



# Water pitcher 15 min

ICEBREAKERS AND ENERGISERS

ICEBREAKER  
PLENARY EXERCISE

## About the exercise

### TARGET AUDIENCE

Any audience.

### PURPOSE

To introduce participatory learning methods and help participants understand that through sharing their own experiences and knowledge with the group, they can each make an important contribution to the quality of the training.

### DESCRIPTION

A simple but effective exercise that introduces participatory learning methods and helps to set the tone. It is particularly useful in contexts where target audiences have strong internal hierarchies and in settings where participants may not be used to participatory, experiential learning due to rote-learning education systems.



## Instructions

### RESOURCES

- A water pitcher filled with water.
- A water glass for each participant.

### ADVANCE PREPARATION

Make sure that the training room is set up in a way that allows the group to move about easily.

### HOW TO INTRODUCE THE EXERCISE 5 MIN

Make sure each participant has a drinking glass and that you have a pitcher filled with water. Start filling the participants' glasses with water as you chat with all of them. Tell them NOT to drink the water in their glasses yet. When the final glass of water is filled, ask the participants to silently reflect on how it felt to get their glass filled with water from the pitcher held by you as a facilitator.

### HOW TO RUN THE EXERCISE 5 MIN

Explain that there is another part to the exercise. In this second part of the exercise, it is up to the participants to share the water they have received. They are free to move around the room while doing so.

After doing this for a little while, ask the participants to stop where they are and silently reflect on how this second part of the exercise felt.

After a short time, ask them to silently compare how they felt during the first and the second part of the exercise. After allowing participants to reflect on this for a while, ask them to be seated.

**HOW TO CONCLUDE THE EXERCISE** 5 MIN

Ask the participants whether they want to share any of their thoughts. Allow a couple of comments before asking the group this question:

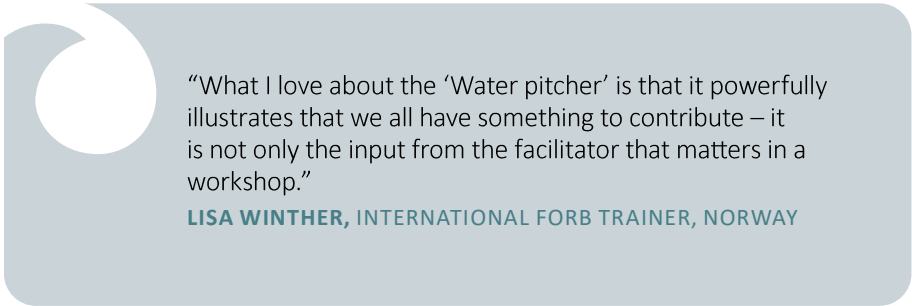
- What do they think this exercise might have to do with education?

Depending on how participants reply, conclude the exercise by making the following points:

- Often, we are trained by school and society to see quality education as being equal to a teacher lecturing us on a specific topic, pouring his or her knowledge into our more or less empty containers. But we are not empty containers – we all have knowledge and experiences.
- During our time together we are going to allow space for what happened in the second part of this exercise. We use a training methodology that builds on your knowledge and experiences – the water that each of you already have in your glasses.
- This exercise is our way of inviting you all to share your water, your knowledge with us all.

**Source**

Adapted from George Lakey, *Facilitating Group Learning* p. 109



“What I love about the ‘Water pitcher’ is that it powerfully illustrates that we all have something to contribute – it is not only the input from the facilitator that matters in a workshop.”

**LISA WINTHER, INTERNATIONAL FORB TRAINER, NORWAY**