"Questions" Improv Exercise

This exercise gets groups asking questions and thinking quickly. Participants work in partners to engage in conversations around nano programming. The first person begins by asking a question. Their partner must respond with a question that connects to something specific within the previous question and moves the conversation forward. The conversation continues with the two partners using only questions.

Skill sets	**Time to implement**	**Number of participants**
Listening/Awareness, Quick Thinking, Accepting Offers	8-15 minutes	2 (partners)

Exercise flow

1. Ask the participants to stand and pair off with one another.
2. Explain that, when asked, each set of partners will engage in a conversation. The conversation will be an interaction that might take place at a NISE mini exhibit or nano program. For instance, a guest and facilitator discussing how advancements in nanotechnology could impact their neighborhood.
3. Explain that the first person initiates the conversation by asking a question as if they were a facilitator.
4. Provide an example of an initiating question. ("Do you think nanosilver will help improve our lives?")
5. Explain that their partner takes on the role of guest and must respond with a question.
6. Encourage people to respond with questions that are linked to a specific detail within the preceding question and then add a small piece of new information.

    Examples of possible responses:

    Good: "What negative side effects does nanosilver have?" *(connects to previous question and provides some new information)*

    Could be better: "Do you think it will help?" or "How can it improve our lives?" *(mirror the preceding question without adding new information)*

    Doesn't contribute: "Why?" or "Is silver a precious metal?" *(deny or ignore the information in the preceding question)*

7. Explain that as the conversation continues the two partners <u>use only questions</u> to carry on the conversation.
8. Ask if any participants have questions about the exercise flow.
9. Have the partners start by asking their initiating questions.
10. Allow the group to work through the exercise.
11. Stop and debrief the experiences.

Debrief questions

1. What skills helped us to be successful in this exercise?
2. What kinds of questions helped the conversation to move forward?
3. What kinds of tactics did you use to come up with new questions?
4. How did individuals support each other?
5. When might these skills be related to working with Team-Based Inquiry?

Tips

Side-coach participants to add information when they ask their questions. This increases active listening and engages critical thinking skills more than if they simply mirror the question or ask unrelated questions.

Have the group increase the speed at which they ask questions. This will heighten their need to listen to the previous question.

Variations

Small teams (fewer than 5 people): Have the group work together to formulate questions. One person starts by asking a question to everyone in the small group. Anyone in the group may respond to the question using a different question. Encourage people to respond with questions that are linked to specific details within the preceding questions. Allow the game flow to continue until all participants have had the opportunity to respond to a question a few times. Repeat the exercise with a new person asking the opening question.

Different opening words: Participants must start questions with a different word than the preceding question. ("*Why are you here?*" followed by "*Did you expect me elsewhere?*", rather than "*Why are you here?*" followed by "*Why would I be somewhere else?*")

Open-ended only: Participants may only begin questions with How, Who, What, When, or Why.

No repeats: Participants may not ask the same question twice in one round.