

ACTIVE LISTENING



Slanted Storytelling

Introduction

We listen to stories on a daily basis, but in these stories do we hear the actual facts or the narrator's perspective?

The objective of this activity is to explore how the narrator-bias that slants the way a story is told, or how facts are communicated. It further encourages us to reflect on missing pieces of information when listening or receiving information.

Instructions

- Divide participants into smaller groups with even number of participants in a group (4-6 members per group).
- One person from each group receives the following story and is requested to familiarize himself/herself with the story.

Story: *A father and a son are travelling to school by car. As they are travelling a tree falls on the car and the father is knocked unconscious and the son breaks a leg. The ambulance rushes the son to the hospital and the father is left behind where he is looked after by a doctor. When they arrive at the hospital the surgeon looks at the boy with the broken leg and says 'This is my son!'*

- Distribute a SAM card with a Situation or an Attitude or a Mood to those who received the story (SAM: Situation-Attitude-Mood).
- Ask them not to tell anyone else what is written on their card.
- They now have to retell the story to the group using the interpretation in the SAM card.
- After each storyteller has presented his/her stories to the rest of the group, the group has to guess what was on the SAM card.
- After a few attempts the storyteller can reveal the SAM card statement.

Examples of the SAM Card:

It is the funniest story you have ever heard or told.

- You are a police officer and you are telling the story of a suspect's movements.
- You have to use the restroom, but must first finish the story.
- You dislike the person you are talking about.
- You are stirring things up with some gossip.
- It is the saddest story you have ever told or heard.

Reflections

- In what ways was information changed and reshaped according to the storyteller's bias?
- Is this a process that is easy to detect in real life?
- Do we intentionally or unintentionally change the information we pass on?
- In what ways and in what situations have we done this?
- Optional: How can we detect and avoid the narrator bias?