



Think of a time you felt powerful

To start the conversation about power, it's helpful for each of us to question the assumptions we hold. We tend to think of power as something that other people have, but when we take the time to think about it, most of us have experienced feeling powerful. Use this as an opportunity to gently challenge commonly held assumptions about who has power and who hasn't.

1. Think of a time when you felt 'powerful' – whether that was a positive or negative experience. If nothing springs to mind, think about the different forms that power can take, eg power with, power within and power over.
2. If you still can't think of an example from your own life, think of someone powerful you've seen in a film, TV programme or book.
3. Describe the experience in as much detail as you can. What happened? Where were you? Who were you with? How did you feel – before, during and after?
4. What does this experience teach you about power?
5. If you can, compare your experience with someone else's. How were those experiences – the same, or different?

If it feels safe to do so, you can repeat the practice and consider a time when you felt 'powerless' – but think carefully before inviting others to do so.

Use the following techniques – Freefall Writing, Three Ways of Listening and Think, Pair, Share – to help you reflect.



Individual reflection: Freefall Writing

If you're working through the exercises that follow or reflecting on a topic on your own, try Freefall Writing. This is something anyone can do, but it gets easier with practice. You can use it to explore the hidden feelings and motivations around any topic. You'll need a pen and paper, and a timer (a phone will do).

1. Write down the title of the exercise, or the topic you wish to explore, as a heading.
2. Set a timer for, say, three or five minutes and start writing – whatever comes into your head. Even if you don't know what to write, just write that and keep writing.
3. When your time is up, read what you've written. Underline any words or phrases that stand out – look especially for those that hint at deeper feelings or intentions.
4. Choose one word or phrase and write that as the next heading.
5. Set the timer for the same amount of time and write again.
6. Once again, read what you've written and underline what stands out.
7. If you run out of things to write, or want to explore further, choose another underlined word or phrase and write about that!
8. Look back over what you have written. What have you learned?



Working with a partner or small group: Three Ways of Listening

If you're working with a partner or a small group, help each other to reflect more deeply by offering different perspectives. You'll need a timer, and you might like to encourage people to write some notes, either after each round of listening or at the end.

1. Decide on the topic you want to think about. You could do this together, or one person can bring a topic, or you could use the exercises that follow as a prompt.
2. Allocate a timekeeper and decide who will speak first. The first speaker has three to five minutes to respond (adapt timings so everyone has equal time to contribute).
3. If there are two people, while one speaks the other listens for different aspects of the story:
 - the 'head' (ideas, thoughts or facts)
 - the 'heart' (emotions, feelings or values)
 - the 'feet' (intentions or motivations)If there are two or three listeners, decide in advance which aspect of the story each person will listen out for.
4. Listeners don't ask questions or interrupt the speaker. If the speaker runs out of things to say, challenge everyone to sit quietly and wait – this can take practice, but sometimes powerful observations arise after a pause.
5. Listeners take turns to share the different aspects they heard.
6. If you have time, you can then ask questions and have a more open conversation but keep an eye on the time.
7. Swap roles, until everyone has had the chance to speak.



Working with a larger group: Think, Pair, Share

When reflecting on power with a larger group, it can help everyone to participate with more confidence if they have time to think first. You'll need a timer, and everyone will need a pen and paper. You might also like to have a big piece of paper or a digital whiteboard if you're working online.

1. Decide on the topic you want to think about. You could use the exercises that follow as a prompt, allow one person to bring a topic to the table, or collectively set the agenda.
2. Set a timer for, say, three minutes and encourage everyone to write down their thoughts about the topic on their own (you could use Freefall Writing, or just make a few notes).
3. Ask everyone to find a partner or allocate pairs to breakout rooms if you're meeting online. Encourage people to share their thoughts with their partner (you can introduce Three Ways of Listening, or just ask people to share the time equally).
4. Ask each pair to share key points from their discussion with the whole group. You might like to capture these points on a big sheet of paper or digital whiteboard.
5. Allow time for everyone to ask questions and share what they learned from the process.