

Activity 2.7 Expanding Thinking with Metaphors¹

Description

In addition to understanding how our thinking can be socially conditioned, which results in blockages, there are also ways to stimulate different types of thinking that can aid in collaborative exploration. Metaphors are known as a key way that we make sense of the world. They allow us to think about things we don't know much about in terms of things we do know about.

Learning Goals

- Develop new perspectives by using metaphoric language.
- Appreciate so-called right brain approaches to problem solving in groups.

Practice (40 minutes)

Step One	<p><i>In small groups, select a big problem facing the campus or community. Each person in the group takes 5 minutes to write down their thoughts.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• How is this problem like (insert any metaphor you prefer)<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ ... a vegetable garden?○ ... like rush hour traffic in a large metropolitan area?○ ... like learning to use a computer?○ ... like a computer virus?○ ... like an adolescent going through puberty? <p>Tip: If the group is working on projects or studying a particular issue, participants can use these topics instead of a campus or community problem to think metaphorically about.</p>	20 min
Step Two	<p><i>Share back some of your answers and what you learned from the experience.</i></p>	20 min

¹ **Citation for this activity:** Lori Britt (2023). Expanding Thinking with Metaphors. In Hartman, Britt, & Byrd (Eds). *The Interactivity Foundation Collaborative Discussion Toolkit*. Retrieved from <https://www.collaborativediscussionproject.com/module-2-creative-collaboration>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How has the use of metaphors helped you to see the issue in new ways?	
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Reflection Assignment

- Did approaching your topic from a creative, imaginative perspective feel different from approaching it from a logical, rational approach? What do you see as the potential of exploring topics from both approaches?
- Did your group laugh when thinking metaphorically? How did the humor help your group? How might humor offer a creative interruption and opportunity to see an issue with new eyes? Did humor interfere in some ways?

Practice Journal

This week, practice using metaphors in your daily thinking. Each day think about a puzzle or problem that you need to address. Instead of rushing to a solution, go through the metaphor activity. Think about it through various metaphors. How did this activity change the outcome? How did your process change from the first to the last time you tried it this week?

Dive Deeper: Additional Resources

- Jack Byrd, “Metaphorically Speaking” (Forthcoming)
- [Metaphors as Key to Creative Thinking](#)