

## Storytelling to Inspire Dreaming with your Eyes Wide Open *Susannah Childers, AHHA!*

The edges of what we can imagine come to us in our dreams and stories are our waking dreams.

Stories connect us to one another, creating shared experiences. Stories deepen our understanding, creating empathy. Stories connect our hearts and minds – bringing the whole self to the innovation challenge.

Stories help us to push out on our own boundaries of what is possible – to the edge and beyond. In the field of innovation and creativity some of the best novel and useful ideas are uncovered in the “Third third” – where you get beyond the cognitive, rational, top of mind ideas and solutions. This is where stories come in – taking us into our individual and our collective non-cognitive brain space – to emotions, intuition, feelings and new connections.

And much like dreams tap into our subconscious, stories allow us to evoke some of that dream state – while fully awake and aware. Stories allow us to pull forward those underlying wishes, dreams, emotions into our current awareness and use them to create our desired future state.

Stories help us to integrate our experiences to expand and inspire our Creativity ... **What's your Mindcamp Story?**

**CONNECT CREATE TRANSFORM AHHA!**

# Introductions

## Ground and Orient Everyone

At the start of any meeting or gathering invite all participants to introduce themselves. This grounds and orients everyone in the room, builds trust and clarifies who else is involved.

Using visuals provides a fun and easy way to overcome initial resistance to public speaking and stimulates the non-cognitive part of the brain, allowing a more emotional (personal) side to come through. Even when participants have been working together, this opening of the group space allows for deeper trust building.

### Steps:

1. Invite all participants to pick one image from a picture card deck, a selection of magazine or calendar pictures, or a set of photographs.

#### Example topics:

- Something I'm looking forward to
  - Something exciting about this work or project
  - My personal gifts and skills I'm bringing to this effort
  - The best and brightest outcome for this team
  - A favorite memory related to the project
2. Ask each person to share their name and something about their picture.
  3. After everyone has shared, ask the team to identify themes they heard/noticed. Capture themes on large sticky notes or chart pad to create a group portrait.



CONNECT



# Vision Board

## Clarify Your Focus

Typically a collage of images from a variety of sources, this is a visual tool for an individual or a group to set intention for the future. Creating vision boards encourages individuals on a team to represent what matters most to them and to become aware of what others want to attract and manifest. Sharing with each other, key elements and themes can be identified to help guide innovation efforts.

### Steps:

*Note:* This activity can take 15 minutes to several hours and can be done on a small card or a large poster size page.

1. Clarify the intended focus and define the time frame.
2. Start by gathering a stack of old magazines (last year's calendars work well too) and a poster board or paper, glue and scissors.
3. Go through and tear out any picture that attracts your attention. No need to know why. In fact a little bit of a "non thinking" mode works well for this. Put on some music and flip through the available pictures quickly. If you find yourself thinking too much, choose pictures without looking at them — let the pictures pick you. Or choose a picture, but use the one on the other side.
4. Once you have a nice stack, cut, arrange and glue while holding an intention for your best and brightest potential. Include only what you most want to attract to you.
5. When you feel complete, date and title your vision board. Place your board where you will see it regularly.
6. Reflect on what you are noticing. What stands out? What recedes? What common elements (color, shapes, images) do you see? What meaning might this convey? What are the feelings associated with the vision – beyond the doing or being or having? Share with others.

*Note:* When used as a group exercise, give participants time to share their vision boards with each other. Wrap up by identifying common key elements and themes.



# CONNECT



# Metaphorical Drawing

CONNECT

## Play with Your Challenge by Drawing It Out

This activity allows a group to play and interact with their challenge or problem without getting stuck in all the details of a situation.

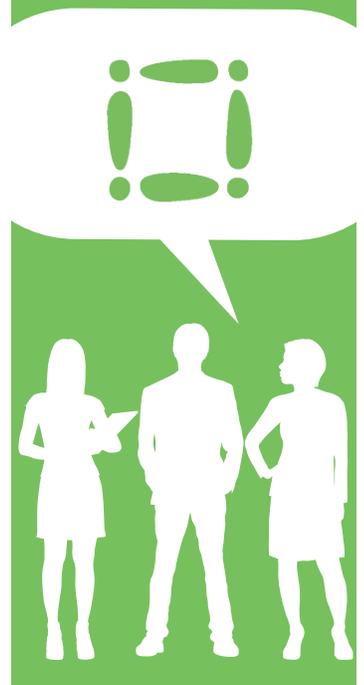
Either individually or in small teams, choose different metaphors to represent the challenge and draw it out. All you need is paper, markers and your team's imagination. *Good artistic skills are not required.*

### Steps:

1. Divide your group into small teams made up of 2-4 people. Supply paper or chart pads and markers for each small team.
2. Introduce the activity. "We are going to play with the current situation/challenge/problem by drawing it as if it is one of these systems."
3. Share a list of metaphors (write the list on a chart pad or on individual sticky notes). Invite each team to choose a metaphor that is interesting to them. Each team should choose a different, unique Metaphor.

Example Metaphors (anything that is or contains a system works well):

- a Machine
  - the Solar System
  - a Zoo
  - a Garden
  - a Family
  - the Human Body
  - a Vehicle
  - a Jungle
  - a Theatrical Production
  - a House
  - a City
  - a School
  - a Circus
  - a Farm
4. Set a timer for 10 -15 minutes. Coach the members of each team to work together to draw. Everyone should have a marker in their hand.
  5. After the time has elapsed, give time for the teams to write captions for the different parts of their drawing and to give their drawing a Title.
  6. Ask each team to describe their drawing and to share the captions and Title.
  7. After all have shared, capture the key themes including similarities and differences.
  8. Reflect together to capture a clarified statement of the Challenge or Problem.

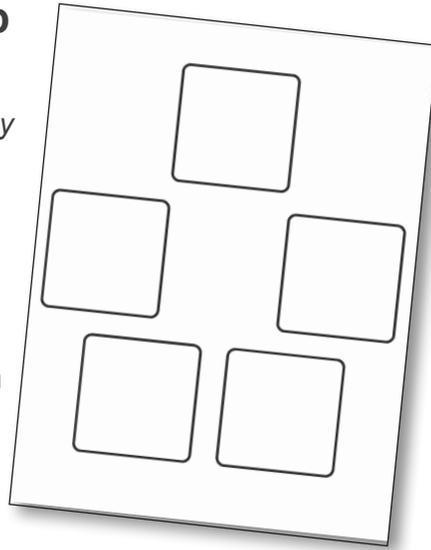


# Pick 5

## Creative Thinking Warm Up

Inspired from activities suggested in **The Secret of the Highly Creative Thinker**, by Dorte Nielsen & Sarah Thurber, used with permission.

This activity provides an easy way for participants to practice both trusting their intuition and making new connections and associations between “random” images.



### Steps:

1. Invite each participant to pick 5 small images from a collection of pictures, photographs or magazine images. *Note:* Images can be picked at random with no specific instruction as to what the next steps are.
2. Ask participants to glue the small pictures on a paper *Note:* You may choose to use a preset framework (see example above) or a blank piece of paper.
3. Provide just a few minutes for participants to reflect on the images they have chosen.
4. In pairs, invite each person to share a story created from their images. Allow time for each partner to share.
5. Repeat with a new partner.
6. Debrief with the full group asking for surprises about the process, the result, and how the process felt for them. No wrong answers.

### TIPS

- Prepare images before the session by trimming 3-4 inch square pictures from calendars, magazine pictures or old postcards.
- You can also incorporate words and phrases. Create a document with lists of random words. Cut and trim the words. Place in a bowl or small basket. Invite your participants to pick 3 pictures + 2 words = 5.
- For a real stretch, do an additional round of sharing. Ask participants to trade a Pick 5 from someone they have not shared with. Ask them to find a new partner and create a story from this sheet.

# CREATE



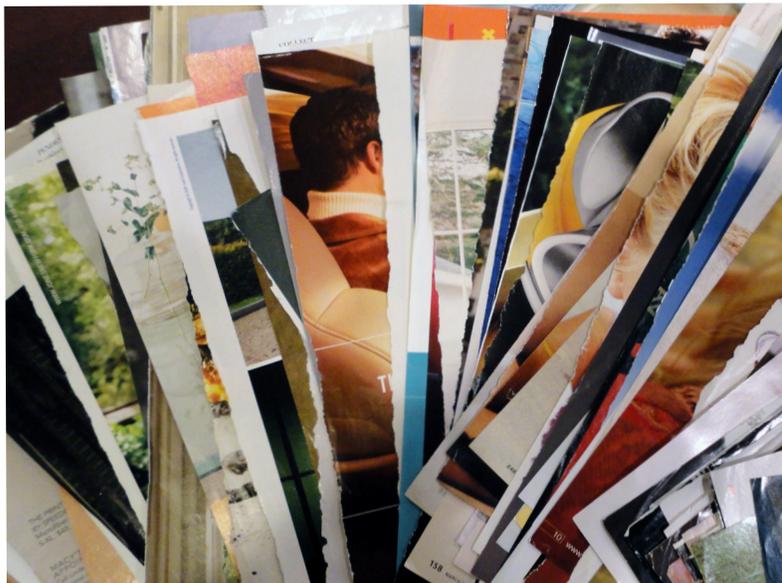
# A-B-C Storytelling

## Collaborative Improv Warm Up

An alternative to **Pick 5**, this warm up activates collaboration and improv through group storytelling inspired by visuals. A bit like theater improv, this is a great way to get all participants up and sharing ideas quickly and practicing making new connections on the fly.

### Steps:

1. Invite each participant to quickly pick one image from a set of random magazine pictures or a picture card deck or a collection of photographs of unrelated images.
2. Ask participants to form groups of 3. Have each person in a group decide if they are going to be A, B or C.
3. Explain that you will be calling out A, B and C randomly. When they hear their letter, they are to pick up the storyline using their image as inspiration.
4. To start, call out A, B or C. The designated person in each group should begin the story using their image as inspiration.
5. Randomly call out to switch storytellers. For example B-A-C-A-B-C-A-C-B. Make sure to give ample time for each turn to add a few sentences to the story.
6. Let the last person know they should bring the story to a conclusion.
7. Mix groups and repeat the exercise.
8. Debrief with the full group asking for surprises about the process, the result, and how the process felt for them. No wrong answers.



CREATE



# Storytelling with Pictures

## Create Stimulus for Brainstorming Activities

Often through telling of stories - real memories or fantastical fiction - we are able to release the judging nature of our cognitive brain and let our intuition and emotion surface the things we may feel or sense, but may not have words to articulate.

Story telling can be an individual or group process, or a combination of both. Individuals telling stories in a group setting allows personal involvement and for each team member to think creatively about what might be possible.



**Use pictures** to enhance what words alone can't communicate – simple magazine pictures or a card deck can be a prompt for an experience or new possibilities. These can be made into picture collages (glue, scissors and markers always enhance creativity). Or if time is more limited, use one picture as a prompt.

**Choose a clear story topic:** Simple is best. Keep the topic broad and linked to the team's focus. Examples are "Ideal Experience," "Earliest Memory," "Current Experience," "Most Memorable," "Once Upon a Time..."

**Provide a framework:** Set clear expectations and provide clear direction for the type of story you want your storytellers to construct; i.e., a one picture story, Before – During – After, free form Collage, Beginning – Middle – End, etc. This is important so your storytellers know what you are expecting from them – but is also important to you as a way to manage time. For example, a One Picture story will take much less time than a free form collage.

Ask each person in the room to share their story. Then collect themes as a new starting point for further brainstorming and idea generation.

From there you can further **DIVERGE** – mind map, SCAMPER, *Circle Around*, and more.

Or, **CONVERGE** to focus in on what you want to pursue next.



CREATE



# Amplify

# TRANSFORM

## Expand and Connect

This visual exercise allows the group or individual to expand and connect ideas beyond an initial core idea. Through amplification, essential features, ingredients and experiential aspects can be discovered and developed.

### Steps:

1. Start with a core idea or capture key themes from a Storytelling activity. Use a large blank paper, a white board or a visual thinking tool such as the *Circle Around*. Write a phrase or place a picture in the center of the framework to represent the idea.
2. Add lines radiating out from the core idea and capture related themes or descriptors. If you're using a *Circle Around*, write the related themes and descriptors in the bubbles provided (you can add more as you need them).
3. For each theme / descriptor ask "What does this mean in the context of the core idea? What are the essential details and elements that bring this to life?" Draw connector lines and capture details around each theme.
4. Ask participants to tell you which themes are most closely related to each other. Connect by drawing a line between them.



Template available for free download - send your request to [info@experienceahha.com](mailto:info@experienceahha.com)

### TIP

- Once the themes are captured, you may choose to use Sticky Dot Voting to identify the most important themes. This will help focus the energy of the group. Narrowing the focus will also help with time management.



# Side by Side

# TRANSFORM

## Compare and Contrast

This activity is great for any side-by-side comparison your group wants to do. Use to compare two different ideas, examine the pros and cons of a single idea, or to compare an idea to the ideal. Understand the similarities and differences between your idea and what already exists. Gather perceptions of a current situation or experience versus an ideal. Explore what's working and what's not.

### Steps:

1. **Introduce the template** and share the instructions.
2. **Share the ideas** with group.
3. **Select a picture:** Ask each person to silently select a picture that represents each idea.
4. **Title your pictures:** "Using a sticky note, give your picture a title."
5. **Share stories:** Each person shares the "story" of their pictures. Ask, "What does this picture represent to you? What does this picture communicate?" Capture their words verbatim on sticky notes and place directly on the corresponding picture.
6. **Repeat** for the next idea.
7. **Compare and contrast:** Ask, "Thinking now about both ideas, how are they similar? How are they different?" Capture their words on sticky notes and place along top or bottom of template.



Template is available for free download - send your request to [info@experienceahha.com](mailto:info@experienceahha.com)

### TIPS

- Use more than one template to do more cross comparisons - side by side by side.
- Provide pictures from a broad selection of magazines - fashion, sports, business, travel, food, home decor, technology, life style, etc.
- This activity may be done without pictures too. Use the template to provide a compare / contrast framework for Sticky Note Brainstorming. Invite participants to capture all associations with the first side, and then the other side. Complete both sides before sharing.
- Options for sharing: Post all sticky notes up and cluster. Or ask one participant to share an idea. Invite anyone else with related ideas to share and post the stickies together. Repeat: Invite another person to share until all ideas are posted in clusters.

