



The Final Word

Adapted from the original by Jennifer Fischer-Mueller and Gene Thompson-Grove.

Purpose

The purpose of this discussion format is to give each person in the group an opportunity to have their ideas, understandings, and perspective enhanced by hearing from others. With this format, the group can explore an article, clarify their thinking, and have their assumptions and beliefs questioned in order to gain a deeper understanding of the issue.

Time

For each round, allow about 8 minutes (circles of 5 participants: presenter 3 minutes, response 1 minute for 4 people, final word for presenter 1 minute). Total time is about a forty minutes for a group of 5 (32 minutes for a group of 4, 48 minutes for a group of 6).

Roles

Facilitator / timekeeper (who also participates); participants

Facilitation

Have participants identify one “most” significant idea from the text (underlined or highlighted ahead of time), stick to the time limits, avoid dialogue, have equal sized circles so all small groups finish at approximately the same time.

Protocol

1. Sit in a circle, and identify a facilitator/time-keeper.
2. Each person needs to have one “most” significant idea from the text underlined or highlighted in the article. It is often helpful to identify a “back up” quote as well.
3. The first person begins by reading what “struck him or her the most” from the article. Have this person refer to where the quote is in the text - one thought or quote only. Then, in less than 3 minutes, this person describes why that quote struck him or her. For example, why does s/he agree/disagree with the quote, what questions does s/he have about that quote, what issues does it raise for him or her, what does s/he now wonder about in relation to that quote?
4. Continuing around the circle each person responds to that quote and what the presenter said, briefly, in less than a minute. The purpose of the response is:
 - to expand on the presenter’s thinking about the quote and the issues raised for him or her by the quote,
 - to provide a different look at the quote,
 - to clarify the presenter’s thinking about the quote, and/or
 - to question the presenter’s assumptions about the quote and the issues raised (although at this time there is no response from the presenter).

5. After going around the circle with each person having responded for less than one minute, the person that began has the “final word.” In no more than one minute the presenter responds to what has been said. Now what is s/he thinking? What is his or her reaction to what s/he has heard?
6. The next person in the circle then begins by sharing what struck him or her most from the text. Proceed around the circle, responding to this next presenter’s quote in the same way as the first presenter’s. This process continues until each person has had a round with his or her quote.
7. End by debriefing the process in your small group.