



WHAT'S NEW?

"Listening is a magnetic and strange thing, a creative force. When we really listen to people there is an alternating current, and this recharges us so that we never get tired of each other. We are constantly being re-created."

—Brenda Ueland

OVERVIEW

Participants divide into pairs, take turns sharing "what's new" with each other, and reflect on the process.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- When transitioning a group into a learning space
- To honor the diversity of experiences and voices in the room
- To promote connectedness within the group through a "low vulnerability" activity, each person deciding for themselves what level of personal experience they wish to share

TIME REQUIRED

- 5 minutes

LEVEL

- Adult

MATERIALS

- None

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Participants will:

- Share something new with another person, and then reflect on the process

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Relationship Skills

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Find a colleague and take a couple minutes each to share with each other something new in your lives. Focus on listening to the other person without judgment, offering your full attention. Debrief with each other: How did it feel to be listened to? How did it feel to listen to the other person?

INSTRUCTIONS

THE PRACTICE

- Ask participants to find a partner (or pair them if that is appropriate for your group).
- Say:
 - *Think of something that is new with you that you want to share with your partner. Give participants a moment to think of their news.*
- Explain that each person will share their news while their partner fully listens silently, without comment or questions.
- Tell participants that you will be keeping time and that you will let them know when it is time to switch roles.
- Give pairs a minute to decide who will go first, ask the starting partners to raise their hands to make sure everyone is ready, then give the green light to begin.
- At the end of a minute or two, use your attention signal to bring the room to quiet and let participants know it is time to switch roles, and time them for an equal sharing time.
- After partners have shared, ask them to reflect with each other or with the whole group: "How was it to share and listen to one another?"

CLOSURE

- After partners have shared, ask them to reflect with each other or with the whole group: "How was it to share and listen to one another?"

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

Do you notice if the group feels more connected and comfortable with each other after this practice?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

A study found that adults who experienced [active listening](#) reported feeling more understood at the end of a conversation in comparison to those being given advice or having their view simply acknowledged.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

School staff have very busy jobs that can be extremely stressful, leaving no time to connect with each other. And yet ironically, the antidote to the stress of teaching is through a climate where adults support and feel connected to one another.

Taking a moment to listen to a colleague and really hear them can make that person feel seen--that they matter and are valued. This, in turn, strengthens the relationships between staff members, creating a more positive school climate.

SOURCE

Adapted from an activity created by [Oakland Unified School District's Department of Social-Emotional Learning and Leadership](#).