

# Empathy

Source: David Robinson, Seattle, USA

## Objective:

To consider that others lives are as rich in experience, desire, loss, joy...as yours.

Intended Audience: Any

Time: 20 minutes

Materials: None

Room Set Up: Open space

## Directions/Process:

Notes: *This is a deep dive, a very vulnerable exercise. We usually use it in sequence following Mask Mingle.*

**Set Up:** Generally, participants have just moved through and exercise that included greetings or some physical awareness around communication. Then, participants stand facing each other (in pairs) and I leave them there long enough to be self aware and a bit uncomfortable. I ask them to close their eyes, which is usually a relief.

## The Sequence:

- With eyes closed, I am going to ask you to remember 5 things but I want you to remember them through your senses, how they felt, smelled, tasted, etc.

With each instruction, allow them time to be in the memory, a few minutes before moving on.

- Remember your **favorite childhood game**. How did it feel to play? What were the sounds? Smells? Textures?
  - Let that go.
- Remember a **sanctuary, a secret place, a place you go to rejuvenate or escape**. How does it feel to be there? What are the smells?
  - Let that go.
- Remember your **first love**...
  - Let that go.
- Remember your **greatest loss**...
  - Let that go.
- Remember your most **potent learning**. What is the greatest lesson you ever learned? How did that come to you? How did it feel?....
- Open your eyes and look at this person facing you. Recognize that their memories were just as potent, just as specific, just as rich as were yours – and that is true of every human being you pass on the streets every day.

## Debrief:

The debrief can happen in a number of ways. We often let participants spend a few moments with their partners informally debriefing, sharing experiences. Then we either instruct them to sit with their partners to share insights, experiences, stories followed by a group debriefing, or we sit and as a group hear the insights. This debriefing session is more about processing the experience than about identifying lessons or abstracts.