

Misunderstanding

Impact: Illustrates the importance of good communication

Risk: Low to medium

Group Size: 2 or more

Time Required: 20–30 minutes

Materials: Paper bag, collection of small random objects, paper, pencils

Directions:

- Have the group divide into pairs. Ask the pairs to sit back to back and designate themselves Person A and Person B.
- Give each Person A one paper bag with an object in it, and give Person B a paper, pencil and hard surface to draw on.
- Person A must verbally describe the object to Person B who has to draw it. Person B has no idea what the object is and must rely solely on how Person A describes it. Person A must use words that are descriptive as to shape, size and texture but not specific enough to give away the object. For instance, the description of a pencil could say that it was narrow and straight, had 6 sides, was hard, had a point on one end and was rounded on the other – not that it had a lead tip and an eraser on the end.
- After Person A is finished describing the object, have Person B show Person A their drawing based on Person A's description.
- Bring the group back together and let everyone share their images.
- If time permits, ask the pairs to switch roles and draw a different object.

Discussion:

Most likely the drawings look nothing like they should. This exercise focuses on communication and its importance. It is crucial to understand that what you think you are saying may not be what others perceive.

- Which drawings look most similar to the objects they portray? Why? What do these objects have in common? Are they more or less familiar to the describer/the artist?
- What could the describer have done to make the description easier for the artist to visualize? What words or types of descriptors would be most useful?
- How important was previous experience with the object in communicating the information between the partners?
- What does this activity demonstrate about the difference between intent and impact?

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