

Buddy System

How to Prepare

Why a Buddy System

- ▶ Support for learning seems to increase the speed and depth of the learning, whether it comes from support groups or from “buddies” (a partner for learning)
- ▶ Yet most people aren’t accustomed to intentional support, so they don’t know how to use them or are embarrassed about using them (practice with a new behavior)

Therefore buddy preparation includes giving people some information and a framework to get started.

Randomize buddy selection

Unless you have specific reasons to put certain individuals together with other individuals, randomizing has advantages, including the opportunity to go to an awareness layer deeper than usual by asking the question, “How is this buddy the perfect buddy for you?”

One system for doing this is two concentric circles of equal size. Put participants who are already friends/political colleagues/partners in the same circle so they won’t match up with each other. Start the circles walking around, in opposite directions. Stop the walking at a random point; the persons closest to each other in the other circle are the buddy pair.

Questions to ask to get the buddies started

Formulate the questions that makes sense for the goals of your workshop, the design, and the level of sophistication of the participants. Sentence completions allow tremendous freedom, yet are structured enough to stimulate valuable information in a sequenced way. Give an example of sentence completion to encourage free association. Here are examples:

For less sophisticated participants:

- ▶ “Some wishes I have for this workshop are. . .”
- ▶ “Some fears or reservations I have about this workshop are. . .”
- ▶ “Some ways I might ‘tune out’ or reduce my participation in this workshop are. . .”
- ▶ “Some support I could use might be . . .”

For more sophisticated participants:

- ▶ “You’ll be glad I’m your buddy because...”
- ▶ “A way I might need support in this workshop is...”
- ▶ “How I might resist that support is. . .”
- ▶ “How you could support me anyway is. . .”

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