

File Cabinet Instructions

Purpose:

To have participants experience a kinesthetic activity designed to remind them of:

- Information processing challenges
- Inconsistent memory and retrieval
- Group dynamics that impose extra pressure on individuals
 - Oral Instructions
 - Limited Instructions
 - Overstimulation
 - Time pressure
 - Competition (prizes)
 - Performance expectation

To demonstrate the “unorganized file cabinet” analogy.

Materials:

- 2 file cabinet quiz sheets
- 1 file cabinet stocked with a set of logically organized answers for the quiz
- 1 file cabinet stocked with a set of disorganized answers for the quiz
- Clock/phone or other timing device
- Prize for each participant (mini magnifying glass or detective badge)

Time:

- 10 min total: 5 minutes for the activity & 5 minutes to debrief

Instructions:

1. Split the room in down the middle to form two teams.
2. Appoint the person furthest from the front as captain for each team.
3. Give the file cabinet to the person closest to the front for each team.
4. Give the captains the cabinet quiz sheet.
5. Give the following verbal instructions to the entire room:
 - Listen to your team captain's instructions.
 - Search for the answer in the file cabinet.
 - Communicate the answer to your team captain, so that your answer can be recorded
 - Pass the file cabinet on to the next person on your team, and continue the search, following your captain's instructions.

- This is a timed activity – You will have five minutes to complete as much of the task as you are able to.
 - The members of the winning team will all get a prize! (don't tell them that everyone gets a prize—this is revealed at the end)
6. Start timing the activity. Walk around the room, paying attention to comments that are made, and observe how people are acting and the group dynamics
 7. Give time warnings, to intensify the group dynamics and tension.
 8. Tell them when to stop, and ask each team how many answers they found.

Debrief after the activity:

- Ask about how people felt – why they feel that way, etc. Extend the discussions by cueing in on things that you observed or heard from different members/teams do or say to start discussion happening.
- It is important that as a facilitator you bring lots of observations to the group if they do not generate them, themselves. Make sure to notice the “black and white thinkers”, the rule followers, the ones who take over and other interesting group dynamics/individual behaviours.
- It's important to relate this experience to a child/adult in a classroom setting; timed activity; prizes for being first; oral/limited instructions and group activity that could be overwhelming; pressure to perform for your team and more. What would that feel like? Was it overwhelming? What if the child wasn't “following” the rules or “cheating”?
- Explain that one of the file cabinets was logically organized – ask how that team did with finding the answers. Then explain that the other file cabinet was disorganized – items were filed in obscure ways or things were missing.
- Everyone is a winner with this activity. List out the different ways they were all winners: ie. Getting the most answers; working as a team; being creative; thinking outside the box; persevering when it's frustrating or confusing (or other ways that you observed the group). Honour all the great things that happening in the group.
- Prizes: everyone receives a magnifying glass (or detective/sheriff badge); it is a symbol of needing to be a “detective” to figure out the individual characteristics, strengths and challenges in the person unique learning style.