

3.5 Puzzling over fairness

Duration: 15 – 20 minutes

Number of people who can take part: at least 6; no maximum

Learning objective: deepen understanding of inequities and how different groups are impacted by unequal opportunities and advantages

Materials needed: bag of puzzle pieces for each team

Before your event:

1. Prepare the puzzle bags – for as many teams as you'll have, buy the same amount of easy (e.g. 30 piece) puzzles plus one hard puzzle (e.g. 100 pieces) and place them in bags. For example, if you've got 4 teams playing, buy 4 easy puzzles and 1 hard one. Keep track of the contents of each bag – one bag should have an entire puzzle. Another bag should have a different puzzle, with some pieces removed. A third bag should have a different puzzle still, but with some pieces swapped from a fourth puzzle, and vice versa. An additional bag should have the hard puzzle (with or without a few pieces from other puzzles added).
2. Decide who will introduce the activity and facilitate participants' debrief of the activity.

At your event:

1. Divide your participants into teams, 2 people/team minimum.
2. Give each team a puzzle bag. Ensure one team has the bag that contains the complete, easy puzzle. For as many teams as remain, give each a puzzle bag. Don't tell them that their puzzle bags have been tampered with!
3. Read out the rules.
4. Yell "Start!"
5. Stay nearby to encourage participants to question the pieces they have in their bags, the speed at which the other teams are completing their puzzles, etc. Consider suggesting (partway through) that teams work together and share pieces/teammates to assist others with their puzzle completion.
6. How did the team with the easy, complete puzzle feel? Did participants cross team lines to help one another? Why, why not? Take this space to discuss discrimination and unequal resource distribution (e.g. stable housing, access to affordable food, fair wages, etc.) in your local community, and what efforts your local takes to promote equity and equality.

After your event:

1. Each team must work to complete the puzzles they received for the time allotted to them.