

Confucius Says . . .

“It is better to play than do nothing.” So said Confucius in what is perhaps one of his lesser known quotes. In this activity, you can capitalize on the playful nature of this well-known Chinese philosopher to help your participants summarize the day’s learning, wrap up the workshop, or just end the day on a high note.

Time: Five minutes to 25 minutes depending on your purpose

Materials: One fortune cookie per person
Paper and pens (optional)

Ask people to think of three to five things they learned during the day’s meeting or training event. Have them write their ideas on a paper. Either full sentences or a few key phrases are fine.

After a moment, distribute one fortune cookie to each person. Explain that, once people read the fortune inside their cookie, many will be surprised to find that it has special relevance to one of the things they learned today. Give them a moment to read their fortunes and be alert for anyone who expresses surprise or delight at what they find.

Invite people to share their fortune and explain how it relates to what they learned. Encourage those who had a strong reaction while reading their fortune to be sure to share. If volunteers are not forthcoming, ask one or two people to read their fortune and invite the whole group to figure out how that fortune relates to the day’s session. Applaud the efforts of the group and thank them for their commitment to learning.

Discussion:

- What additional thoughts or comments can you add to the fortunes that were read?
- If you were to write an original fortune that relates to the day’s session, what would it be?
- What are some specific ways you can apply the wisdom of these fortunes on the job?

TRAINER'S NOTES

Variations:

- If you are worried that no one will find a fortune that relates to what was learned, relax. Give people plenty of time to consider their fortune and someone will always find one that clicks.
- This activity is especially appropriate for the end of a strategic planning session or any meeting where people leave with specific follow-up assignments.
- Use this activity at the beginning of your session to elicit expectations.
- Have people work with a partner or in small groups to choose a fortune and determine its relevance.
- Ask people to read their fortune adding an extra identical phrase at the end. Choose a phrase that’s relevant to your group such as “...on the shop floor,” “...when providing customer service,” or “...while leading a team meeting.” What new insights can be gained about the topic through this juxtaposition?