



TOOL | A CHALLENGE IN HYPNOSIS – THE POWER OF THE GIVE AND TAKE

TIME REQUIRED: 30-60 MINUTES

We know that when tackling complex community issues, bringing a diversity of voices to the table is a key ingredient to finding the best path forward. We don't however, always do a great job of intentionally creating an environment where people – with varying backgrounds and perspectives – can thrive and feel comfortable contributing. This participatory tool offers a simple and fun exercise that can help break down barriers between group members and provide a space and context to play, reflect and share with one another before diving into the task of working collaboratively.

USING THIS TOOL WILL HELP YOU:

- Break down barriers between community members
- Offer opportunities to give, take and reflect on different positions of power
- Build trust amongst diverse stakeholders
- Warm up or break the ice before diving into a conversation
- Have fun with one another!

OVERVIEW

This tool is a simple exercise that can be applied to any group setting where you are bringing people together to collaborate. It can be used as a standalone ‘ice breaker’ at the beginning of a community gathering, or in conjunction with other exercises and built upon over time with groups whose work is long-term and ongoing. No matter how you choose to use it, it is a great way to encourage individuals to get out of their shell, move around the space, and share with one another.

THE TOOL (20 MINUTES)

STEP ONE: Have the group select a partner and find a space in the room to stand together. Each partner should identify as either A or B.

STEP TWO: Using a co-facilitator or volunteer from your group explain the instructions of the activity and show a demonstration to the group.

INSTRUCTIONS:

- **Partner A** holds their palm forward, fingers upright (as if giving a high five), about 30cm's away from Partner B's face.
- **Partner B** will then line up their face with their partner's hand so that their hairline is at approximately their partner's fingertips and their chin is more or less lined up with the base of their palm.
- When the exercise begins, **Partner A** will start a series of movements with their hand in which **Partner B** will follow. Movements can be up or down; left or right; back or front – any direction that **Partner A** chooses, so long as they do not cause **Partner B** any harm. Movements should never move too quickly or come to a complete halt.
- **Partner B**'s role is to maintain the same distance from **Partner A**'s hand and their face throughout the entirety of the exercise. This will involve contorting their body in whatever means necessary to maintain the distance so that the face and hand remain parallel. **Partner B** does not need to stay stationary for this, but will adapt and move throughout the room as per **Partner A**'s hand movements.



STEP THREE: Once the instructions have been explained and demonstrated, have the partners spread out in the room and allot about five minutes for **Partner A** to 'hypnotise' **Partner B**. Once time is up, have the partners switch roles – and switch power – and have **Partner B** 'hypnotise' **Partner A**.



STEP FOUR: Once both partners have had the chance to try leading, have both **Partner A** and **Partner B** hold their right palm forward facing one another, and assign them the task of hypnotizing each other simultaneously. In this case **Partner A** is lined up with **Partner B's** hand, and vice versa. Together each must balance leading and following all at the same time.

VARIATION #1 (15 MINUTES)

As mentioned above, the exercise can stop right there. This will give you enough to have a great conversation and reflection with the group around how they felt and responded to that exercise. [See list of suggested debrief questions on Page 4]. But if you want to keep building, have participants break into groups of three – preferably leaving their first partner behind and finding two new ones.

In this variation there is one leader and two followers. The leader now uses two hands – again moving fluidly without stopping – to hypnotise their two partners. Partners should never touch. In this round, give about five minutes to each member of the group to have their turn leading.

VARIATION #2 (10 MINUTES)

If momentum is good, and the time allows, why not keep building? In this variation we involve the whole group.

STEP ONE: Have the group arrange themselves in a circle with one participant in the middle.

STEP TWO: The participant in the middle begins moving their whole body, but always in one direction and staying in the same spot.

STEP THREE: A first volunteer can then come into the circle and allow themselves to be hypnotized by any part of the leader's body. For example the volunteer might pick the leader's elbow or ear or nose or foot, and in the same way as past variations, align their face with that body part maintaining a consistent distance.

STEP FOUR: A second volunteer steps into the circle and allows themselves to be hypnotized by a body part of either the first or second leader in the circle.

STEP FIVE: A third participant joins, with the choice of being hypnotized by any of the three leaders. Each remaining participant joins in until the whole group is being hypnotized by a body part of another's.

STEP SIX: Once everyone is being hypnotized, the facilitator can have the followers move closer and/or further from their body part, or can challenge the group by having the initial leader exaggerate their motions even more so – causing a ripple effect in the group.

THE DEBRIEF (5-15 MINUTES)

The debrief is best done after each round of variations. Each element to this exercise might bring up new or different reactions from participants and so to taking five minutes after each round to reflect on the experience will help to make this tool more than just fun and games.

Also – think about probing questions that help to pull out some of the key themes you want to achieve with this exercise. You may want to focus on conversations around power for instance – what was it like to give and take power? What was it like to lead and follow?

HELPFUL DEBRIEF QUESTIONS:

- How did this exercise make you feel?
- What, if anything, did this exercise bring up for you?
- What was it like to give and take power?
- What was it like to lead and follow?
- How can this exercise be applied in your own life or work? (Or maybe this particular project)
- Were you surprised by anything you experienced?

PRINCIPLES FOR USING THIS TOOL

- This activity relies on participants trusting one another, so emphasizing the importance of not moving too quickly, or putting another person in harms way is key.
- Be sure to demonstrate the exercise before expecting others to follow. It is much better understood in practice than in words.
- Be sure to consider the accessibility of the group participants as well as the space. This exercise may need to be adapted if group members have difficulty moving around, or if the room you're working in is too small for the number of participants.

DIVING DEEPER

- For other theatre-based exercises like this one, pick up a copy of Augusto Boal's [Games For Actors and Non-Actors](#). This tool has been adapted from an exercise pulled from this book called *Colombian Hypnosis*.

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