



Sweetie-bag

We learned this from Pace e Bene

Purpose

to explore power/ privilege/ powerlessness and competition/ co-operation at personal and collective levels

Preparation

Distribute the sweets into the bags so they are unequal, using a rough ratio of, say, 5% “wealthy” bags, 10% “impoverished bags and 85% middle bags. Mark each category of bag for easy recognition when you’re distributing them, eg blue circle for the wealthy bags, green squares for the middle bags, and red stars for the poor bags. In the wealthy bag, put the four chocolates; in the poor bags put one sweet or nothing at all; in the middle bags put 3 to 6 different sweets.

Time

45 minutes

Materials

- Identical paper bags, enough for each person
- Assortment of sweets, including ones that are identical, eg smarties, wine gums, liquorice all-sorts. Plus four identical wrapped chocolates.
- Prizes – raid your cupboard for ideas. Should range from desirable (eg chocolate) to less desirable (eg old spectacles case) to undesirable (eg can of dog food). Enough for half the group.

Related tools

Who has power in a school?

Description

Introduce the exercise by inviting everyone to play a game called “Sweetie bag”. At this stage you don’t need to explain the purpose of the game; maybe that will come out in the feedback later. Explain that you will give out a bag to everyone and the objective is to collect four identical sweets, how each person does that is up to them. When you have collected four of the same shape and colour, you can claim a prize.

Introduce the prizes in a fun way that will encourage them to want them, eg as a quiz show host. Take very few questions.





Give participants a bag each and ask them not to look inside until everyone has received one. Consider carefully who you give the poorest bags to - maybe the more confident, higher ranking members of the group? When everyone has a bag, say "GO!"

Participants will begin to trade with each other to come up with the 4 sweets. The people who come up first (which will usually be those who got the "wealthy" bags) will probably choose the best prizes.

If you like, prize-giving can be done in a game-show way as well, celebrating the prize-winners. Check the sweets before giving the prizes. The game is over when all the prizes are claimed, usually within 5 minutes.

Note: observe the interactions for sharing in the debrief. Note the areas of competition/co-operation, and rule-breaking.

Debrief

- How was that? What happened there? What did you notice? (Where relevant, share what you noticed).
- What feelings came up for you? Ask generally and specifically those who had the "privileged" bags and those who started with less or nothing.
- What enabled you to succeed in this game? For those that did. What prevented that? For those who didn't.
- What connections, if any, do you see to everyday life/ what's happening in the world?
- What can we do that would help make a difference?

