

This is a slight variation of an exercise used within the Toyota Motor Corporation that has two people interviewing each other, asking the same question five times in a row: “Why did you come here today?”



TIMEFRAME

15 – 20 minutes



GROUP SIZE

No limit (pairs)



FACILITATION LVL.

● ● ○



COMFORT ZONE

● ○ ○

Use it to...

- Root intentions for the journey ahead



MATERIALS AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS

- None

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Walkthrough

The space should be set up so that each pair is facing each other and taking notes.

1. Hand over materials.

Hand each participant a pen and a medium size index card. Then, ask participants to organize in pairs and define within each pair who will be "A" and "B" (optionally, the facilitator may provide a rule such as "the one with bigger right hand is "A", the other is "B")

2. Explain the dynamics.

(5 minutes) Each participant must interview the other in a particular way - asking the same question 5 x in a row. Repeat the activity one more time but with switched roles. Start, for instance, with "A" as the questioner and "B" as the questionee and advise the questioner to take notes on interesting insights. This exercise lasts 8 minutes, switching partners halfway)

- *Reinforce that they must stick to the same question instead of probing the topic with different sequential questions. The goal is to get to the bottom of the topic.*

- *Instruct the participants to gather relevant standing-out insights on the cards provided, asking the question 5 times and then switch.*
- *Make sure everyone is clear on what they have to do before handing out the question.*
- *Share the question: "why did you come here today?"*

3. Run the experiment.

(8 minutes, signaled halfway) Signal the start and count 4 minutes to signal the time is halfway through. Make sure it was time enough for everyone to finish the exercise. When in doubt ask the pairs who have finished to raise their hands.

4. Wrap up.

Thank everyone for participating and invite the group to share their thoughts on the experience.

- *"What was the experience like?"*
- *"How was it different from asking different, sequential questions?"*
- *"What did you feel while you were doing it?"*

Notes and tips

At the start...

The activity should be briefly introduced as “An exercise that helps to root intentions for the journey ahead while providing an excellent opportunity to start interacting with each other”. The space should be setup in a way that allows for pairs of participants to interact facing each other, and take notes.

At the end...

After the activity, the facilitator may provide additional context, as follows: “Thanks for sharing. 5x Why is an active listening exercise. Often when people ask each other questions, the asker is already thinking of what they may ask next. Having one single question that you ask five times removes the temptation to ask follow ups and encourages askers to be active listeners as well. 5x Why is also designed to be an empathic exercise that helps you to meet and connect with someone new. Finally, it’s a wonderful way to collect a valuable data point at the start of a class, event or meeting.”