



Superpowers.

- Useful for:** provoking divergent thoughts and revealing an individual's dreams.
- Very good for:** innovation, self-discovery, empathy.
- Good for:** cohesion.
- Type of exercise:** individual.

General description:

This type of exercise is best done individually because the concept of enhancing one's abilities is very personal. The basic idea is to get participants to imagine having a superpower and what they would do with it - it's an exercise in imagining change. If the scope of your work is better served by focusing on the implications of a certain kind of change, you can prescribe a specific and appropriate superpower to concentrate the exercise on what participants would do with that power (or expect others to do with it). Conversely, you can provide the context of a problem and concentrate the exercise on which superpower participants would choose to help confront the problem. This kind of exercise is very effective for stimulating divergent thinking, it is useful for establishing the possibilities of diverse approaches and for learning about the strengths and weaknesses of a group.

Requirements:

A worksheet with a visual identity that reflects the superpower/superhero theme. Comic book style stories with empty speech boxes and descriptions invite participants to narrate their own story about the superpower of their choice. Alternatively an outline illustration of a superhero character for which the participant is asked to provide a name, symbol, description of their superpower and maybe even a back-story. This type of exercise works best without any particular stimulus.

Example assignments:

- Give all the participants the same task and ask them what superpower they would like to have to help them perform the task. For this and also all the other exercises, always ask how they would use their superpower and why it makes a difference.
- To examine trade-offs and priorities the exercise can consist of a list of superpowers from which the participant can choose one, a list of abilities they currently have from which the participant must choose one to sacrifice to gain the superpower. The gain-loss can be permanent or temporary - if temporary ask them when they would want to make the trade and for how long. Always ask how they would use their superpower.
- The participant's superpower is being able to confer a superpower on someone else. Who do they give the superpower to and what is the superpower? You will need to provide the context and problem to solve that is relevant to your exploration.
- Randomly give individuals different superpowers and ask them how they approach the same problem. If you put them in teams, you can observe the strategies they adopt to combine their strengths.
- A variation is to think tools and gadgets rather than superpowers (think Batman, not Superman). This tends to produce more practical and less emotionally inspired responses but can be appropriate in certain contexts.

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Outcome:

The principal outcome of this exercise is an open mindset and fantasy solutions to a problem. Usually, you should design the session so that the next exercise can focus on converging fantastic and realistic. To make sure the group understand the utility of this exercise, make sure that each participant explains why their superpower is important and what significant changes it would allow.