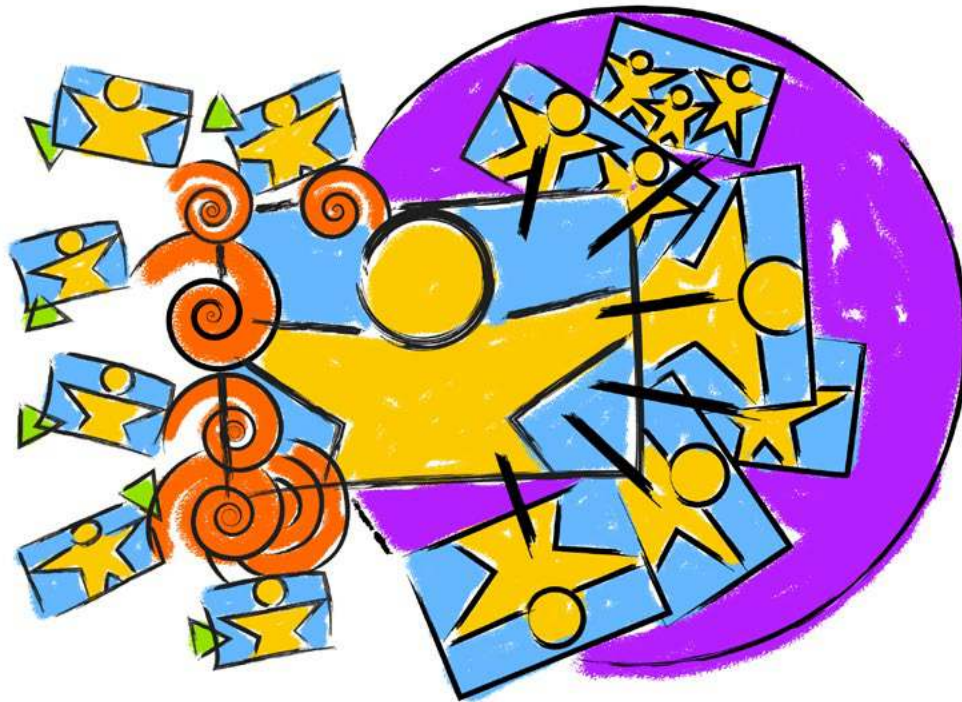




## Drawing Together

Help people surface hidden knowledge – feelings, attitudes, patterns – with this non-verbal group exercise.



### DRAWING TOGETHER – A Team Exercise

The ability to lead group exercises is a differentiator for leaders. Become adept by honing your abilities to give clear instructions and facilitate open dialogue. When leading this exercise, measure your progress by gauging the openness of the final conversation.

TIME  
REQUIRED



50  
MINUTES

#### GOAL:

The goal of the 'Drawing Together' exercise is to create meaningful conversations among team members about a shared experience. Rather than relate what happened, participants express their experiences symbolically.

#### SET-UP:

If you conduct this exercise in person, have plain white paper, flipcharts and markers available. If remote, invite everyone to have markers, colored pens, crayons, pencils, etc., and a small supply of unlined paper.

HERE ARE THE 5 STEPS TO FACILITATE THIS EXERCISE:

## 1 Invitation to reflect & play

Invite participants to become storytellers. The story to be told is of a shared experience: a project, a re-org, a product launch, a user conference. Each person will depict their own experience using five symbols and no words.

Share the five symbols and their meanings with the group.



WHOLENESS



SUPPORT



GOAL



CHANGE



RELATIONSHIP

Tell participants they have 5 minutes to play with the shapes.

**10** Time required: 5 minutes to explain + 5 minutes to draw = 10 minutes

## 2 Invitation to tell a story – first sketches

Tell participants the shared experience they will focus on. Ask people to think not so much about what happened, but rather, what do they think about what happened? If the experience were a journey, where did it begin? Where did it end? How was it at different stages?

Invite participants to sketch ideas of how to depict their experience using only the symbols, no labels or words. These first sketches are experiments. They will not be shared. If working in person, these sketches could be done on plain paper.

**10** Time required: 10 minutes

### 3 Invitation to tell a story – second sketch

Invite participants to create one final drawing in which they clarify the story of their experience by emphasizing a symbol's size, placement, color, etc.

Participants should try to make their stories as obvious as possible. These drawings will be shared. If working in person, these second sketches could be done on flipchart pages.

10 Time required: 10 minutes

### 4 Invitation to interpret the drawings

In groups of three or four, participants share their drawings with each other. Others interpret the drawing while the artist listens without speaking. Observations are brisk: a total of one or two minutes is spent on each picture.

10 Time required: 10 minutes

### 5 Invitation to think as a team

The small groups now join together to form one large group. Invite the participants to shift their thinking to the team itself.

Questions you might ask them to talk about in the large group:

- What do the drawings reveal about us?
- What are we learning about ourselves?
- What are we learning about that shared experience?

Help the team stay away from debating any one person's idea.

People will naturally want to gravitate towards problem-solving. The value of this conversation is to stay in meaning-making mode as long as possible. Help them focus on how they interpret the experience, not on fixing issues.

10 Time required: 10 minutes

## NEXT STEPS:

Ask yourself, did the team achieve the exercise's goal to have "a meaningful conversation among team members about a shared experience"?

### IF SO...

- How did you, as the facilitator, help bring that about?
- What did the team do well?

### IF NOT...

- How did you contribute to that?
- What might the team do better next time?

Reflect on what you heard from the team. Assuming you now have information you didn't have before, what seems like the best next step to you? How can you bring that action to life?

This exercise is from a trove of exercises at [Liberating Structures](#). They design their exercises for team leaders just like you. The "Drawing Together" exercise is here. The site is 100% free. Access is open. Grab some tools. Share them with your team.

**Grow your leadership skills. Enjoy!**



To learn more, listen to episode [#213 How to Re-engage a Team](#) of Essential Communications' *The Look & Sound of Leadership* podcast.