

Social change paper game

Purpose: To explore what happens in a group when resources become scarce and to understand the different options available.

Time: 20 minutes – if only introducing the tool and demonstrating how it works, allow more time if the objective is for the group to apply the tool to their situation

Preparation: have ready A4 sheets of paper (or big enough for someone to stand on with both feet) enough for one per participant and make sure there is furniture to sit/stand on, eg chairs, tables.

Facilitator's notes:

1) Explain that this is a cooperation game. It might involve some physical contact, but there's no running or 'high activity'. Those who cannot stand or prefer not to can participate – consider asking anyone to share such physical conditions before starting the game.

2) Put a piece of A4 paper on the floor in front of each participant
"We're going to play a game with two rules: you must always be touching the paper, but not touch the floor". Demonstrate by standing on the paper, and ask the group to touch the paper, but not the floor (this is the trick – everyone assumes the touching means standing, but there are many other options!) Invite the group to *"Imagine the paper is a resource – what kind could it be?"* e.g. oil, coal, money.

3) Create a story around the resource eg: *"at the moment there is plenty of money, easily enough for everyone"*...continue this as the game progresses and the resource becomes more scarce.

4) Gradually remove some pieces of paper.

Take 1 or more pieces of paper at a time, and repeat the rule. Ask any relevant questions and share reflections about their cooperation and working together. Typical responses to scarcity include ripping paper in two, sharing two pieces of paper between three people, piggy backs – but let the participants find their own solutions. At each stage of paper removal, give the group enough time to work out their own solutions to the problems they face.

5) Finally remove all but one piece of paper (this often on the 3rd or 4th round of paper removal – depending on time and group size). Repeat the rule: "touch the paper but don't touch the floor". The participants may claim that there isn't a solution. Assure them that there are many. At this stage it might be worth stating *"make sure you get any needs met, and that you all understand any solution that you find"*.

In the fifteen or so times I've run this, participants have always found a solution. Solutions include ripping the paper into many pieces, and each person take a piece and stands on a chair/sits on a chair but keeps legs in the air; keeping the paper as one piece but moving chairs into a small circle, and everyone stands on the chairs, even hanging from the rafters!

7) Debrief. Pair-share for 5 minutes: "how did that go?" If time allows, ask for general comments after the pair-share, and offer any facilitator's observations if they don't come out from the participants.