erica!

B: Hi Erica, I'm Bob

A: Nice to meet you, Bob!

B: Nice to meet you, Erica!

Now players part with swapped names. ie. Bob will introduce himself as Erica to the next person. Every time you introduce yourself you leave with a new name. Your individual play continues until you meet your own name. At that point you leave the group.



BINGO!

IN PERSON

🕒 15'

complexity: ●●○

participants: ≥ 5

Goal: to encourage interaction, active listening, and relationship-building while fostering a fun and competitive atmosphere.

Activity:

Hand out a pre-prepared bingo card and a pen to each participant.

Now tell them that the task is to find someone who can answer “yes” to each statement and to write their name in the corresponding box.

There are two rules: they may not use one name several times and they should first guess which fields might fit their partner rather than asking them which field they can offer.

If one person manages to complete all names s/he shouts “BINGO!” and the game is over. Otherwise end the game after the allotted time expires and the person with the most boxes filled wins.



How to prepare the bingo card: use a grid-layout that includes one statement per box plus space beneath for writing. Include both fun statements as well as informative ones (eg. “Has a white board in their office” “Has read all the Harry Potter books” “Leads a team” “Has worked with Design Thinking before”..)

IN PERSON OR ONLINE

LOVELY LUCIA

🕒 5'

complexity: ●○○

participants: ≥ 3

Goal: to enhance memory, creativity, and group connection while fostering a fun and supportive atmosphere.

Activity:

Have everyone sit in a circle. One person begins by giving their name, plus an adjective that begins with the first letter of their name. (e.g., Jolly Jim, Happy Holly). The next person repeats the person’s name and adjective and then their own name the same way. Continue around the circle.



HAVE YOU EVER..?

IN PERSON OR ONLINE

🕒 10'
 complexity: ●○○
 participants: ≥ 5

Goal: to break the ice and energize the group; to help participants discover common things.

Activity:

The facilitator reads a list of "yes/no" questions, often beginning with "Have you ever...?" Participants respond to each question by standing up (if in-person) or by turning on their video camera (if online) if their answer is "yes." This activity helps participants quickly discover commonalities and shared experiences in an engaging and physical way.



IN PERSON OR ONLINE

WOULD YOU RATHER..

🕒 10'
 complexity: ●○○
 participants: ≥ 2

Goal: to move beyond superficial introductions and encourage open communication from the start.

Activity:

The facilitator presents the group with a thought-provoking "this or that" question. Participants choose one of two options, which can be done using a poll, a show of hands, or even by moving to a specific side of the room. The facilitator then leads a brief discussion, asking participants to explain the reasons behind their choices to spark conversation and reveal different ways of thinking.





ACTIVITIES

TO STIMULATE CREATIVITY AND DIVERGENCY

CROSS THE RIVER

IN PERSON

🕒 20'

complexity: ●●●●

participants: ≥ 8

Goal: to break down people's barriers and highlight how often we try to conform to undefined rules.

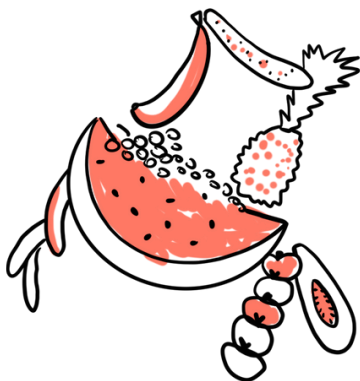
Activity:

Two lines are drawn to mark the river's banks: the distance must be at least 7 or 8 steps. All the people are on one side of the river. The game consists of crossing the river using a method that DOES NOT involve being on feet (walking, sliding with feet, jumping...). Each participant must find a different way from the others, which means they cannot copy someone else's method.

Why is this game useful? In the creative phase, it shows that despite seeming impossible, there are infinite ways to "cross" a river without using feet. Furthermore, the facilitator might notice that initially, no one considers teamwork (e.g., one person acting as a transporter for another). This highlights that we often impose limits or rules on ourselves that don't exist and that no one has established.



IN PERSON OR ONLINE



CREATIVE CONSTRAINTS

🕒 10'

complexity: ●○○○

participants: ≥ 3

Goal: to train creativity under constraints

Activity:

The facilitator proposes a creative challenge with specific limits (e.g., "design a chair using only cardboard and glue" or "write a sci-fi micro-story in 3 sentences without using the letter a"). Each participant or group then shares their idea.

I AM A TREE

IN PERSON

🕒 10'
 complexity: ●○○
 participants: ≥ 3

Goal: to spark collaborative creativity and lateral thinking. To warm up for ideation by practicing the “Yes, and...” mindset. To encourage listening, quick thinking, and playful energy.

Activity:

One participant steps into the center of the space and starts a mini-scene by saying something simple, like: “I am a tree”
 One by one, two more participants join in, each adding a related element, saying something like: “I am an apple” and then “I am a worm in the apple.”
 Associations can be logical, absurd, poetic, symbolic, or funny: anything goes, as long as participants accept and build on what’s already there.



IN PERSON OR ONLINE

18 CIRCLES

🕒 10'
 complexity: ●●●○
 participants: ≥ 1

Goal: to unlock creativity and overcome mental blocks.

Activity:

Each participant draws 18 identical empty circles. In 3 minutes, they must transform as many circles as possible into objects (e.g., a ball, a sun, a pizza, an eye). Quantity and variety matter more than quality. Then, participants compare their sheets and discuss recurring patterns and the most original ideas.



HOME TREASURE HUNT

IN PERSON OR ONLINE

🕒 10'

complexity: ●○○○

participants: ≥ 3

Goal: to energize participants with a brief physical activity and build comfort with having video cameras on, creating a more interactive and dynamic virtual environment

Activity:

Give participants a little task such as: “You have 25 seconds to fetch something yellow,” or “Get the weirdest thing in your apartment, then bring it back to show us”.

You can even take it a little further and play in steps: first you ask to grab something yellow (for example), and then you ask to state “this object is so important for me because..” It will be fun because some people will show up with random object and will be forced to make a story out of it.



IN PERSON OR ONLINE

WHAT CAN YOU DO WITH..?

🕒 10'

complexity: ●○○○

participants: ≥ 2

Goal: to get ready for ideation. No limits, no filters, spread creativity and encourage wild ideas.

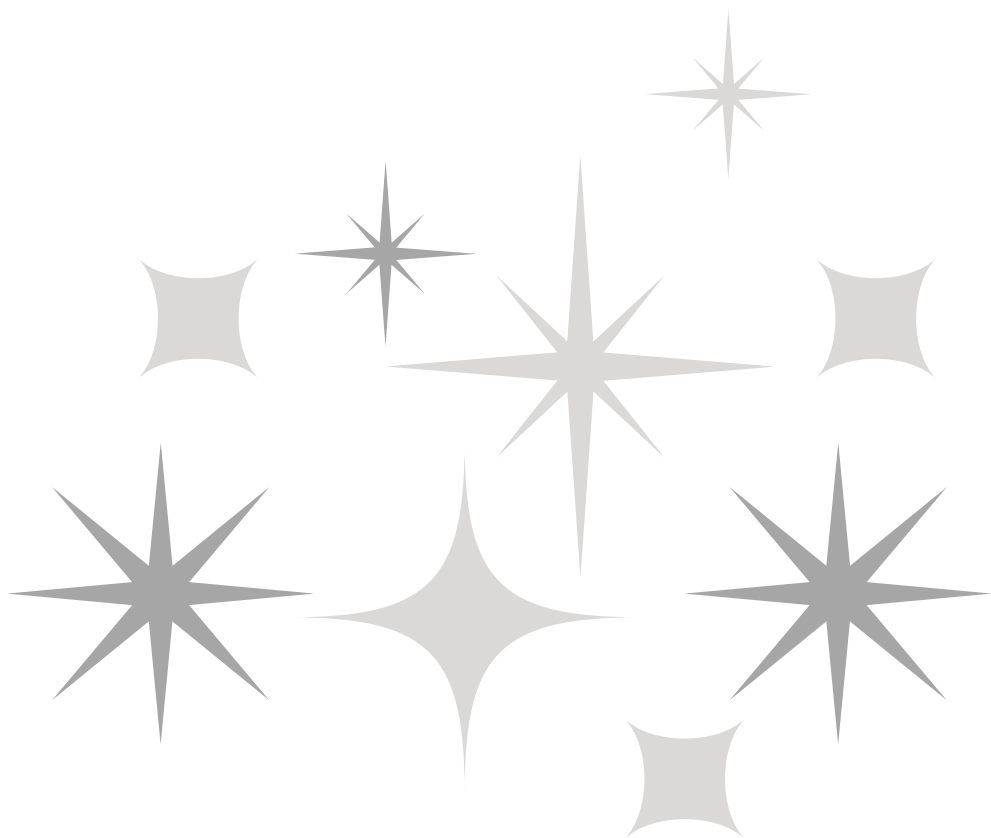
Activity:

Depending on the project's topic (for instance if we talk about food we can start with “pizza”) pick a random object. Ask the participants to write down as many things as possible that you can do with that object. Might be real or fake, might be science fiction or illegal, all ideas are good!



ACTIVITIES

TO ENHANCE PERFORMANCE AND STORYTELLING SKILLS



STORYMAKING

IN PERSON OR ONLINE

🕒 10'

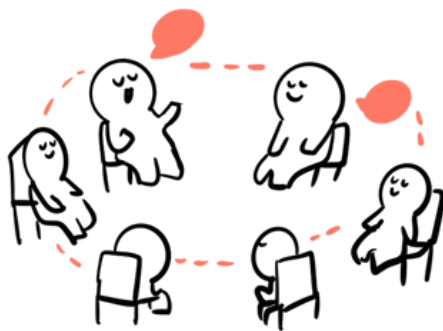
complexity ●○○○

participants: ≥ 5

Goal: to get in the creative storytelling mindset

Activity:

The group stands/sits in a circle. The facilitator begins the story by setting the initial scene and mood: i.e.: “on my way to class the other day..” “A good friend called last night and..” “I had them most amazing weekend! I...” In no special order, members of the group then take over the story. They add another element to the plot. The information that is added can be light-hearted, serious, true, fabricated, etc. The main point is to make sure everyone adds something. The progression of the story indicates where the group members are emotionally and is representative of what is high on their lists of priorities, concerns or thoughts.



IN PERSON OR ONLINE

GROUP STORYTELLING

🕒 10'

complexity ●○○○

participants: ≥ 5

Goal: to foster team creativity and collaboration by having participants collectively build a spontaneous and humorous narrative.

Activity:

The facilitator begins a story based on a series of random, pre-selected images. Participants take turns adding to the narrative, with each person's contribution being inspired by the next image in the sequence. The goal is to build a fun, imaginative story together.



6-WORD STORY

IN PERSON OR ONLINE



complexity ●○○
participants: ≥ 2

Goal: to practice brevity and spark creativity in storytelling.

Activity:

Each participant is asked to tell a full story using only six words. They can draw inspiration from personal experiences, something fictional, or even exaggerations. After everyone shares, the group reflects on how short stories can still be powerful and emotionally engaging.



IN PERSON OR ONLINE

EMOJI STORY

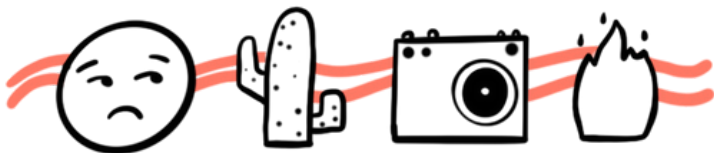


complexity ●○○
participants: ≥ 2

Goal: to encourage creativity under constraint and narrative structuring.

Activity:

The facilitator presents 3–5 random emojis (same set for all or different per person). Each participant creates and tells a short story that links the emojis in sequence.



ACTIVITIES

TO SHARE VISIONS



TELEPHONE Pictionary

IN PERSON

🕒 20'

complexity: ●●○

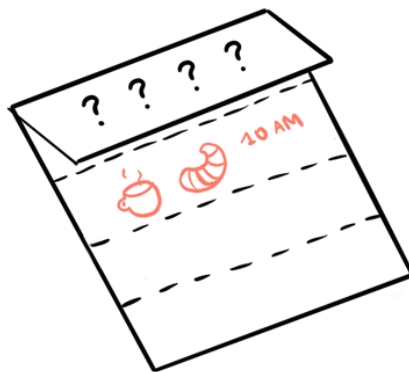
participants: ≥ 4

Goal: to show how visions transform as they move between people, highlighting interpretation, distortion, and creativity.

Activity:

1. Each participant starts with a sheet of paper.
2. Everyone draws something (e.g., “the future of work”).
3. Description: they pass the paper to the next person. That person writes a short description of what they see.
4. Redrawing: the description is passed to the next participant, who draws what is written, without seeing the original drawing.
5. The process can continue alternating drawing → writing → drawing → writing for as many rounds as you like.

At the end, you unfold the whole sequence and compare the first vision with the final one often completely different, sometimes hilariously distorted, but always insightful about how communication shapes visions.



IN PERSON OR ONLINE



FUTURE HEADLINES

🕒 15'

complexity: ●○○

participants: ≥ 3

Goal: to align on desired impact and long-term vision.

Activity:

.Ask participants to imagine that a major newspaper or blog writes a headline about the success of the project/team two years from now. Each person writes one headline (and optionally a short blurb). Everyone shares, then the group clusters similar themes to identify common visions.



ACTIVITIES

TO PUT HANDS ON!

THE SPAGHETTI CHALLENGE

IN PERSON

🕒 30'

complexity: ●●●

participants: ≥ 3

Goal: this exercise is about radical collaboration, thinking with your hands, failing, testing and iterating.

Activity:

The challenge consists in building the highest free-standing spaghetti tower in groups.

Groups may only use the provided material (1 marshmallow, 20 spaghetti, tape, 1 meter of string). The marshmallow must be located at the top of the structure and marks the measuring point. The structure can be affixed to the surface of the table but cannot be connected to any object / part of the room (e.g. ceiling)

Either when time's up or sooner, the structure must stand freely without breaking for at least 10 seconds.

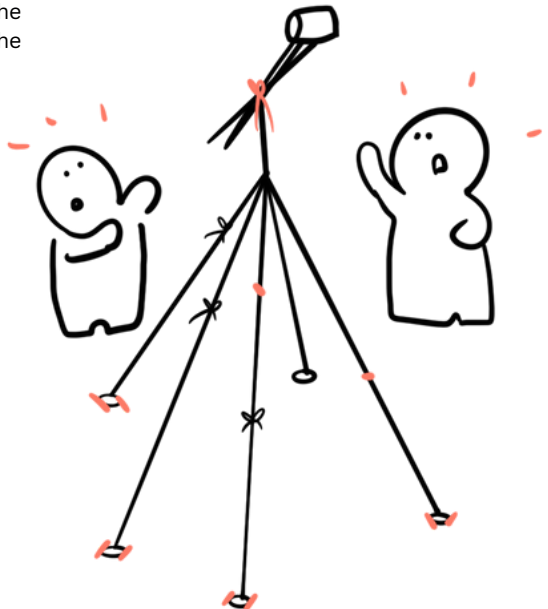
Groups have 15 minutes to build the structure, if they finish early the notify the facilitator, who goes ahead and measures.

Learnings to reflect:

- bias toward action
- build to think
- fail early and often
- test and iterate
- team work

More info here:

[Spaghetti challenge](#)



TEAM AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT



A set of activities and
exercises that require
time and are specifically
suggested for long-term
project teams

TEAM AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

WHY THIS TOOLBOX

While the “Facilitation Fire Starters” section aims to provide facilitators with a toolkit of quick and engaging activities to set a positive tone at the beginning of any session, the “Team and Personal Development” chapter offers a deeper collection of activities specifically designed for long-term projects and extended sessions. Facilitators, coaches, and trainers are often tasked with guiding teams over prolonged periods, making them responsible not only for creating a good mood and energizing the group but also for fostering resilient and effective team dynamics.

Successfully managing teams with diverse backgrounds and cultures requires a strong set of soft skills. To help with this, several models have been developed to assist trainers in understanding the different stages of team development, allowing them to intervene with the appropriate tools when necessary. The activities presented in this chapter have been refined over five years of experience with diverse groups, including students, corporate professionals, managers, and individuals from various cultural backgrounds. They are specifically designed to support the facilitator during distinct phases of a team's journey, prioritizing emotional well-being and creating a safe space for individual and collective growth.

By focusing on the emotional component, these exercises help every team member evolve and improve, ensuring that personal development is a core part of the team's success. This collection represents a selection of proven exercises that can be adapted to a wide range of situations, demonstrating that while the tools may be many, the goal remains the same: to build a more aware, cohesive, and effective team.

**RECOGNIZ
ING THE
TEAM'S
STAGES
TO APPLY
THE
RIGHT
TOOLS**



THE TUCKMAN'S TEAM MODEL

Every team is new at some point and it takes the members a while to gradually learn to work together and function effectively. The psychological researcher Bruce Tuckman first studied and published his four stages of development in 1965 and they are still considered the backbone of normal team function. Why is this model useful? It's useful to consider Tuckman's 5 stages as experiences that a team might go through, even though these stages don't always occur in this order or all take place. The model is interesting for reflecting on which specific behaviors and signals to pay attention to, in order to recognize the stage the team is in and thus apply the appropriate tools. It's also interesting to note how the storming and norming stages often follow one another very quickly, and the transition between the two represents the most challenging moment in teamwork.

FORMING



Team members meet and begin to make the personal connections that will form the basis of their work. There's excitement as they share information about experiences, interests and knowledge and form first impressions. There's some confusion around roles and responsibilities as well as goals.

STORMING



Usually characterized by conflict, during this stage team members learn to work together. Differences in opinions, personalities, communication and work styles emerge. There is often competition for status and acceptance of ideas.

NORMING



As team members adjust to each other's differences, they begin to unify and get organized. They're learning to work together, respect one another's opinions and see the value in their differences. The team shares information, stops competing with one another and works toward a common goal.

PERFORMING

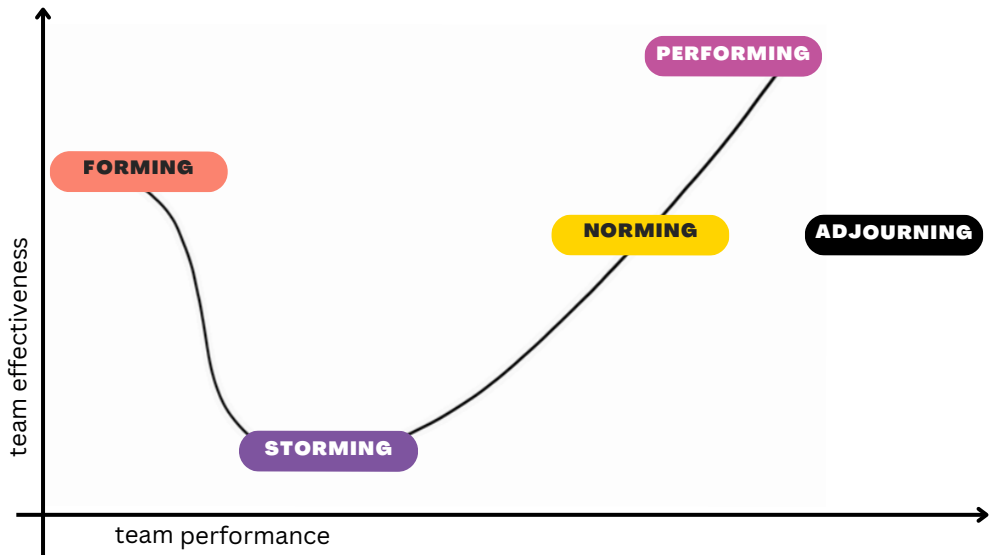


The team hits its interdependent stride. Each team member works on his or her portion of the project, trusting and relying on others to complete theirs. They are motivated, solve problems quickly, and work through disagreement easily to make well-considered decisions.

ADJOURNING



It involves the termination of task behaviors and disengagement from relationships. A planned conclusion usually includes recognition for participation and achievement and an opportunity for members to say personal goodbyes.



WHEN MAY I USE THESE EXERCISES?

The following section will detail the stages of team development, along with a variety of suggested tools. When applying these tools, it is crucial to ensure that the team has developed sufficient cognitive proximity, the shared understanding and common ground necessary for deeper, more effective collaboration. This readiness ensures that participants can engage with the material and one another in a meaningful way.*

**In the context of knowledge transfer, cognitive proximity refers to the shared intellectual foundation and socio-cultural dimensions that facilitate collaboration. This includes a team's organizational and cultural alignment, which is essential for working on more profound activities successfully.*

FORMING



In this stage, it is important for the team to take time to get to know each other both personally and professionally. It is considered good practice to organize a team moment before the operational kickoff. This moment can be referred to as a "pre-kickoff meeting" or "introductory kickoff." The goal of the pre-kickoff is to establish a connection between team members and allow them to get to know each other.

Keep in mind that the Forming phase is not only about the team coming together and building connections; it is also an introspective moment for each individual to reflect on their emotions, expectations, mood, and skills. This is the stage where the team defines its *common* goal, but it is also when individuals set their *personal* goals.

A team cannot function effectively without a shared objective, and people will struggle to work toward that common goal if they lack personal motivation.

Unless the team is already familiar from previous projects, the following activities can be useful to facilitate this phase. Some exercises might also serve as Fire Starters, aimed at connecting the group and helping participants get to know each other. Others are specifically designed for workshops and sessions dedicated to team formation.

6 THINKING HATS



complexity: ●●●●

Goal: this exercise aims to enhance collaborative thinking, encourage diverse perspectives, and develop problem-solving skills through structured thinking approaches.

The challenge involves using the Six Thinking Hats method to tackle a problem collaboratively. Participants will work in groups to apply each of the six thinking styles (represented by colored hats) to a specific scenario or problem.

Preparation:

- Give each group 6 sheets of colored paper and ask each member to choose a color and make a hat with that sheet: the hat must be a single color.
- Assign a problem or scenario relevant to the group's work or interests.
- Tell the participants that each of them will participate in the discussion by embodying an emotion/state defined by the color of their hat: White (information), Red (feelings), Black (caution), Yellow (positivity), Green (creativity), and Blue (process).

Execution:

- White Hat: Start by focusing on the facts and information related to the problem. Groups discuss what they know and what information is missing.
- Red Hat: Shift to expressing feelings and intuitions about the problem. Participants share their immediate emotional responses and gut reactions.
- Black Hat: Analyze potential risks and challenges. Discuss what could go wrong and the possible downsides of different approaches.
- Yellow Hat: Explore the positive aspects and benefits. Identify opportunities and potential value in various solutions.
- Green Hat: Engage in creative thinking. Brainstorm innovative ideas and alternative solutions without judgment.
- Blue Hat: Conclude with a summary of the discussion and decide on the next steps. Organize the ideas and plan the implementation.



CARD AND FREAK ROLES



🕒 20'

complexity: ●○○○

Goal: to help the team get to know each other and define initial roles to create a work plan

This tool allows the team to establish the very first rules and understand what each member feels most comfortable with. It is useful for defining soft skills and initial tasks. It's helpful for the facilitator to step in later for a debrief conversation, but it's not necessary to moderate the activity.

get the PDF set here:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/12rRw3YtcDWwKPERTjll5Deil4sUezEPB/view?usp=sharing>

THE SCHEDULER



RESPONSIBILITIES

The Scheduler may be the same person or someone else on the team. They are responsible for comparing and managing team members' schedules and time to ensure that the team is on track through activities.

QUALITIES

You value efficiency and excel at project coordination and keeping everyone on track. You also have a clear understanding of members' schedules and time, and you have a fairly plan for the best times and complete the work.

THE DOCUMENTER



RESPONSIBILITIES

The Documenter is in charge of capturing the progress of the team at every step. This means everything from ensuring that the members are writing their thoughts down on paper or post-its, to taking photos of interviews, and blogging about your experience if you choose to do so. This is an absolutely essential role to the team and will help everyone feel much more organized and productive.

QUALITIES

You are incredibly organized and a dedicated note-taker. Your files and notes are archived in a logical fashion and keeping track of disparate pieces of information from all points of time is your special talent. Additionally, you have an eye for multimedia recording and always have a camera on hand, ready to snap a picture of anything that inspires you.

THE CONNECTOR



RESPONSIBILITIES

The Connector is the force of momentum during the initiation phase and a huge asset in connecting the team to users, experts, and interesting research experiences. They help the team benefit from by connecting into the community at large for insights.

QUALITIES

You make associations between ideas and are the most inspiring experiences in conversations with those in the hub of relationships and seem like the one who comes to your library.

In the picture: some examples of normal card roles.

Other card roles: the Anthropologist, the Interpreter, the Hurdler, the Storyteller, the Visualizer. These roles have been used over the years for multidisciplinary teams and projects, facilitators can add or remove cards as they wish.



Sometimes, card roles can reach a wild stage!

Teams are made of people, not just of job descriptions. While standard card roles help define professional skills, introducing 'wild' roles is a powerful way to tap into the human side of collaboration. These unconventional titles like 'The Drinking Buddy' or 'The Comedian'—aren't meant to be taken literally. Instead, they serve as playful archetypes that help team members express their personalities and unexpected strengths. For facilitators, the key is to frame these roles as a way to celebrate diversity in character and emotional intelligence. By acknowledging these informal but vital contributions, you create a richer, more authentic team dynamic where every individual feels seen and valued beyond their official title. It's a gentle nudge towards vulnerability and humor, essential ingredients for building a resilient and cohesive team.

THE DRINKING BUDDY



RESPONSIBILITIES

The drinking buddy is in charge of making sure that whenever a member of the team needs a beer, he/she won't suffer the lack of another person to toast with. It could happen in the early morning, in the afternoon or in the middle of the night, with bad or good weather, the drinking buddy is there for any occasion.

You are a better fit for any occasion. As a strong stoic, you are in order to do the job.

THE CHARMER



RESPONSIBILITIES

One day someone will ask a question about the design that the team won't be prepared to answer: here comes the charmer. The charmer is the one who breaks the silence in order to save the team by providing a sharp answer or through a witty remark to wriggle out of uncomfortable situation. The charmer is able to create great, and often invented, stories to make a presentation more intriguing or a statement bolder.

QUALITIES

The charmer is able to answer diplomatically and to avoid any awkward moment every time someone wants to ask you an uncomfortable question, he/she ends the conversation with a fake answer, but still satisfied with the team's disquisition about irrelevant topics.

THE COMEDIAN



RESPONSIBILITIES

There's always during a project the moment when everybody feels lost, the whole team is so nervous that you could cut the anxiety in the room with a knife: here comes the joker. With one of his/her incredibly inappropriate jokes he/she is always able to alleviate the mood of the room, and even if everybody complains about him/her for being unfitting, they secretly are all very grateful for the job him/her only could have done.

QUALITIES

You are able to find into any disaster something fun to laugh about, and you for sure don't want to keep it for yourself. You are the kind of person that regardless of the adversities, never gives up the chance to laugh it off. You always think that "it's not the end of the world", and your positive approach is able to influence the state of mind of everyone around you.

In the picture: some examples of freak roles.

INTRODUCING ME

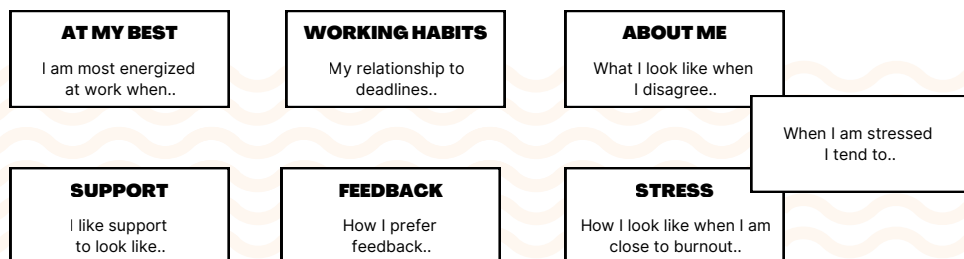


🕒 20'

complexity: ●○○○

Goal: to break the ice and start a conversation about the teammates' habits.

It's a way to tell something more intimate about themselves but also to set the very first rules in work. The coach might join the team after or participate to the session and share his/her information too.



LETTER TO YOUR FUTURE SELF

🕒 20'

complexity: ●○○○

Goal: to set expectations and help participants focus on their personal growth and become more aware of it.

This activity is incredibly powerful, specially in projects that last for more than 4 months.

Ask the participants to write a letter to their future self:

- How do you expect to be?
- What do you wish?
- What will you have learnt?
- How will you be?

Ask them to fold the letter so that the content is not visible and to write their name on it for identification. Place the letters in a box and hand them back to the recipients at the end of the project. Have tissues ready!

Check out the Mindfulness session to introduce this activity with a meditation (page 76).

TEAM CHARTER CANVAS



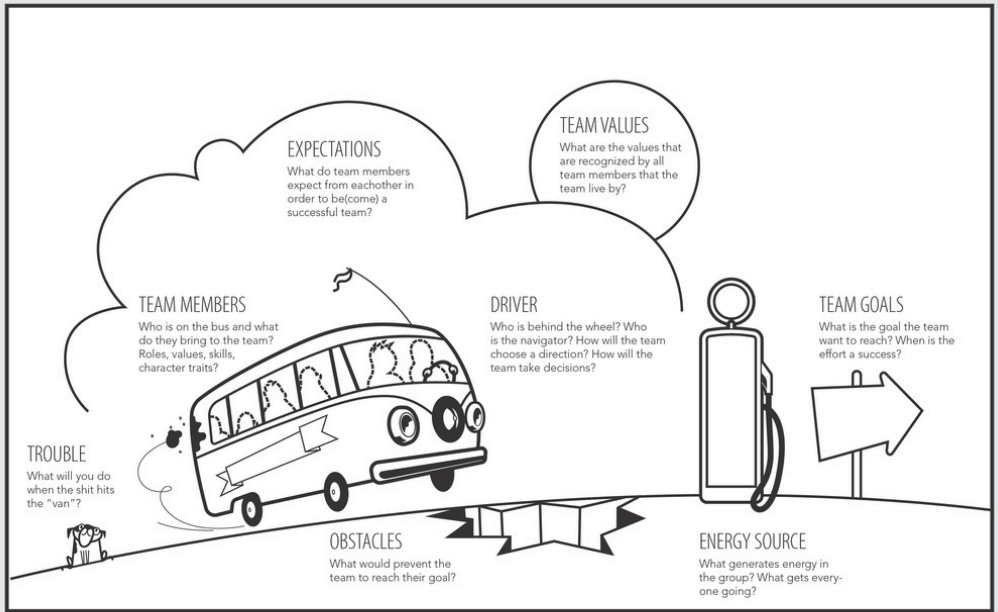
⌚ 35'

complexity: ●●●●

Goal: this tool is useful for initiating a discussion within the team to define roles and work methods in the event of issues. Unlike the "Get to Know Your Team" activity, it provides a long-term perspective.

Ask the team to collaboratively fill out the canvas using post-it notes. Allocate 30 minutes for this task. Share and involve the entire team in the discussion.

TEAM CHARTER CANVAS



How to use the tool:

<https://www.designabetterbusiness.tools/tools/team-charter-canvas>

STORMING



During the storming stage people start to push against the established boundaries. Conflict or friction can also arise between team members as their true characters and their preferred ways of working surface and clash with other people's. If roles and responsibilities aren't yet clear, individuals might begin to feel overwhelmed by their workload or frustrated at a lack of progress.

Since this stage is characterized by a strong “emotional storm” it's time to apply emotional intelligence skills and to foster genuine and transparent discussions.

There are many ways to address tensions, and, depending on the situation, might be good to face them individually or collectively.

1:1 FEEDBACK SESSIONS

🕒 > 1h

complexity: ●●●

Goal: to address tensions using feedback.

Qualitative evaluation and the art of delivering effective feedback are crucial in fostering a productive and positive work environment. Feedback has the potential to either uplift or demoralize, depending on how it is delivered. Understanding the difference between facts and opinions is essential to avoid generic or unhelpful feedback that fails to drive meaningful growth. A structured approach is necessary, one that focuses on specific behaviors rather than personal traits, provides concrete examples, and avoids broad generalizations.

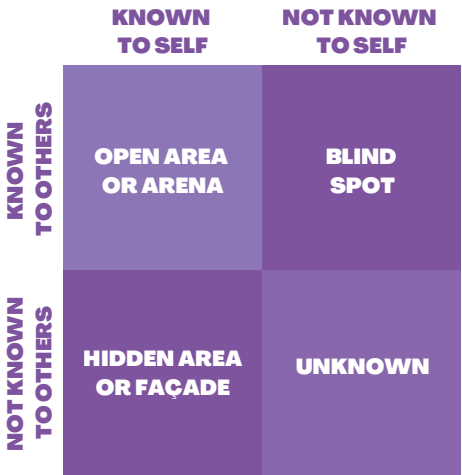
The psychological aspect of feedback plays a significant role in how it is received. It is important to cultivate a feedback culture where feedback is perceived as a valuable tool for professional development rather than as a form of judgment.

THE JOHARI WINDOW

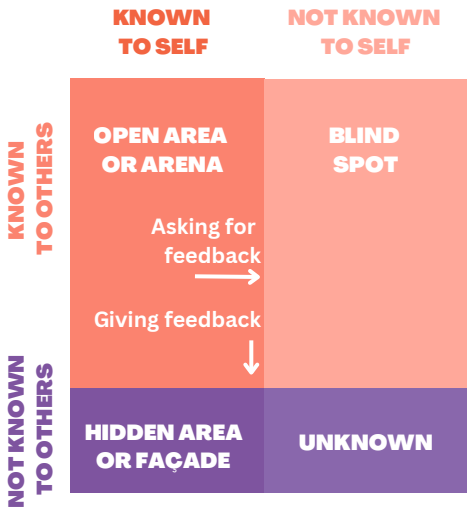


The Johari Window is a communication tool developed in 1955 by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham, and later expanded and subjected to various tests in the following years. The term "Johari" is a partially distorted combination of the initials of its creators' first names.

The Johari Window serves as both an interpretative and actionable tool, refined by the two scholars, to observe and engage in contexts of interpersonal communication, group dynamics, or intergroup interactions.



A healthy feedback culture aims to focus on the 1st and the 2nd quadrant. In a team that works, people want to share more about themselves reducing the “Façade” and to deepen more their behaviors exploring the “Blind spot”.



Timing and context are critical when delivering feedback. Dedicating specific sessions for feedback allows for thoughtful and intentional communication, where both parties can engage in a meaningful dialogue. Below 6 rules for providing good feedback:



1. ASK FOR PERMISSION AND BE TIMELY

Make it consistent, not disconnected by the situation. Find the right and safe space to give it.

Feedback isn't about surprising someone, so the sooner you do it, the more the person will be expecting it.



2. SCHEDULE IT AND GET PREPARED

Do not wait for a problem to come to give feedback. Make it regular, it is an ordinary and necessary team activity.

Don't give feedback when you feel upset!



3. SHARE OBSERVATIONS

Make a reference to an fact/anecdote.

"Do you remember during the workshop when we..?"



5. MAKE 'I' STATEMENTS

Do not judge. Share feelings. The protagonist of the sentence is YOU.

"I feel..", instead of "You are..".



6. TALK ABOUT POSITIVES TOO

It is easier to say what is wrong rather than what is right. Try to start with positive things, be grateful with the other person. "What I'd like to see more is..". Frame your feedback as what is missing rather than what is wrong.



7. FOLLOW UP!

The whole purpose of feedback is to improve performance. You need to measure whether or not that is happening and then make adjustments as you go. Be sure to document your conversations.



UNHELPFUL FEEDBACK

- All at once
- Making generalization
- Shared like a fact or universal truth
- Trying to fix/correct or making demands
- Anonymous
- Without permission
- About identity

HELPFUL FEEDBACK

- About one thing
- About actions and behaviours
- Given with specific examples
- Offered as a perspective
- Genuinely curious and helpful
- Direct; face-to-face
- With permission



A STEP FORWARD

⌚ 10'

complexity: ●○○

Goal: to address tensions collectively

The team arranges themselves in a circle. The coach presents a statement and asks those who feel affected by it to step forward. For example: "I am not giving 100% to this program." Why is it useful? It creates individual and group awareness, allowing people to "declare" themselves through body movement. It can be a delicate activity, so it's important to introduce some rules (such as honesty and non-judgment) and conduct it with a team where confidence and trust are reasonably strong.

FEEDBACK MAP



complexity: ●●●

Goal: to enhance feedback skills and address team tensions through clear, specific, and structured feedback.

Start by introducing the purpose of the exercise: to help the team visualize their connections and provide meaningful, specific feedback. This is not just about identifying who worked with whom, but about reflecting on collaborations and finding ways to improve communication and support within the team.

On a whiteboard or a large sheet of paper, write down the names of all team members, leaving enough space between them so that connections can be drawn. This will serve as a visual representation of the relationships within the team. Next, agree on a relevant timeframe (whether it's the past three, six, or nine months) depending on how long the team has worked together. Once decided, write this at the top as a reference point.

Now, each person will begin mapping out their working relationships. They will draw lines connecting their name to the colleagues they have collaborated with and add a few words describing their interaction, perhaps a specific project, a shared responsibility, or a particular challenge they tackled together. As the map takes shape, it will reveal the web of interactions within the team.

Once the connections are in place, ask everyone to take a step back and reflect. Each participant should identify three key interactions they want to focus on for feedback. These could be moments of particularly strong collaboration, challenges they overcame, or areas where they felt there was room for improvement.

With these key interactions in mind, the team will move into the feedback phase. Using a structured approach, participants will either share their feedback verbally or write it down.



MOVING AROUND THE ROOM



🕒 10'

complexity: ●○○○

Goal: to address tensions collectively, using body to indicate opinions/feelings

Each person is asked to write on a sheet of paper their opinion in response to the following questions: “What aspects of your team motivate you the most? What do you think is working well?” and “What aspects demotivate you? What is not working and could be improved?”

The post-its with the responses are collected and shared with the group. The facilitator clusters and analyzes the key points.

Subsequently, the clusters related to problems (those answering the second question) are displayed in the room on large sheets. Team members are invited to position themselves near the issues they find most relevant, urgent, or important.

NORMING



This stage begins to occur as the process of organizing tasks and processes surface interpersonal conflicts. Leadership, power, and structural issues dominate this stage.

TEAM MANIFESTO

🕒 15'

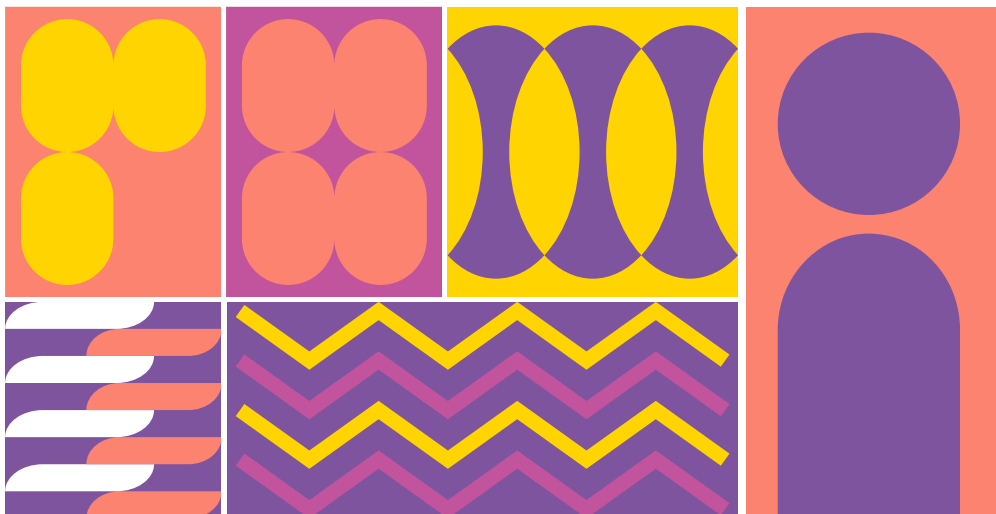
complexity: ●○○○

Goal: to align team goals, allowing team members to express their intentions and share their expectations for the project.

At the beginning of a session, ask your team to write down a “team manifesto” composed by:

- Team name
- Team members + their superpower
- A statement

Example: Team Crazy Cookie Members: Agata the Emotional Charger, Matteo the Tireless Sense Maker, Sofia the Bursting Communicator, Gianni the Fixer. Statement: “We are the Crazy Cookie team. Our cookie will never stay still; we are solemnly committed to stepping outside the box, breaking predefined patterns, and bringing creativity and innovation. We want to work hard and have fun.”



KALM RETROSPECTIVE



🕒 1h

complexity: ●●●

Goal: to make the team share their perceived value of the aspects of the project

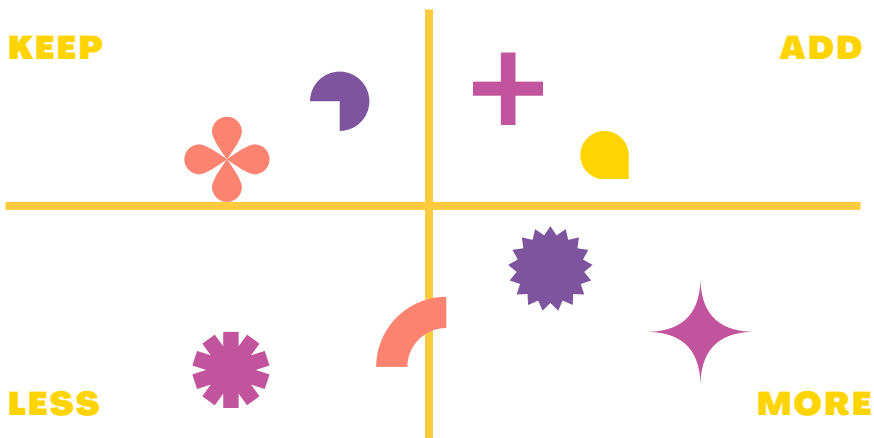
KALM is a popular interactive sprint retrospective idea that reinforces the notion that all ideas are good ideas noting that some bring more value than others within the project context. KALM offers participants a polite way of framing their support ('keep') or lack thereof ('less') of the various aspects of the sprint. It could therefore allow team members who may not feel comfortable presenting their opinion a safe environment to share. At the same time, it promotes a sense of agency and utility allowing them to come up with ideas about what they could add or do more of to essentially help them carry on.

Suggested icebreaker questions for KALM retrospectives

- When have you kept calm and carried on?
- What would be beneficial if you had less of it in your life?
- What are you putting off starting?

Create a graph on a Miro board or on a wall composed of 4 quadrants representing the areas 'Keep,' 'Add,' 'Less,' and 'More' (as shown in the figure).

Each team member can now brainstorm individually under each topic. This avoids group think and allows everyone to have their say. They can indicate when they have finished, or you can set a timer so that you know when to move onto the next stage. Drag and drop related ideas to combine them for easier voting. Each team member votes on what they would most like to discuss further. Discuss the top voted ideas and can capture deep dive comments. Presentation mode allows you to walk your team through ideas one-by-one and keep the conversation focused. Easily facilitate discussion by bringing everyone onto the same page. Create action items, assign owners and due dates that will carry through for review at the next retrospective.



THEATRE FORUM



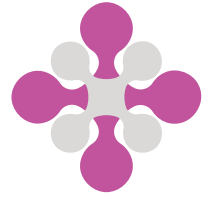
🕒 30'

complexity: ●●●

Goal: to raise problems and tensions plus generating no-filter creative solutions.

Teams of 5-6 people are created. Each team chooses a “challenge or problem” to represent: this should be an issue identified during research, such as bad company habits, inefficient processes, or situations leading to negative outcomes. The team enacts a tragedy where, due to a lack of communication, inefficiency, or other reasons, something serious happens. Once the scene is finished, the audience must intervene with suggestions: instead of explaining, they must take the place of one of the actors and propose a new behavior. Following this exchange, a different team should appear on stage. The new team recreates the scene, bringing it to a positive conclusion.

PERFORMING



In the Performing stage of team development, members feel satisfaction in the team's progress. They share insights into personal and group process and are aware of their own (and each other's) strengths and weaknesses. Members feel attached to the team as something "greater than the sum of its parts" and feel satisfaction in the team's effectiveness. Members feel confident in their individual abilities and those of their teammates.

MY STRENGTHS & MY WEAKNESSES

🕒 30'

complexity: ●○○

Goal: to perform in a team to raise awareness of individual strengths and weaknesses.

Each team member reflects on their superpower and Achilles' heel. The coach can facilitate the discussion by preparing a sheet or a Miro board with photos/drawings of the team members, creating true "superhero profiles."

An alternative is for team members to reflect not only on themselves but also on others. The team can also conduct this reflection collectively: what is our superpower as a team? What should we focus on?

CONFESSIOIN CELEBRATION

🕒 10'

complexity: ●○○

Goal: to gain confidence before a performance

Gather your team: ask everyone to stand in a line as if they were an audience. Ask each person, one by one, to step in front of the group and confidently share an embarrassing secret. Once the secret is shared, the rest of the group applauds and cheers with excitement as if they were at a concert. Explain that the activity requires courage and openness, and the goal is to laugh together, not to judge anyone. Emphasize the importance of mutual respect and confidentiality. As the leader, you might go first to break the ice and encourage the group.

MY LAST SUCCESS



🕒 10'

complexity: ●○○

Goal: gain confidence before a performance

Ask each person to think about the last time they felt proud of themselves, the last time they succeeded in something. Give them some time, then ask everyone to share their success out loud.

Do this exercise right before a presentation.

End with a group hug :)

I AM REMARKABLE

🕒 30'

complexity: ●●○

Goal: to build motivation and confidence

Each person writes their name at the bottom of a sheet of paper and passes it to the left. The next person writes a positive comment at the top, folds the paper to hide it, and passes it on. This continues until the paper returns to its owner, now filled with hidden compliments from the group. At the end of the round, everyone take some time to read quietly and individually the feedback.

Ask people to stand up in a close circle, and ask everyone to say the strength she or he liked using positive words like "I am Remarkable because..."

This exercise is inspired by the I Am Remarkable community: #IAmRemarkable is a global movement that empowers everyone, including underrepresented groups, to celebrate their achievements in the workplace and beyond while challenging social perceptions of self-promotion. For more information, visit: iamremarkable.org

ADJOURNING



In the adjourning stage, most of the team's goals have been achieved. The focus is on wrapping up the work, completing final tasks, and documenting the efforts and results. As the workload decreases, team members may be reassigned to other projects, and the team disbands. This stage also serves as a moment of reflection and acknowledgment of the journey undertaken. It is essential to dedicate time to a structured retrospective to analyze what went well and what could have been improved. This reflection process not only helps recognize the work done but also provides valuable lessons for future projects and teams.

If the team is a standing committee with ongoing responsibilities, some members may be replaced, bringing the group back to a forming or storming stage and repeating the development process.

THE POWER OF A RETROSPECTIVE

Retrospectives provide an opportunity for the team and its members to reflect on their experiences and opinions regarding a recent project. Often, we move from one task to another without taking the time to analyze what went well and what could be improved. A well-structured retrospective is a valuable tool for refining workflows and enhancing team dynamics.

WHEN?

Timing plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of a retrospective. It's recommended to schedule the meeting about five days to a week after a project or sprint concludes. This allows enough time for team members to reflect while keeping discussions relevant and fresh.

How to Conduct a Project Retrospective Meeting

There is no single “right” way to conduct a retrospective—it should be structured in a way that best suits your team. However, some key principles can enhance its effectiveness:

- Ensure the meeting involves all team members, not just the project manager.
- Encourage open participation and collaboration.
- Encourage in-person participation
- Document feedback and action points to track improvements.

WHY?

Creating a transparent and safe environment

A well-organized retrospective allows every team member to share their perspective on the process, successes, challenges, and suggestions for improvement. This open discussion fosters collaboration and helps build a strong team dynamic.

By collecting these insights, you gain a comprehensive view of the project's outcomes. Encouraging team members to contribute in a supportive environment ensures valuable feedback and strengthens trust within the group.

Boosting team morale

Retrospectives serve as effective team-building exercises by creating a space to give praise and share constructive feedback. Recognizing achievements, brainstorming solutions, and discussing success stories can uplift the team's energy and motivation.

When structured properly, feedback helps individuals and teams refine their working methods. Without regular reflection, teams risk falling into unproductive habits that may hinder success.

Encouraging learning and development

Helping a team evolve and improve over time is essential for building a high-performing group. As a leader, you play a crucial role in fostering growth through every project.

Learning requires time, patience, and consistency. While constructive feedback is useful for identifying areas that need work, retrospectives also provide a broader view of where the entire team can improve collectively.

Identifying strengths and weaknesses

Self-reflection helps team members recognize their most impactful contributions, moments of confidence, and areas where they faced challenges. By analyzing these experiences, individuals can pinpoint skills to develop and areas where they excel.

No team is perfect at everything, not even the highest-performing ones. Identifying strengths and weaknesses enables the team to maximize its potential, work around limitations, and become a more efficient unit.

Addressing workflow obstacles

Regardless of a project's size, challenges and roadblocks are inevitable. These issues can cause delays and frustration, often requiring workarounds to keep progress on track. Some obstacles may go unnoticed if team members don't feel compelled to mention them at the time. By sharing their experiences, team members can help streamline processes and improve efficiency in the future. Discussing past challenges and proposing solutions allows the team to anticipate and mitigate potential setbacks.

Enhancing planning and structure for future projects

Through retrospectives, you gather valuable insights into how your team operates—its strengths, challenges, and areas for growth. These reflections help refine workflows, optimize resources, and set realistic goals for upcoming projects.

Armed with this knowledge, you'll be better equipped to plan future projects in collaboration with stakeholders, department heads, executives, or clients.

HOW?

Here are some key questions to guide your retrospective discussion:

- What is your goal? What do you want to achieve with this retrospective?
- Start by reviewing the project's objectives. This helps assess whether the team met its initial targets.
- What would be the tone of the session for you?
- Do you need a specific material or space?
- What is the next phase?

Keep reading if you want inspiration and tools → → →

I USED TO THINK.. BUT NOW I THINK



🕒 15'

complexity: ●○○



Goal: to identify the learning points and help participants reveal changes in their perspectives

This is a good reflection protocol following an activity or event that should lead to experiencing or learning something new, or perhaps to a change in attitude about something. Basically, participants are asked to answer two questions quietly (in writing if it's a large group or if it's been a lengthy activity with lots happening). 1. I used to think... 2. But now I think... Give two to five minutes for reflecting or writing depending on the length of the activity and the learning expected. Then people can share their answers to the group. You can collect them on flip chart paper, or even type them to share later with participants or others. If you have a large group you might want to break them into smaller groups so that each person can share.

I LIKED, I WISHED, I LEARNED

🕒 15'

complexity: ●○○



Goal: to encourage reflection, feedback, and learning in a structured way

This exercise works very well when the team is experiencing an activity that lasts more than one day. Throughout the days or week, ask participants to end the day with this reflection. Use three different colors and a wall, and give people 10 minutes to think. You can ask them to read the feedback out loud or simply place it on the wall and read it quietly afterward.

REFLECTING

MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness, the art of mental presence, gives us the opportunity to focus on our goals and connect with our inner self. Why is mindfulness useful in facilitation? It's true that to lead and motivate a team, you often need to start the fire. However, since the work of a coach or facilitator involves sensing the energies in a room and acting accordingly, when the inner fire becomes too intense (tension, stress, and anxiety can lead to individual and collective agitation) or when the team's energy is scattered and people struggle to concentrate, it's helpful to apply some breathing and meditation exercises.

Traditional facilitation formats often leave little room for introspection and vulnerability. Mindfulness brings a new dimension to our sessions, enabling us to delve deeper into our thoughts, fears, hopes, and career aspirations.

I have personally led several mindfulness sessions for both colleagues and clients, as well as young students, especially in stressful situations or before a performance. Mindfulness creates a space both inside and outside of us, allowing us to connect with our self as well as with others.

DISCLAIMER

This toolbox is not a meditation manual, nor do I claim to be a certified mindfulness guide or expert. The mindfulness-related activities included here are based on my personal experience and the knowledge I have gathered in my professional practice. They are intended as facilitation tools rather than formal mindfulness instruction. If you are looking for structured guidance on mindfulness or meditation, I encourage you to seek resources from certified professionals in the field.

These are accessible mindfulness practices that can be integrated into daily work sessions. I encourage you to approach these tools with an open mind, recognizing their potential to create a calmer, more present environment. You can choose to adapt or skip any practice to best suit your team's comfort level and needs

MEDITATION

🕒 10' → 40'

complexity: ●●●

Goal: using meditation to enhance personal abilities

A meditation session can be used in various context.

When a group of people is dealing with a project work the pressure can be high. Meditation and breathwork are useful exercise when you see people overwhelmed.

A meditation session can last 10 minutes as well as one hour.

To decide how long you want your session to be, consider:

- The agenda of your session
- The group: is it a new one? Do people know each other?
- The goal: is it a stop from the rush or is it meant to raise awareness or reflection on something?

PREPARE

Script

Once you have defined your goal, write down a script, there's no need to improvise while guiding a meditation. It's also helpful to include informal parts, such as the introduction and presentation.

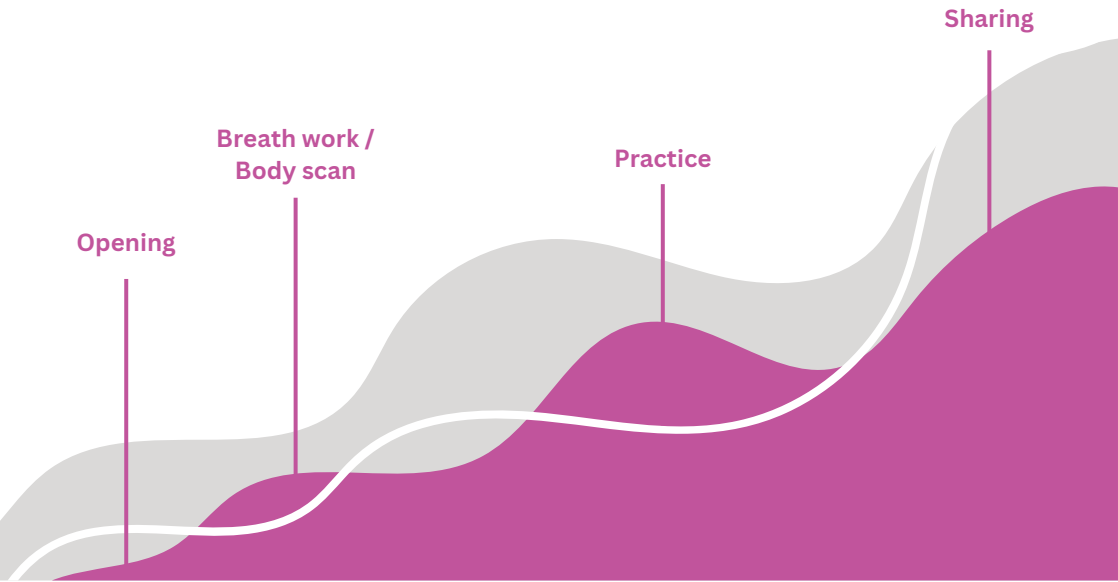
Time

Divide the script into sessions to create a rhythm. Write down the expected duration for each phase so you can keep track of time.

Space

No special environment is required. The only essential condition is that you are not interrupted during the practice, and the space should feel safe.

CONDUCT



Opening

Remember to introduce yourself and explain what you are about to do. Not everyone feels comfortable when they hear the words mindfulness or meditation. Provide information and details about the practice you will be guiding to help participants feel informed and prepared. Let them know that you may ask them to do things like closing their eyes, so they can decide whether they feel comfortable with it.

Explain the power of mindfulness and meditation, as well as the importance of these practices in the corporate world.

Then, invite participants to find a comfortable position that allows them to relax while remaining alert. Encourage them to connect with their body and breath, directing their attention to something specific (such as bodily sensations, breath, sounds, emotions, or thoughts) for a few minutes. The goal is to observe everything that arises in an open, non-judgmental way.

For example, someone might notice a tingling sensation in their foot, recognize the thought "What am I going to cook for dinner tonight?", or become aware of an emotion they are feeling. The purpose of meditation is to learn to observe all of this with conscious presence and compassion, without labeling a thought as good or bad, an emotion as right or wrong, or a bodily sensation as beneficial or harmful. The key is simply to observe.

Breath work

There are many ways to start focusing on the moment, and it depends on where you are. If you are in a room, a good way to make the people able to get in touch with themselves is to listen to their breath: there are some breathing exercises with the aim to becoming more and more conscious.

Easy breath work exercise to conduct - script

🕒 5'

complexity: ●○○

*"Let's begin by taking three slow, deep breaths together.
Inhale deeply through your nose... feel your lungs expand completely... and exhale slowly, releasing any tension or heaviness.
[Pause]*

Again, take a deep breath in... hold for a moment... and exhale, letting go of any stress or worries. [Pause]

One last time, breathe in fully... and as you exhale, imagine your body softening, your mind quieting, and your heart opening to this moment.

Now, allow your breath to return to its natural rhythm. Simply notice the sensation of breathing: feel the air entering through your nose or mouth, filling your lungs, and gently leaving your body. With each breath, you are becoming more present and grounded."

Five seconds breath work exercise - script

🕒 5'

complexity: ●○○

"Let's listen to our natural breath with openness, without trying to breathe correctly. Let's try to clear our minds of the thoughts of the day, the week, the month. Let's forget about what we've done today and what we will do tomorrow. We are in a safe space. Now, let's begin breathing with awareness.

Take deep inhales and exhale fully.

Breathe with your chest / belly whatever feels most comfortable for you.

Now, let's try making our inhales last for 5 seconds. 1...2...3...4...5...

And exhale for the same 5 seconds. 1...2...3...4...5...

Once again. We'll do this three times together, then three times on your own.

Now, we'll change the breathing pattern.

Before we begin, here's what we'll do:

Inhale for 5 seconds... 1...2...3...4...5...

Hold the breath for 2 seconds.

And then exhale for another 5 seconds.

We'll do this three times."

Body scan

In today's academic and corporate environments, employees and students often spend long hours sitting in front of their laptops, immersed in demanding tasks that contribute to physical tension and mental stress. The sedentary nature of modern work and study routines leads to discomfort and unconscious accumulation of stress in the body, especially in areas like the neck, shoulders, and lower back. A body scan meditation is a powerful tool to counteract these effects by promoting awareness of bodily sensations and helping individuals recognize and release built-up tension. By guiding attention systematically through different parts of the body, this practice fosters a deeper connection between mind and body, allowing individuals to identify areas of discomfort and consciously relax them. Regularly incorporating body scans into daily routines can enhance overall well-being, improve focus, and reduce stress, making it an essential practice for both academic and corporate professionals striving for balance and productivity.

Body scan

🕒 10/15'

complexity: ●●●○

*"We'll now transition into a gentle body scan, bringing awareness to different parts of the body. This practice will help us release any tension and become fully present in our bodies. Start by bringing your attention to the top of your **head**. Imagine a warm, gentle light resting at the crown, softening any tightness in your **forehead** and around your **eyes**. Let this light flow down, relaxing your **cheeks**, **jaw**, and the muscles around your **mouth**.*

*Allow your **shoulders** to drop away from your **ears**, releasing any tension in your **neck**. Feel this light flowing down into your **chest** and heart space. Notice if you're holding any tightness there, and if you are, allow it to soften. With each breath, feel your chest expand and relax. Now, bring your attention to your **arms** and then **hands** and **fingers**. Feel the space between each finger, noticing any sensations or tension. Imagine the light spreading through your fingers, relaxing them, and releasing any tightness in your hands.*

*Now, shift your attention to your **back**. Sense your upper back, middle back, and lower back. Slowly releasing any discomfort or tension with each exhale.*

*Bring awareness to your **abdomen**. Let your **stomach** be soft and at ease. Feel the light spreading into your **hips**, gently releasing any tightness, and then moving down into your **legs**. Notice the sensations in your **thighs**, **knees**, **calves**, and finally your **feet**, feeling the weight of your body fully supported by the earth beneath you.*

*Bring your focus to your **toes**. Feel the sensations in each toe, noticing the space between them. Visualize the light moving down to your toes, relaxing them and releasing any tension. Let your feet feel grounded and supported.*

Take a moment to feel your entire body, from head to toe, breathing naturally and fully. You are here, in this moment, safe, grounded, and present."

Practice

Meditation practices are endless: there are many books, as well as online resources like YouTube videos that guide meditation sessions of any length.

Below, I'm sharing some scripts I've written for practices aimed at students or employees in various situations and with different objectives.

Gratitude meditation

🕒 10/15'

complexity: ●●○

Goal: to raise awareness of the present moment and cultivate gratitude.

"Bring to mind one thing you're grateful for in this moment. It could be a person who supports you, an opportunity you have, or even just the simple gift of being here today.

Feel the warmth of this gratitude. Let it fill you up, knowing that, no matter what challenges or uncertainties lie ahead, you have things to be grateful for right now.

Now, think about the journey you're about to begin. Feel gratitude for the chance to learn, to grow, and to connect with others over the next months. As you breathe, let this gratitude settle into your heart, anchoring you in this moment and filling you with a sense of abundance and possibility."

Future self - connected to letter to future self (see page 55, Forming chapter)

🕒 15'

complexity: ●●●

Goal: to introduce the "Letter to future self" activity

"I'd like to invite you to imagine yourself XX months from now (depending on the project).

Picture your future self at the end of this program. See yourself having gone through the entire experience, having learned, grown, and evolved in ways that you can't fully predict.

What does your future self feel like? What strengths or qualities have you developed over these months? How have you grown? Perhaps you feel more confident, more connected to yourself and others, or more open to new experiences.

Take a moment to really connect with this vision of yourself. Notice how it feels to imagine this growth and transformation. Let yourself feel a sense of curiosity, excitement, and hope as you think about the person you're becoming.

Stay with this vision for a few more breaths. You are planting the seeds for this growth right now, and you have everything within you to nurture these seeds over the coming months."

Ask the participants to write the letter.

A pebble in the lake

🕒 15'

complexity:

Goal: to reflect on the journey over a period of time (e.g. a year) and focus on personal growth.

“The only thing you need to do is follow my voice. At some point, I will stop talking, and we will remain in silence during the meditation.

Imagine throwing a pebble into a lake. Watch the surface of the water ripple.

Let’s do this again, throw another pebble into the lake.

This creates waves that gradually fade away, becoming smaller and more distant from the center, until the water becomes calm and still again.

Imagine that each pebble you throw into the lake represents a thought. Thoughts that, in this moment, you don’t need and can release by tossing them into the lake. Watch them disappear, following the small waves until the water is calm and clear once more. And when the water is completely still, you can see the bottom of the lake.

Let’s try to clear the mind. If any other thoughts arise, throw them into the lake and watch the waves disappear.

Now, imagine that beyond the lake, there’s a mountain landscape.

You’ve traveled this path to reach the shore of the lake, and now you observe it.

Each mountain represents your journey over the past year, from January until now.

I invite you to reflect on this journey: think about where you started, what has happened, what you’ve faced, and what you’ve discovered.

Scan each month as if it were a mountain.

Slowly, begin to reconnect with your breath, following each inhale and exhale.

Re-establish awareness of your physical body, feeling the space around you, and becoming conscious of it. Gently open your eyes.”

Ask the participant to draw what they felt / experiences / saw.

Sharing

From my personal experience, the sharing session is the most powerful part of a meditation practice. People gain confidence and express their feelings openly, without filters.

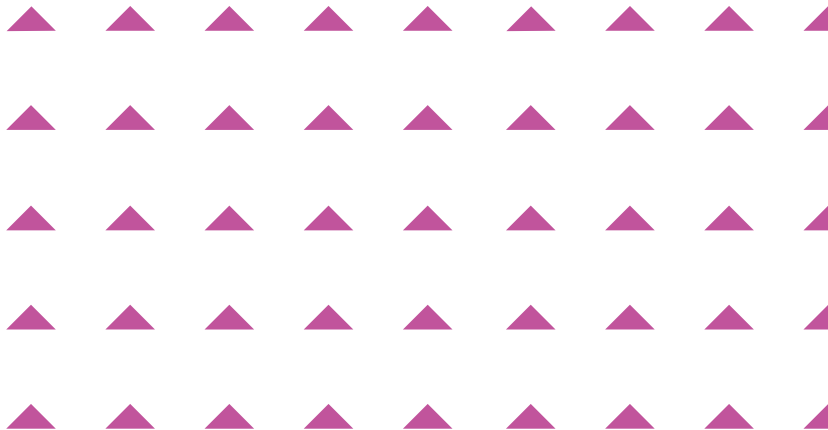
I have facilitated meditation sessions in the corporate world, where I've witnessed people shedding tears in front of colleagues, without any barriers. This not only created a safe space for everyone but also fostered a deeper connection within the team, allowing them to learn more about each other.

As a facilitator, it's important not to force participants to share their feelings. Sometimes, using techniques like drawing what they felt or writing a letter can be enough as a closure, and it can help people share their thoughts with less embarrassment.

Don't be afraid of silence: allow participants the time to feel comfortable before sharing.

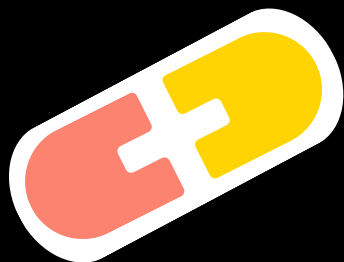
Remember to ask everyone how they felt:

- Was it difficult to focus?
- Was there anything that felt better or worse than at the beginning?
- Will they consider practicing again?



**LOOKING FOR
QUICK TIPS?**

FACILITATORS', FIRST AID



WHEN THE TEAM STRUGGLES TO MAKE DECISIONS

ESTABLISH A WEEKLY FACILITATOR

During various projects, it has proven useful to appoint a weekly facilitator during critical moments of teamwork. Why is this beneficial? Establishing a single facilitator can be challenging in a team where members have equal roles and no clear leader. Rotating the role helps team members to:

- engage in a position that may or may not naturally suit them.
- share the responsibility of managing potential challenges.

The rotation can be done randomly or by assigning the facilitator based on the tasks best suited to each person for that week.

RULES OF WORK: THE TEAM CHARTER

When the team struggles to follow a single direction, it's important to take a moment to clearly establish the rules: How do we want to work together? Write them down in a manifesto to follow throughout the day.

To make it more engaging, consider setting a lighthearted penalty for those who break the rules, for example, contributing 50 cents to the communal pizza fund!

DOT VOTING

When a democratic conclusion cannot be reached, the last resort is a vote by dot or a show of hands.

WHEN THE TEAM INSISTS ON DOING EVERYTHING TOGETHER AND AVOIDS SPLITTING UP

ESTABLISH FIXED OR ROTATING TASK FORCES

It can be useful to use the Card Roles tool (see page 52) to understand the various affinities and “superpowers” of each team member. If there are no specific roles and affinities, the team can also rotate the assignment of tasks. Additionally, setting aside an hour a day for individual work can be helpful.

THE TEAM IS FUNCTIONING WELL OVERALL, BUT ONE MEMBER SEEMS DISENGAGED



ENCOURAGE INDIVIDUAL FEEDBACK AND AVOID USING GENERAL TOOLS.

In these situations, group retrospective tools like KALM (page 64) may not be the most effective approach. The team needs to address specific conflicts, so consider suggesting an individual "I Wish / I Like" (page 59) round in a collective setting. For example, gather and share all the "I Wish / I Like" feedback for component X, then move on to component Y, and so forth. Give the team the option to decide whether they would prefer to carry out this activity with or without your presence.



USE THE “A STEP FORWARD ACTIVITY”

Why?

Physical movement can be a powerful tool for releasing tension and addressing each team member's level of commitment and engagement. By incorporating a body-focused activity, the team can step away from purely verbal discussions and instead express feelings through movement. This approach can help surface underlying frustrations, encourage self-awareness, and create a more open environment for reflection. Engaging in such an activity allows individuals to reconnect with their personal motivations and the collective energy of the group. For a deeper exploration of this method, refer to Chapter Storming.



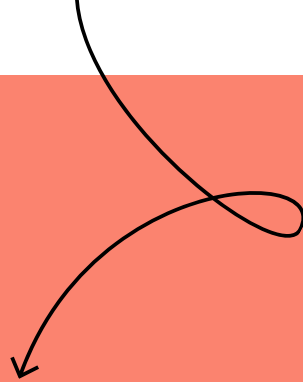
THE VIBE CHECKER

When dealing with disengagement, general tools may not be very effective. Instead, prioritize one-on-one feedback and have a personal conversation with the “bad egg,” encouraging them to do the same with other team members. If personal issues are affecting their engagement, consider suggesting a break from the process to regain clarity.

Often, disengagement stems from a lack of clarity about one's role. Introducing card roles can provide structure, and assigning titles to everyone can help foster a stronger team dynamic. Additionally, shifting the responsibility of the vibe checker (a role often held by the coach) to someone else can bring fresh energy and new perspectives to the team atmosphere.

05.

CONCLUSIONS



The most urgent need is to train coaches and facilitators in this ability, since it is not innate. Creating positive team dynamics and effective sessions requires a supportive environment, and it is the coach's responsibility to foster it through skill development rather than relying on individual sensitivities. Emotional intelligence can be cultivated, and it is essential to promote its understanding in the workplace, especially given the significant mindset shifts organizations are undergoing in the post-pandemic era.

To empower facilitators, it is crucial to focus on developing their character and behavior, particularly if they are more introverted. Introverted facilitators may face challenges in engaging participants or energizing the room, but training programs can help by teaching techniques such as voice modulation, body language, and active listening. With support and encouragement, they can gain confidence and lead authentically and effectively.

This is not to suggest that facilitation is only for extroverts. Introverted coaches, for example, often connect more thoughtfully with participants and can guide team dynamics in a measured, attentive way. By contrast, extroverted coaches might risk dominating the discussion or unintentionally discouraging those less comfortable sharing emotions.

Whether introverted or extroverted, every facilitator has unique strengths to bring to a group. What truly matters is nurturing the skills and confidence to create spaces where people feel safe, energized, and empowered to contribute. When coaches and facilitators grow in this way, teams grow with them.

I am excited to continue exploring this topic, to learn from others' experiences, and to collaborate on projects that put these principles into practice.

SOURCES

Fire Starters

- [SessionLab](#)
- [Fun Retrospectives](#)
- [Slido Blog: 35 Icebreakers](#)

Tools

- [Design a Better business \(team charter canvas\)](#)
- [Hyper island toolbox](#)

Other

- [I am remarkable](#)

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