

Activity 7

Whispers

Aim: To understand how stories can lose important details.

Age: 8+

Time: 20-30 mins

Materials: A copy of the stories; an open space where the group can sit in a circle

What to do:

Step 1: Sit the group in a large circle. Divide them into two teams of even numbers. Both teams should remain sitting in the circle (with each team making up half of the full circle).

Step 2: The leader invites two people up to hear a story. There should be one person from each team, and they should be sitting next to each other in the circle (i.e. they are the first person in their team). The leader should whisper the story to both people at the same time (making sure the rest of the circle does not overhear the story). The two who have heard the story sit back together in the circle. They each turn to a member of their own team next to them in the circle.

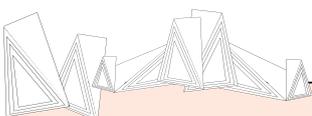
Step 3: Now the race begins. On the count of 1,2,3! they each whisper the story to the next person on their team. Each person must then repeat the story to the person next to them, and so on. Continue this until everybody had been told the story by the person before them. It is a race to get the story to the other side of the circle (i.e. the last person on your team). The stories should meet on the other side of the circle. Remind the group that the side with the most accurate version of the story wins, not just the one that finishes first.

Step 4: The last person on each team must then repeat the story aloud. The side with the most accurate version of the story wins. Read out the original story to everybody and give one point for each accurate fact or detail retained from the original story (see the parts underlined in the text). Announce which team was most accurate.

Debrief: How accurate were the stories? Are you surprised by how much/little information was communicated by each team? Why did the story get broken up?

What were the main issues in the story? How do you think he/she feels if her story is not represented accurately? Did you identify with the story told? Or did it feel strange to tell other stories which were not your own?

What causes stories to change from person to person? Why? Is it on purpose? Can you give an example? What is the effect on us when we are given wrong information?



DID YOU KNOW? This game is based on a game called 'Chinese Whispers'. Did you know the name 'Chinese whispers' reflects the former stereotype in Europe of the Chinese language as being incomprehensible?

Story 1: Last month, I went away with my youth club on a residential weekend. We were meant to go orienteering in Kerry, but went surfing in Donegal instead. There were 16 young people and 4 youth leaders. We had a brilliant laugh, I'd never tried surfing before but I loved it! The water was freezing though! When we got back, one of the lads created a page on Facebook with photos from the weekend. Some of the photos were hilarious. But there is a photo of me that I hate! It was taken just when I woke up one morning and it's so embarrassing. I told him to take it down, but he said it was just a laugh and no one cares what I look like. But I care. Now I don't know what to do.

Story 2: I studied engineering in college, but before my final year I was offered a job in the financial sector following summer work with the company. I took the contract and went on to work my way up without a financial qualification. I went travelling with friends but upon returning to Ireland the financial crisis had hit. Jobs in finance had been moved either back to America, over to cheaper labour regions or to more promising and stable economies. Without a full Engineering Qualification and relevant work experience the following two years have been difficult. Most of my job applications don't even get a response from the companies. I found myself staying up later at night, sleeping in longer in the mornings and generally losing motivation. However, I have become more involved in a youth organisation. They have given me great focus and above all kept me active in both body and mind. This year I hope to attend college as a part or full time student to complete my engineering degree. (Thomas, Macra na Feirme)

Story 3: I came to Ireland from Somalia when I was 16 years old. There was fighting in the region where I lived, and when our village was attacked, me and my aunt had to run away to safety. I have not seen my brothers or my mother since and do not know if they are alive. My aunt helped me to get to Ireland to seek asylum, and I have been here ever since. I turned 18 last year, which meant I was moved from the hostel in Dublin. I liked it there because I was able to go to school, and had started making friends. I also had a social worker who helped me with my school and asylum application. Life in the hostel is difficult. I have left all my friends behind in Dublin, and feel very lonely here. I was told I might be able to go to a local school to finish my Leaving Cert but I am still waiting for a place. I don't have enough money to travel to the city where there might be things to do, so I sit in my room a lot. I share my room with an older woman and her young child. The child cries a lot and the woman is not very kind to me. I hope I can get a place in the local school. If I don't, I don't know what I will do. It might take years before a decision is made on my application. (Fatima)

Note to leader:

If doing this activity with a younger age-group, use a simple story such as Story 1 above.



DID YOU KNOW? People who leave their country due to a fear of persecution are called refugees. Asylum seekers are people who are waiting for a decision to know if they can remain in a country as refugees. In Ireland, asylum seekers are provided with accommodation in shared hostels and three meals per day. They are not allowed to work and receive €19.10 per week per adult, and €9.60 per week per child. Asylum seekers are entitled to free public education until Leaving Certificate level. Many asylum seekers have been waiting for a decision on their case for more than 3 years.