

CORNERSTONE 2019 RESOURCE

Creating Mind-Blowing “AHA” Moments

Elective

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SUMMARY:	A workshop on how to create moments of insight, “AHA” Moments, through a shortened experience of them, an introduction to a working model for creating them, and an intensive brainstorm session aimed at developing them for camp. - <i>Submitted by Josh Friedman</i>
TOPIC(S):	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) What is an “AHA” moment as far as cognitive psychology is concerned? 2) How do we create them for our campers?
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	Participants will walk away from the session having a mental model for designing / programming experiences so that campers have a good chance of experiencing a “moment of insight”, how to frame it, and a better appreciation for these moments.
AUDIENCE:	Older camps and staff
TIMING:	90 Minutes
APPENDICES:	Research White Paper on Insight, Eureka Moments, Model for understanding how to program for Insight.
MATERIALS NEEDED:	<p>Activity Materials: 10-Inch Nails: 15 10-inch nails, 1 2x4 piece of scrap wood that has at least one broad flat side (nail 1 nail into the wood piece so that it stands straight up when placed on a flat surface); Hoops of Awareness: 4 hula hoops, MANY random objects that can be thrown around the room (pieces of string work okay, koosh toys are best, bandanas, flags, cones, balls, blocks, foam pieces, etc. all work fine as well); and Traffic Jam: 1 piece of paper for every participant + 1 piece of paper for every group of 8 participants, and some kind of marker for every participant (could be a literal marker, could be the objects from the Hoops activity, just some handheld object really) is helpful but not necessary.</p> <p>Instructional & Brainstorm Materials: Post-It Notes, markers, a large Post-It pad on an easel.</p>
SET-UP DETAILS:	Upon Participant arrival, Facilitator should have set out the 10-inch nails activity block in the middle of the room, the hula hoops at the 4 cardinal directions of the room’s edge (but still in a square, not rectangle, shape); and the random objects should be scattered around the room (koosh toys). If there are chairs, they should all be pushed against the walls, but no chairs is okay too. The easel should be placed one side of the room, visible everywhere, and the materials for Traffic Jam should be organized by group (9 sheets of paper with 8 “markers” per group) but kept off to the side. If time allows, facilitator can also set up briefing questions on giant Post-Its hung around the walls of the room with questions such as “What is insight?”, “Write your most memorable AHA moment”, “what makes life meaningful? etc

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

- 5 Minutes – Introduction & Framing Brainstorm
- 20 Minutes – Activities & Reflection
- 15 Minutes – Model Elicitation and Display
- 10 Minutes – Course Correction Feedback
- 20 Minutes – Progressive Brainstorm
- 20 Minutes – Share Out & Play if Time Allows

5 Minutes – Introduction & Framing Brainstorm

Facilitator (FL) will welcome Participants (PPs) to the space, introduce themselves, and invite participants to answer framing questions: What is an AHA moment?; Tell us about a personal AHA moment?; What is insight?; Why do we care about AHA moments?; etc.

20 Minutes – Activities & Reflection

FL will provide a transition statement into doing activities that have the potential for an AHA moment experience, ask that if anyone has seen any of the activities before to not reveal the answer until called upon to do so, describe that we will play each as long as time allows, despite how much fun they may be to continue on with, and then describe the challenge of the first activity: 10-inch nails.

10-inch nails: there are 14 nails provided, the group's challenge is to figure out how to get them all to balance on the head of the one nail standing straight up in the block of wood. FL will slowly provide hints and suggestions that reveal the answer within 5-7 minutes. If no answer is reached by the PPs, FL will describe that many things are like this: before we know the answer, the task seems impossible, after seeing the answer, we're unlikely to ever forget it. How can this be? After the solution is revealed, FL will remove the materials for this activity, instruct PPs to reflect on any thoughts they had / have throughout / from the activity, and then move on to describing the next one.

Hoops of Awareness: There are 4 hula hoops around the room and many random objects. FL will number every PP 1,2,3, or 4 in equal numbers. FL will then ask each number to go to a specific hula hoop in the room WITHOUT EVER SAYING: group, team, or anything of the sort. i.e. "1's to the green hoop, 2's to the blue one," etc. Then, FL will give *this exact instruction*: "Your goal, by the end of time, is for your group to have the most objects in your hula hoop as possible. You will have 2 minutes. Go." If the group "figures it out", FL will instruct PPs to reflect again, and then move on to the next activity. If they do not "figure it out" FL will provide them with another chance after a reset (throw all of the objects around the room and put the Hula hoops back in their starting location) and provide the same instruction without anything else. If they don't complete it after this chance, FL will ask everyone to simply collect the materials as they have failed again, and put them all on the ground at the FL's feet (everything, including the hula hoops, resulting in all 4 hoops stacked together, and all of the objects inside of them), at which point FL should look up in shock, surprise, and joyous awe to proclaim to the group that they have completed the task: "indeed, that *is* the most objects possible in your group's hula hoop!" Again here, FL will instruct the PPs to reflect on their mental processes throughout the activity, and then move on to the final one.

Traffic Jam: See YouTube video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=alFCqX-qxog> for full and simple explanation. Essentially, there is a complex additive pattern whereby 2 halves of the group need to switch sides on a $1 \times \text{total \# of participants} + 1$ game board. The extra space belongs in the middle of the two halves, all PPs start on one side of the free space and must finish on the other side of the free space from where they start. Rules: Each PP may only move 1 or 2 spaces forward to a free space. PPs cannot move two spaces past a teammate, only a PP from the other side. PPs cannot share a single space. (Hard mode: PPs cannot step backwards). The insight here is the pattern, and for the purposes of the overall program, PPs do not need to complete this on their own, its really more for a display (the actual solving as a group takes anywhere from 15 minutes to 2 hours depending on the group). So, FL will ask participants to take spaces on a 1×9 game board (4 participants on each side) and then give them plus the spectators a couple minutes to attempt a solution before either

playing them the video (if A/V allows), directing them so that a solution is reached by following the video instructions themselves, or, simply don't reveal the solution until the end of the workshop / seminar to keep their brains going on it (additional / alternate setup: FL can also handout sheets of paper and markers to represent the problem). A pattern will begin to emerge for the PPs as they watch / work, and this is the take-away that the FL should drive home: there is an underlying order to many things that we often don't perceive; a guide makes a big difference, but this insight (the pattern) could also have been reached with more time, more trial and error, etc. Again here, FL will encourage reflection before moving on to the next section.

15 Minutes – Model Elicitation and Display

FL will have PPs come close into a semi-circle shape around the white board / easel, and ask debrief questions around the activities to elicit the Plan, Product, Perception AHA Model (see appendix: 3P's Model for Educational AHA's). The basic idea is that by obscuring either the Plan (as in the pattern in Traffic Jam), the Product (as in 10-inch nails) or the Perception (as in Hoops of Awareness), educators can purposefully create tension and engage problem solving processes in the students (campers) until the insight is revealed through trial and error or instruction, and all of this makes life quite exciting. FL should ask PPs here *why* or *how* they experienced insight, *what happened* just before they experienced an AHA moment, etc. and attempt to distill and frame the conversation in terms of the 3Ps.

10 Minutes – Course Correction Feedback

Once the model is up on the board, FL will hand out the corresponding Appendix, and then challenge participants to talk about AHA moments they have experienced at camp (in any setting as well if not hits on camp), and then ask them to think about how the 3Ps apply to the situation they described. FL will then ask if the PPs have any ideas off the top of their head that may incorporate this idea into an activity / program, and FL will provide some concept-checking feedback *after everyone has shared that wants to*. FL will then move on to the next section.

20 Minutes – Progressive Brainstorm

FL will ask PPs to split up into groups based on similar camps / the same camp (to encourage more applicability), and start them thinking individually and quietly about how they might use the 3Ps to create an AHA moment for campers. FL will instruct at 3-5 minutes for groups to begin talking and sharing with one another, with the goal of developing one really solid AHA moment based on obscuring either the Product, Plan, or Perception of an activity. FL will roam throughout this section providing guidance, feedback, and encouragement.

20 Minutes – Share Out & Play if Time Allows

Once the groups have had ample time to create an AHA moment plan, FL will call the big group back together and have groups that would like to share with the whole group what their idea is, how to create it, the purpose, the insight, etc. until time is up or everyone has shared, at which point perhaps one of the activities may be played (if applicable; also, if they want to have people play it, then they may need to wait until everyone else has shared so that they don't give away the insight pre-maturely).

Finally, FL will hand out Appendix: Insights from Cognitive Psychology as a take home resource.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

The activities in the beginning are chosen for the express purpose of displaying the 3Ps. If other activities are more familiar and accomplish the same goal of obscuring Plan, Product, or Perception, by all means substitute them.

It ought be noted here that I am describing how to program for AHA moments, not necessarily how to ensure that any given individual will have their mind blown by an activity. This is hard to do concerning that there is incredible individual variation in knowledge, resulting in AHA moments of varying degrees for individuals in any group. Don't be disappointed if people tell you that they didn't have their mind blown in your mind-blowing session, only if they are unsure how to create one for campers.

There is an obvious deceptive element to this theory, and its important in all cases of deception that the social and emotional health and safety of the PPs be taken into account, and respected, this disclaimer should necessarily be mentioned to all those present and learning the technique.

Finally, on a somewhat related note, insights are about wonder, fascination, and natural curiosity in the world. An important take-away and learning for any PP of this program ought to be a piece of this joy and excitement that comes from the idea of learning new things. If PPs are leaving the program excited about tricking and deceiving their campers, that's a negative sign. If they leave energized and enthused about the amazing moments and feelings that they have the opportunity to teach their campers wonder-full ways, that's the best outcome.