

# HOW TO SET UP A BUDDY SYSTEM

## WHY PREPARE YOUR BUDDIES?

- ❑ Support for learning seems to increase the speed and depth of learning, whether it comes from support groups or from "buddies" (a partner for learning).
- ❑ Most people aren't accustomed to intentional support, so they don't know how to use it or are embarrassed about using it
- ❑ Many people need information and a framework to get started.

## STEPS

- ❑ Randomize buddy selection
  - Unless you have specific reasons to put certain individuals together with other individuals, randomizing has advantages, including the opportunity to go to an awareness layer deeper than usual by asking the question, "How is this buddy the perfect buddy for you?"
  - One way of doing randomizing buddy selection is to set up two concentric circles of equal size, facing each other. Put participants who are already friends, political colleagues, partners in the same circle, so they don't match up with each other.
  - Start the circles walking around, in opposite directions. Stop the walking at a random point; the persons closest to each other in the each circle form the buddy pair.
    - ✓ You can also play a game of "musical circles" (someone sings or claps hands while people move, and then stops). At each stop, participants share one hope for the workshop, for example. After a few stops, tell the participants they have now found their buddy.
- ❑ Ask your newly formed buddy pairs to sit down facing each other
- ❑ Explain that Buddy A will listen to Buddy B do a series of statements before the roles are reversed. The questions will be in the form of a sentence to be completed.
  - Sentence completion allows tremendous freedom, yet is structured enough to stimulate valuable information in a sequence.
  - Formulate questions that makes sense for the goals of your workshop, the design, and the level of sophistication of the participants.
- ❑ You as a facilitator tell the group each sentence to be completed (allow one or two minutes per sentence). Model one or two examples, starting each sentence with the primer statement.
  - You should write up the questions on flip chart for easy reference.
- ❑ Buddy A will listen to Buddy B go over each of the sentences, repeating each primer statement a number of a time. The whole series of statements will have to be done before the roles are reversed, and Buddy B listens to Buddy A.

## **SAMPLE QUESTIONS TO GET THE BUDDIES STARTED**

- ❑ For less sophisticated participants
  - "Some wishes I have for this workshop are..."
  - "Some fears or reservations I have about this workshop are..."
  - "Some ways I might 'tune out' or reduce my participation in this workshop are..."
  - "Some support I could use from my buddy might be..."
- ❑ For more sophisticated participants
  - "You'll be glad I'm your buddy because..."
  - "A way I might need support this workshop is..."
  - "How I might resist that support is..."
  - "How you could support me anyway is..."

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*Based on a handout from Training for Change, [www.trainingforchange.org](http://www.trainingforchange.org).  
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