

Three Brain Warm-up

A very powerful and popular warm-up with physical, cognitive, and spatial elements, where participants have fun failing

**TIMEFRAME**

15 – 20 minutes

**GROUP SIZE**

Groups of 4
(up to 5 groups)

**FACILITATION LVL.**

●●○

**COMFORT ZONE**

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Use it to...

- Make a powerful start to the day, to clearly punctuate the process, or to shake people out of a rut
- Awake participants
- Provoke laughter
- Inject a sense of fun through failure

**MATERIALS AND OTHER REQUIREMENTS**

- N/A

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Three Brain Warm-up

Walkthrough

1. Clear the space

This activity is developed with groups of 4 participants who will be standing and at a comfortable distance from each other. The space should allow visual contact between participants and facilitators.

2. Set up groups & Assign roles

Ask participants to form groups of 4. If necessary, some groups of 3 is fine.

- *Scatter the groups around the room so that they have space in between and can see each other. Arrange to have a spot at the center of the room for facilitation.*
- *Each group should appoint someone to stand within their group and face the facilitator. Name them "Subjects".*
- *Again, the groups should appoint someone else to go and stand behind the "Subject"'s left shoulder. Name them "Color Canvases"*
- *Now they should appoint "Math Professors" that must stand behind the "Subject"'s right shoulder*
- *Lastly, each group should choose a "Puppet Master" to stand facing the "Subject".*

3. Explain roles & demonstrate

Start by clarifying and role-play each role. Follow the sequence:

- *Color Canvases: They can ask their "Subject" simple questions about the color of things and repeat that question until it is answered correctly. Keep asking new color-related questions.*
 - *Role-play & Practice: Move inside a specific group, take the place of their Color Canvas and role-*

play an example ("What color is the sun? The sun? The sun? <right answer>... The sky? The sky?"). Move away and ask all Color Canvases to practice with their subjects for a few seconds.

- *Math Professors: They can ask their "Subject" simple math questions and repeat that question until it is answered correctly. Keep asking new math questions.*
 - *Select any group, take the place of the Math Professor and role-play an example ("2+2? 2+2? 2+2? <right answer>... 3x1? 3x1?"). Move away and ask all Math Professors to practice with their subjects for a few seconds.*
- *Puppet Masters: Explain they should perform very slow, precise movements mostly with their hands, waiting for the Subject to copy each pose precisely before moving on.*
 - *Move inside a specific group, take the place of their Puppet Master and role-play an example. Move away and ask all Puppet Masters to practice with their subjects for a few seconds.*
- *Subjects: Explain they should try to provide the most right answers to the other players in the group.*

4. Exceptions

When a group has only 3 players, the Subject should choose another group's Puppet Master to refer to

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Walkthrough (cont.)

1. Go through the process

At the start signal, each player should perform their role within the initial formation. (The remaining 3 players all demand the Subject's attention at the same time; the Subject tries to answer all the questions and mirror the movements simultaneously). At the stop signal, all players should stop and change positions:

- *Subject takes the Puppet Master position*
- *Math Professor takes the Subject position*
- *Color Canvas takes the Math Professor position*
- *Puppet Master takes the Color Canvas position*
- *Subject takes the Puppet Master position*
- *Math Professor takes the Subject position*
- *Color Canvas takes the Math Professor position*

- *Puppet Master takes the Color Canvas position*
- *With the re-start signal, each player should perform their role within the new formation.*
- *Repeat until all players have performed all roles (total of 4 rounds)*

2. Run 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th rounds

- *Start a round with an agreed starting signal (e.g. short ring)*
- *Allow approximately 30 seconds (or the time needed to warm the Subject which you can grasp from signals like bright eyes and face full of life)*
- *Sound the stop signal the round with the agreed signal (e.g. long ring)*
- *Hold for 10 seconds*
- *Start a new round*

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Notes and Tips

At the start...

The activity should be briefly introduced as "A powerful and popular warm-up with physical, cognitive, and spatial elements, where participants will have fun failing".

As in any other activity that pushes the boundaries of the comfort zone, the facilitator should also highlight that he/she is inviting the participants to take part in something that is not so usual and that they may accept or decline the invitation as well as leave the activity at any moment.

At the end...

The facilitator can debrief the activity highlighting some of the outcomes as linked to the workshop's mindset:

At first, we initially struggle to talk and use our hands at the same time (most participants will often "forget" the hands). But we soon get into the flow, and the result is very invigorating. In design too, we will do best if we enrich our accustomed verbal channel by using our hands and bodies.

Also, this activity is basically impossible – everyone fails, from the CEO to the newest intern – but they still get a benefit from the exercise. And because everybody fails, nobody gets embarrassed. As designers, we will all fail together, and by failing we will move forward.



DOs, DON'Ts & BE AWARE

Besides being very clear and illustrative of the roles, process and rules, during the activity the facilitator should focus on:

- ✓ Clearly signaling the right pace for rounds
- ✓ Use time before starting each round to recall the basic rules (Remember, the basic rule for the two questioners is "never stop talking" and the basic rule for the Puppet Master is "be very slow, and very precise") and remind them that it's OK to reuse questions/movements and that "you need your answer NOW!"