

Gummy Bear Exercise

Goals

Help participants prepare themselves for their transition into work in the field;
Help participants think about their support network and how to relate to it.

Time

30-45 minutes

Materials

Hundreds of gummy bears (or other small animal-like objects)

Each person needs their journal

Extra paper (preferably colored construction paper)

How to Lead

Give each person a large handful of gummy bears (10-20 or so bears) and one piece of paper. Have individuals spread themselves around the room along with their journal (or pen and paper).

STEP 1. DEFINE THEIR SUPPORT NETWORK: PRE-DEPLOYMENT

First have participants place a single gummy bear on their colored paper. This represents them.

Then have participants place their support network around that first gummy bear onto the page – each gummy bears represent people or families or groups of people for their home support network. This represents their life before going into the field.

Now, have them brainstorm in their journal ways that they could support their support network at that stage: what information might they want? What resources would they need? What are they fearful about and what would help them be less fearful? Give them some time to journal.

STEP 2. DEPLOYMENT

Then have them take their gummy bear off of the colored paper and save it (do not eat it or throw it away). This represents their support network's life after deployment. Have them move around the gummy bears to represent how their support network's lives might shift after deployment.

What will be the experience of the support network be like? As facilitator, remind them that all the support network folks' lives will continue: with all the challenges and stresses of their daily life. Have participants brainstorm what things do they think their support network would appreciate from them (as fieldworkers and friends). Have them move around the gummy bears to represent various changes or shifts that might happen (moving away, new jobs, death in the family, etc.).

Allow a few minutes for journaling, then put them into threes to get some ideas from other people. (Here, you might remind them about culture and that the cultural values we bring around family/friends can differ strongly – so it's not a time for judgement or telling people how they have to do it – just open sharing.) Then send them back to do some more journaling.

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STEP 3. RE-ENTRY

Finally, have them put the gummy bear back on the colored paper – representing their “re-entry” (returning home). What now will their support network appreciate? How do they fit or not fit back into the configuration of their support network? What shifts will need to happen?

Put them back into another group of three to debrief. Harvest individual learnings or things people noticed.

(Since re-entry may be a long ways off for people, you might add: one reason re-entry is there, is because research suggests that people who think about re-entry earlier on, tend to be healthier when they return.)

STEP 4. DEBRIEF

Go into small groups for personal reflection. Debrief with larger theory about handling stress/trauma and theory about re-entry.

Where This Tool Comes From:

Created by Winnie Romeril and Jill Sternberg from Peace Brigades International (PBI) – Indonesia Project (<http://www.peacebrigades.org/>). Adapted slightly by Daniel Hunter, Training for Change.