

Big Wind Blows

Goals

- To invite risk-taking around self-disclosure in a low-intensity activity.
- To warm a group up for deeper conversations or activities on themes of diversity, to release tension or anxiety about going into such a topic with a playful game that invites laughter.
- To have fun and bring the energy of the group up!

How It's Done

Get the group sitting in a circle. Make sure that there are no notebooks, chairs, cups or other things in the center of the circle that people could trip on during the course of the game. There should be one less chair or spot in the circle than people playing the game. Stand in the middle of the circle and explain the game.

In this game, one person will be in the middle. Whoever is in the middle will say, the Big Wind Blows for..... and finish that sentence by saying one thing that is true about themselves. You can model a few examples, such as 'The Big Wind Blows for anyone who has a sister' or 'The Big Wind Blows for anyone who likes to swim'. The main thing to emphasize is that the person in the middle must say something that is true about themselves. Once the person in the middle has made this invitation, everyone in the circle who identifies with that statement must get out of their seat and find a new one. They cannot move to an open seat right next to them, they must move more than one seat over from where they are sitting. The person in the middle must also try to get into one of the seats. This means that a new person ends up in the middle, and then that person gets to come up with a new "Big Wind Blows for..." The game continues this way until a good number of people in the group have had a chance to be in the middle or until the facilitator calls time.

As the facilitator, it's a good idea to pay attention to how people are engaging in the game. Are people energetic or hesitant? Are people using statements to finish the sentence that are very surface level or that are more vulnerable ('The Big Wind Blows for everyone who is wearing sneakers' vs. 'The Big Wind Blows for people who have been in an abusive relationship').

Whatever the energy is and whatever level people are sharing at is ok, but you'll want to pay attention because it may give you some indication of what people are feeling, level of safety in the group and what to expect for whatever you have planned next. It is best to call time before people start to lose interest, while the energy is still high.

Adaptions

A few more options for this game... Sometimes this game is also called "Move Your Booty if..." so you can use that name and prompt instead of "Big Wind Blows" if you think it will work better for the group you're working with. Sometimes facilitators give an option for whoever is in the middle to choose to say "Hurricane" instead of saying "The Big Wind Blows for..." When someone in the middle chooses to say "Hurricane", EVERYONE has to get up and find a new place to sit. When we are working with participants who have challenges with physical mobility, one option we offer when setting up the game is to say, "If you have trouble moving from one chair to another, when the Big Wind Blows for you, you are allowed to stand up, turn around, and sit back down in the same chair."

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As a facilitator, you may also decide to modify the game in other ways to accommodate particular needs around physical ability. You may have the sense after playing the game that it might be useful to spend time debriefing it before moving to the next activity. One option is to get people into pairs or small groups after the game is over to spend another 10-15 minutes debriefing it.

- Some possible debrief questions are
- How was that for you personally, what feelings came up as you were playing the game?
- What did you notice about what people were sharing about themselves?
- How did you decide what to share or disclose about yourself when you ended up in the middle?
- What would it be like to share a part of your identity that didn't come out in that game, what might be holding you back?

Story

Trainer Reverend Dan Buttry, who does a great deal of international training work, shares this story of how “The Big Wind Blows” became a pivotal tool in a training he did, a good reminder that even games and energizers can create important opportunities in during a training:

You never know what tool is going to be the turning point in a workshop. I was doing a 3-day training in the southern Philippines on interfaith peacemaking. (The Christian/Muslim divide is a huge part of the conflict in Mindanao, where I was training.) The first day we had just one Muslim participant, a wonderful young imam from a mosque just down the street who was invited by one of the Christian participants. On the second day the imam couldn't come because he was giving exams at their school, so we had just Christians. The topic was going to be on building interfaith relationships. I started with the Big Wind Blows. Because I wanted people to speak about something related to interfaith concerns or experiences, I began by saying, “The Big Wind Blows for everyone who has been inside a mosque.” Only the pastor who had invited the imam moved! These were leaders and peace people, and it was clear that this was something we had to work on right away. We arranged to visit the Islamic school and mosque later that afternoon. I had an “exercise curiosity” activity to elicit a list of questions that I would present so nobody would be embarrassed by asking a “stupid” question. We had a great time at the school, getting a tour and meeting with students and faculty. We asked our questions and had some delightful conversation. Then we went to the mosque for prayers and some further discussion afterward. When we got back to the retreat center I said, “The Big Wind Blows for everyone who has been to a mosque!” We all ran around yelling and celebrating, and finished the workshop strong.

Where This Tool Comes From

This tool is a common energizer used by many trainers and we're not sure who to credit as the original inventor of the game. If you know who deserves credit, please contact us at info@trainingforchange.org