

Death in the Desert

ACTIVITY

Goal: A deficit builder activity:

1. To demonstrate that we often let our minds jump to conclusions & take us down the wrong path
2. To demonstrate how frustrating it can be to get the facts and figure out what the story is – if you are not having a productive two-way conversation.
3. To drive to the difficulty of trying to get the whole story when we only ask Yes & No questions.

Set-Up:

1. Have the participants pair up (hopefully with someone they do not know well)
2. Explain that this is a communication activity that they will be conducting with each other.
 - They need to move close enough to each other to be able to speak & be heard - and far enough away from other people so that their conversation is private.
3. Have one member of each pair join you outside of the room.
 - Provide the following directions:
 - I am going to tell you a story.
 - I am going to tell your partners the same story (when we return to the room) – but I will leave out one critical piece of information when I am speaking to them.
 - The goal of this activity is for your partner to figure out the critical piece of information – and solve the riddle.
 - They will do this by asking you questions.
 - You will answer honestly – but the ONLY answers you can give are YES or NO.
 - If the question they ask cannot be answered with a YES or NO – ask them to restate the question.
 - As soon as someone has figured out the answer – have them raise their hand.

Here is the story:

- It was late April in 2011.
- I was horseback riding with 3 other people in the desert outside of Los Vegas.
- We were over a mile away from the closest road, and 3 miles away from the closest town.
- We can upon a body – face down in the sand – the person was very dead.
- Next to the body was a package that could have saved their life.
- What Happened?
- The package was a parachute.

Are there any questions?

- We will go back into the room & I will ask you to sit with your partner.
- I will tell them the same story I just told you (less the part about the parachute).
 - They will then start asking you questions
 - If they ask a question that was not covered in the story – answer (YES or NO) in alignment with what you know.

Activity Part 1:

4. Return to the room, have the participants join their partners.
 - I will tell you the same story I just told your partner – they just have one more piece of information that explains the whole thing.
 - Your job is to ask questions that will help you solve the puzzle.
 - Your partner will work with you and answer every question honestly.
 - But you can only ask questions that they can answer with a YES or NO.
 - If they can't answer with a YES or NO – you have to restate the question.
 - As soon as you have figured out the answer – raise your hand.
5. Tell the story – exactly the same way – do not mention the parachute.
6. Instruct the pairs to begin
7. After 15 minutes- if no one has solved the puzzle, stop the game & provide the answer.

Activity Part 2:

8. Tell those who were asking the questions – they will now have the opportunity to go through the activity & have their partners answer questions.
 - Have them join you outside the room.
9. Provide the following directions:
 - You will now have the opportunity to do to your partner as they just did to you.
 - I will tell you a story
 - I am going to tell your partners the same story (when we return to the room) – but I will leave out one critical piece of information when I am speaking to them.
 - The goal of this activity is for your partner to figure out the critical piece of information – and solve the riddle.
 - They will do this by asking you questions.
 - You will answer honestly – but the **ONLY** answers you can give are YES or NO.
 - If the question they ask cannot be answered with a YES or NO – ask them to the question.
 - As soon as someone has figured out the answer – have them raise their hand.

Here is the story:

- It was late February of last year.
- I was riding snow-mobiles with a group of friends in up-state New York, near the Utica border.
- It was about 3:30 in the afternoon & the sun was started to go down.
- We were traveling NorthWest.
- As we came to the top of a ridge, we came upon a cabin.
- There were no footprints or animal tracks near the cabin.
- When we looked in the window – we saw two (2) people – dead.
- What happened?
 - It was an airplane cabin.

- Are there any questions?
- We will go back into the room & I will ask you to sit with your partner.
- I will tell them the same story I just told you (less the part about it being an airplane cabin).
- They will then start asking you questions
 - If they ask a question that was not covered in the story – answer (YES or NO) in alignment with what you know.

Activity Part 2:

10. Return to the room, have the participants join their partners.
 - I will tell you the same story I just told your partner – they just have one more piece of information that explains the whole thing.
 - Your job is to ask questions that will help you solve the puzzle.
 - Your partner will work with you and answer every question honestly.
 - But you can only ask questions that they can answer with a YES or NO.
 - If they can't answer with a YES or NO – you have to restate the question.
 - As soon as you have figured out the answer – raise your hand.
11. Tell the story – exactly the same way – do not mention the parachute.
12. Instruct the pairs to begin
13. After 15 minutes- if no one has solved the puzzle, stop the game & provide the answer.
14. DEBRIEF:
 - Why was it so difficult?
 - How often do we believe we know exactly where the conversation is going – only to be totally surprised?
 - If we were to do the activity again – with different facts & riddle – how would you modify your questions & your thought process?
 - How does this activity tie in with the subject of The Trouble with Communication?