

Comic Relief

Effective training is no laughing matter – but it could be if you use the comics pages from your Sunday paper!

Time: 20 - 40 minutes depending on variation chosen

Materials: Several dozen color comic strips from the Sunday paper

Personal Inspiration – Planning a new presentation? Do your research, thinking, and writing then set it aside for a few days. When you are ready to look at it with fresh eyes, turn to the comics. Read through them and ask yourself how each might relate to your topic. If you are grounded in your topic, you will find a comic strip that connects. Then flesh it out by asking what metaphorical association each character has with your topic. Use your insights to inform your presentation.

Event Theme – Choose a comic strip that you feel has some connections to your workshop theme. Be strategic and ask participants what new insights the comic strip reveals for them after you cover each major learning point. Notice how people's thinking becomes more profound when they are asked to derive new meaning from the same comic several times.

Icebreaker – Cut several comic strips apart into their individual picture panels. Distribute the panels randomly to participants and have them find the folks who have panels from the same strip. Have them put their panels into the correct order and introduce themselves as they read their whole strip to the rest of the participants. Ask them to describe how their comic is a metaphor for the training topic.

Extreme Learning – Ask people to reflect silently about the topic and find a comic that is a metaphor for their views about it. Share comics and metaphorical meanings with the rest of the group. Use to explore learning points, write action steps, or review.

Get Creative – Distribute comic strips with the words blacked out. Ask partners to write dialogue for the comic characters so the strip illustrates a key learning point.

TRAINER'S NOTES

Newspaper comics are cheap and readily available. In a few weeks you can easily save enough for a year's worth of workshops – especially if you gather them from more than one paper each week.

People like the funnies. Everyone has their favorite and is able to identify with specific characters. Written as they are for mass consumption, they speak to contemporary themes and can be easily related to current issues. It is this aspect of the Sunday comics that makes them valuable as a training tool.

Variations:

- Instead of comic strips, try using pictures from a magazine like *National Geographic*. Ask people to choose a picture to tell a story that relates to the learning topic.
- Have on hand a variety of super hero comic books. Ask your participants to list the main points of the learning topic. If there were a super hero who was an expert in that topic, what super powers would that hero have?