COUNTING TO TEN

CATEGORY   Energiser

SUMMARY   Inclusive quite energiser that works with simple counting, working on building or improve a group culture.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

- Focuses group
- Establishes a cooperative culture within the group
- Helps group to identify disruptive factors
- Emphasises cooperation over competition

TIME   10 to 15 minutes

PREPARATION   None
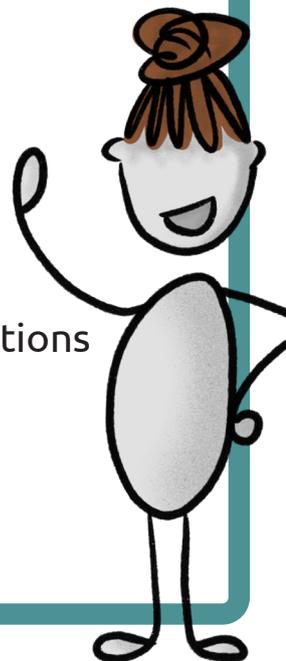
MATERIAL   None

APPROACH

Call the participants into a standing circle and invite them to get as close to each other as it is comfortable for them and their neighbour. Explain that in this exercise the group will count together up to ten or the number of participants, but there are some rules.

1. Only one person speaks at same time.

2. If two or more folks speak simultaneously the group has to start over from one.

3. Each person can only count once.

4. The group cannot communicate in any kind of way beyond counting together.

DEBRIEF

For the debrief you can use the following questions as guidance.

- What makes the group struggle?

- What strategies they tried to employ?

- What made them succeed?

- What were things they learned about themselves and the group?

- How can those things support the group to work together better moving forward?

NOTES

You can adjust this method very easily. Here are some ideas.

Add more rules

Sometimes groups just get there right away. That does not necessarily mean that they are aligned or focused, but it can be due to the size or they d a way to 'cheat'. I usually respond jokingly to the latter, praising their collaborative skills. I would increase the stake with such groups by adding rules to get the magic out of this activity. The following are some of my favourite options:

- Forbid hand **gestures**

- **Neighbours** cannot say the following number

- **Raise** target number

- Count with **closed eyes**

These additional rules don't just make the activity more challenging but also allow for a deeper connection.

Take it remote or hybrid

Counting to 10 is also easily adapted to a remote or hybrid setting. There it can support the group in bridging the geographic divide and equalising the two spaces in the hybrid case. Some things to consider:

- Invite everyone to **unmute** their mics.

- Find an **ally/co-facilitator** in the space you are not in to support you in enforcing the rules. (*hybrid*)

- Keep it easy! Start with only the **first two rules** (only one person speaking & if two speak at the same time, starting over from one) to allow folks to get a feel for the technology and increase them according to need.

- Suppose you have an equal number of participants online and on-site. In that case, you could introduce the following rule: 'The counting has to **ping-pong between the two spaces**. If two people in the same space count after each, the group has to start over.' This shift could strengthen the awareness to balance participation between the spaces. (*hybrid*)

- Consider sending them into **breakout rooms** if you have a huge group online. Just make sure they really understand the process. The debrief then happens again in the large group to create accountability.

- If turning on the mic is unavailable, you could also run Counting to 10 in the chat with participants writing the numbers. Agree beforehand if they need to write them out or can use just numbers.

Switch out the number or change the language

Even though Counting to ten is clearly meant for counting numbers, it could be possible to use other 'lists' of things. Some examples:

- **Names** - This could change the activity into a name game that helps participants learn each other's names. They would have to pay extra attention to what names in the group were already called. I would also use the rule that you cannot say your own name or respond to your name being said.

- **Months, weekdays, colours, feelings, etc.** - For those word groups with unlimited words, the group should focus on not saying doubles.

- **Switch languages** - If you have a multi-lingual group, let them count in their language of choice. This twist also needs more focus from the group as they might not understand seven in Tagalog.

SOURCES

Variation and Extension of Count to ten in "Seeds for Chang In-depth guide" by Seeds for Change