

Fishbowl dialogue approach

This activity is for groups of at least 6 people (plus facilitator).

Purpose:

This activity can be used either when students have a lot of questions to ask each other. It can also be used as a tool to initiate conversations and dialogue about a particular issue/topic.

Set up:

Place three chairs facing each other within a circle of six chairs on the outside.

The outer circle of chairs should be equal to the total number of people in the group. Therefore, if you have 10 students participating in the activity there needs to be 10 chairs in the outer circle. The number of chairs in the inner circle always remains as three.

Before you start, ask everybody to write any question they want to discuss/ask on a piece of paper (or post-it note). Ask participants to fold the paper up and place all questions into a hat, in the centre of the inner circle. In small groups, people can add as many questions as they like, but each question should be on a separate piece of paper.

Activity:

To start everybody sits in the outer circle, the facilitator must explain the following rules of the activity, before you begin:

- Only those who are sat in the inner circle are allowed to speak. After the first question has been asked (by the facilitator), those who want to answer, respond to or discuss the question must move to a seat in the inner circle.
- Participants cannot speak when sitting in the outer circle.
- Those in the inner circle must speak in the order that they sat down, allowing everybody the opportunity to speak equally.
- When there are three people already sat in the inner circle and someone in the outer circle wants to speak they must stand just to the side of the first person who sat down – so that they know someone is waiting to speak.
- If you are in the inner circle and see someone waiting to take your place, finish your point and move back into the outer circle (you are allowed to move back in at any point, by the same approach).

The facilitator starts the activity by taking a question out of the hat and reading it to the group.

When the question has been answered or the discussion becomes repetitive the facilitator should end discussion on that question and move onto a new one.

