

Whisper Circles

For all kinds of groups

■■■■ Practical advice for: Warming up and breaks

Whisper Circles are a mixture of brainstorming and the dynamic of small groups. For groups of 12 or more persons

How it works

- the people meet in a room (big enough for several small groups)
- the method and the topic in question is presented or agreed upon
- the people gather in small groups of 2 to 5 persons and talk about a certain question for a few minutes. For example: "What do you expect of this meeting?", "Which topic would you like to discuss on this meeting?", "What would you like to learn here?" This can lead to cooperations, new agreements for workshops etc.
- you can note down the collected answers and ideas on paper or a screenboard. Annotate possible get-togethers as well, for further contacts between interested people.
- The groups split up again after 3 to 5 minutes and form new groups

You can repeat this procedure as often as you want (for example until each one talked to everybody else). This enhances an exchange of thoughts and ideas of many people within a short period of time, for example to come up with ideas for workshops. If you collect these ideas you can use them for further discussion and more meetings later on.

Aims

- to get to know the ideas and visions of other participants and to encourage further get-togethers
- you can express your thoughts in a Whisper Circle without fear of valuation or discrimination
- Whisper Circles shall overcome the differentiation of participants and course instructors, by giving voice to one's own ideas
- Whisper Circles are a dynamic, creative way for mutual exchange of ideas, huge gatherings aren't necessary any more
- at the same time Whisper Circles support the participants in getting to know each other, because the persons start to talk with each other about a topic they all share



Where to apply Whisper Circles

- Whisper Circles are recommended for all meetings, which aim at the direct participation of all persons and want to focus on the concrete ideas of the individual participant. You can use this technique at the beginning of an Open Space phase, for example, or when the meeting tends to get boring

- They are also useful to discuss a certain topic, problem or to get/give feedback. The advantage is to weaken domination and people's shyness, because you can avoid big gatherings.

How to prepare Whisper Circles

- you need a room big enough for several small groups to be able to see each other all the time and to be able to communicate with each other
- Create small corners to sit down or stand comfortably, provided with pen and paper to take notes or write down announcements
- Write a poster, which describes the method
- You also need a poster with the certain topic or question to discuss
- You might also need a place where to collect all the information and announcements written down, for example info-boards or a big table