

Back Art

Introduction: Saying what you mean and hearing what is said are problems that we have in any communication between two people. You can imagine how these problems can escalate when you have more than two people involved. An example would be a comment or set of instructions that passes through a number of people and the interpretation that each person puts on the information. Rumors are certainly a good illustration of their problem; they seem to grow bigger and better with each telling.

Time Frame: 15 to 20 minutes, plus debriefing time.

Materials: A pencil, marker or crayon blank sheets of paper for each group of 5 to 6 people. 5 or 6 pictures for team members to view and then be able to draw...some examples: star, house, flower, tree, boat. Have the pictures get progressively more difficult.

Directions:

1. Divide your class into groups of five or six people.
2. Have each group sit in a single file facing the front of the room. This can be done sitting on the floor, in chairs or even standing.
3. The last person in line from each team meets with the teacher and is shown a picture to draw. All the teams are shown the same picture, at the same time.
4. After seeing the picture, they go back to their team and place themselves at the end of the line.
5. At the starting command, they use their finger to draw the picture that they saw on the back of the student in front of them.
6. Once they are done drawing, the person in front of them tries to draw the same thing on the back of the person in front of them.
7. This continues until it reaches the first person in line. That person then draws what he thinks was drawn on his back on a piece of paper.
8. When the front people are finished drawing, they need to raise their hand so the teacher can note the order that the team finishes.
9. When everyone is finished they all reveal their pictures.
10. The teacher then judges how closely they resemble the original picture and awards points to the teams that finishes first if their drawing resembles the original, if it doesn't they go down the line to determine winner.
11. The teams may not ask questions about what is being drawn on their backs. They should also be encouraged not to look at the other teams to see what they are drawing.

Debrief:

- What did you see happening during this activity?
- How did you feel when you were the person who started the drawing?
- How did you feel when you were in the middle of the line?
- How did you feel when you were the person drawing on the paper?
- What made this activity hard to accomplish
- Why did the picture look different at the end than it did at the beginning?
- What would have made this activity easier to accomplish?
- What can this activity tell us about communication?
- What are some of the ways that the facts of a story get changes
- What are some of the consequences of information being changes?
- Does it make any difference in the end whether the information was changes on purpose or by mistake
- What steps can we take to be sure that information is not heard or told incorrectly?
- Whose job is it to be sure that information gets passed along correctly? The person doing the talking or the person doing the listening? Why?