



GIVING AND RECEIVING GIFTS EXERCISE (Paradigm-breaking methods)

The Giving and Receiving Gifts exercise is one of Keith Johnstone's improvisation theatre exercises. It is based on the associative continuation and enrichment of a given idea without a predetermined goal. In the exercise, participants can also practice an accepting attitude with "yes, and in addition...". The counterpart to this spontaneous acceptance is rejection, where the associative idea is not continued but cut off.

Applied to the context of the green transition, the exercise focuses on the idea of recognising opportunities and continuing and elaborating emerging ideas. At the end of the exercise, during the reflection phase, health and care participants can make free associations related to their daily work, expertise in environmental activities and mental models related to the green transition. For example, this can be future-oriented visioning of various reactions and the impact of behaviour, roles related to the development of green transition related practices, and the expectations and emotions related to the green transition.

What is required:

- Openness, honesty and a playful attitude: Participants are expected to be willing to examine different roles and expectations in the metaphorical situation of giving and receiving a gift.
- A safe environment: The exercise requires an atmosphere of serious playfulness, where participants can spontaneously associate their thoughts and articulate their feelings about the dynamics of giving and receiving gifts without fear of judgement.
- Ability to handle feelings of expertise and collaboration: Participants are required to be willing to explore their own expectations of expertise and roles in collaboration.
- Reflection ability: The exercise requires participants to be able to reflect on their experiences and roles in the partnership.

Level of difficulty: 3

Time required: 20-30 minutes

Materials:

- No special equipment, but space is needed for implementation
- Possibly paper and pens for taking notes

Participants: 4-30

How to use:

- Introduction and roles: The exercise begins with a discussion about what a certain role in the group means and what each party can offer to each other.
- Giving and receiving gifts: Participants consider what they can offer in their role (e.g., support, expertise, resources) and what they receive from others.



- Discussion and verbalisation: Participants share their thoughts on giving and receiving gifts and how it relates to their role and their own expectations of expertise and collaboration.
- Reflection: After the exercise, a group discussion is held about what each participant noticed about the dynamics of giving and receiving gifts in their role.

When to use:

- Useful when examining roles of collaboration and expertise
- Also suitable for situations where collaboration and trust between organisations or teams are discussed

Why to use:

- The exercise helps participants to examine collaboration and expertise
- It encourages open discussion, making the invisible visible, such as the experiential knowledge and expectations of different parties in relation to goals, community and practices

How to document:

- Documentation of the exercise can be done by recording the participants' thoughts, in the form of notes based on group discussions. When notes are taken, the participants should be able to ensure that the notes accurately reflect what they have said.

The roots of the method can be found here: Theatre director Keith Johnstone is a pioneer of improvisational theatre. In his classic book “*Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre*” (Johnstone, 1979), he describes the improvisation method he has developed, the impact of status in social situations, non-verbal interaction and spontaneous and associative storytelling. Giving and Receiving Gifts is one of these methods. It can also be linked to Bourdieu's field theory (1986) and Habermas's (1984) theories of communicative action. Bourdieu's field theory addresses how different parties gain access to resources and decide what "gifts" they can give or receive in the social field. Habermas's theories of communicative action emphasise the importance of dialogue and creating shared meaning.

Further information:

Johnstone, K. (1979). *Impro: Improvisation and the theatre*. Theatre Arts Books.