Click4it Wiki - Toolkit

Guidelines for applying the River of Life Method

When to use it

- It can be used as an icebreaker exercise, when participants do not know each other. The River of Life is an entertaining, visual, interesting and effective ways for introductions.
- Groups can apply this method to understand a project, organization, problem or opportunity.
- It is also be useful for groups to visualize progress for an event.
- Basically, anytime a timeline is involved, with some creative thinking the method can be applied.

Step by Step

1. Prepare

Make sure you have enough markers, supplies, pictures (if you prefer), flipchart paper and/or a board/surface to draw on. It is also recommended to have a camera to take aphoto of the end result.

2. Introduce the activity

- Explain the metaphor of the river as a symbol for the people's-, the organization's-, the project's-, etc. life. Indicate that a river sometimes flows slower, other times faster, that there are obstacles, etc. Make participants understand that their task is to point out the significant elements that have contributed to shaping their River of Life the way it is now.
- Give participants a few minutes to think.
- Ask participants to use the supplies and their drawing skills during the exercise.
- Allow 15 minutes for participants to create their pictures/the group-picture.

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3. Sharing the pictures and discussion

- Ask for volunteers to talk about their pictures.
- Leave questions for the end.
- Allot 5-7 minutes for each participant.
- If you have a larger group, you might want to consider dividing them into smaller units so that everyone has a chance to share.

4. Debrief

- When the presentations are over, allocate time for reflection with the group.
- Ask them questions about how it was to share, what they have learnt and what conclusions they can draw from the activity.
- Take a photo of the drawings for possible future use and sharing