

EXERCISE: RAINMAKERS**AUTHOR: HEIDI NECK****Description**

How do you make rain inside a room? This is the opening question for a playful, kinesthetic exercise that can help students begin to think more creatively and collaborate as a group. In a round circle of 15 or more, participants work together to create the sound of light rain that then escalates to a powerful storm and back to light rain.

Usage Suggestions

This exercise works for all audiences, undergraduate, graduate, and executive. The exercise is best positioned at the start of a session or a class as a non-traditional opener.

Learning Objectives

- Break the ice and build energy in a classroom setting.
- Encourage students to think more creatively when problem-solving.
- Feel how movement can be an active component of the learning process.

Materials List

None.

Pre-Work Required by Students

None.

Theoretical Foundations

Gardner, H. 2011. *Frames of Mind: The Theory of Multiple Intelligences*. New York: Basic Books.

Time Plan (15 minutes)**Exercise**

0:00–0:08 (8 minutes)

The instructor should begin with the following challenge: “If we wanted to make it rain in this classroom right now, how could this be accomplished?” Students will offer the more obvious solutions such as: light a fire so the sprinkler system will go off; bring in a bucket of water and throw it up in the air; shake a closed bottle of carbonated water and then open it. Note that many of these solutions are individual based, and they are neither realistic nor innovative.

When there are no more ideas, ask the students to form a circle (shoulder to shoulder) in the room and announce the following: “We are going to make rain together as a group. Only do what the person to your right is doing and don’t start until the person on your right starts.” The “rain” is made during a series of seven rounds. The instructor begins each round, and then the person to the left will do exactly as the instructor does. The rounds flow into one another; there is never a break in the flow of making the rain.

- Round 1: rubbing hands together. The instructor begins by rubbing his or her hands together palm to palm. The person on the immediate left should immediately follow. Eventually the entire group will be rubbing their hands together. When hand rubbing reaches the person to the immediate right of the instructor, it’s time for round 2.
- Round 2: snaps. While everyone is still rubbing their hands together the instructor then begins snapping his or her fingers of both hands. The person on the left should immediately follow. Eventually the entire group will move from rubbing hands to snapping fingers. When the snapping of fingers reaches the person to the immediate right of the instructor, it’s time for round 3.
- Round 3: slapping hands on thighs. Repeat the format of the previous rounds. Transition to round 4 when thigh slapping reaches the person to the instructor’s immediate right.
- Round 4: stomping feet while slapping hands on thighs. The storm is at its peak during this round. Repeat the format of previous rounds.
- Round 5: return to slapping hands on thighs. Repeat the format of the previous rounds.
- Round 6: snaps return, and the storm begins to subside. Repeat the format of the previous rounds.
- Round 7: rub hands together so the light rain returns, and then end. Repeat the format of the previous rounds.

Congratulate the students for making rain and creating a storm and initiate a round of applause.

0:08–0:15 (7 minutes)

Debrief

The following questions are suggested for debriefing:

- When I asked the question about creating rain, why did your answers not consider “sound” or other ways to create rain?
- What does this mean for how you think about creating opportunities? Problem solving?
- What was your reaction when I asked you to get into a circle?
- How did you feel before, during, and after the exercise?

Key Takeaways

- Our frames of reference are the starting point for problem solving and creating, yet these frames are limiting.
- There is usually uncertainty associated with asking students to get into a circle, but through collaboration this uncertainty is diminished and something completely unexpected is created.
- Entrepreneurship requires action. Simply moving your body can have an immediate impact on emotions, motivation, and confidence to continue.

Teaching Tips

Here are a few tips to ensure a true rainmaking experience:

- Every round must flow into the next without stopping.
- The instructor sets the tone for each round because he or she is the first to go. For example, it’s important to slap hands on thighs rather hard to get the sound needed. The same can be said for stomping.
- Students have a tendency to want to all start rubbing their hands together when the first person starts. It’s important that each person waits to start (or change) until the person to his or her right starts or changes. The instructor may have to start, stop, and restart in the first round to make the point regarding who does what activity when.

The following YouTube video illustrates the power of the exercise: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LKDGCgXtETc>.

Attribution

This exercise has been used by teachers of all levels, though it’s not clear who created the exercise. See http://www.teampedia.net/wiki/index.php?title=Make_it_Rain.