

The Mingle

a flexible experiential activity

The mingle (also called milling) is a kind of simultaneous interaction of the participants. The facilitator creates a limiting boundary, for example, within the circle of chairs participants have been sitting in. Participants are instructed to get up and move about within the boundary, to encounter each other, and to carry out a task.

The flexibility comes from the variety of tasks available. Here are a few examples. Note that they can be very different in relation to the comfort zone.

- ▶ **Get acquainted** • The facilitator sets the task as "In these few minutes, see how many people you can meet!" There's a noisy chaos as people move around trying to meet as many as possible. It's a fairly comfortable exercise for most participants and warms up the room very quickly. In this version it is fine for both participants to share briefly.
- ▶ **Insight sharing** • The facilitator sets the task as "In these few minutes, see how many people you can get around to, to share one of your insights from the day." An alternative to closing circles, to journal-writing, and other means of capturing insights and assisting participants to "digest" their work. Obviously a very kinesthetic way -- bodies in motion!
- ▶ **Feedback** • The facilitator carefully explains that this is structured, one-way communication. In the encounter, whoever starts gets to finish and the other person does not reciprocate, although later in the exercise they may encounter each other again and the other gets to go first. Acknowledge that this is ritualized, and for a particular reason. Write on the newsprint the formulation, including what the response is from the person who receives the feedback. Rehearse the whole group on both, Make a big deal out of how structured and formal this is, and that no conversations are permitted. Reducing the light in the room can be helpful, as well as music. Examples of the communication (usually sentence-completion):
"The inner beauty I see in you is..." / "Thank you for noticing." OR
"A way I see you hiding your power is..." / "Thank you for caring enough to share that."
- ▶ **Practicing conflict resolution tools in real time** • After a fair amount of set-up ("front-loading") about conflict resolution and teaching a tool (for example, "I-statements,"), the facilitator invites people to practice with real issues they have with each other. For example: *"When you repeatedly come late to our staff meeting I feel irritated because it seems like you don't value our meetings as much as I do."*
- ▶ **Taking risks** • After discussion which yields consensus that risk-taking is a good idea (promotes growth, etc.), create a mingle in which people can take a risk. For example (w/ highly structured, one-way interactions as in Feedback):
"Something I like about myself is. . . ." OR
"A fear I experience in this workshop is. . . ."
- ▶ **Self-assertion** • You get the idea.