



One Hundred Pennies

Purpose: To begin an event as a way of introducing people and capturing the range of experiences of a group.

Collect one hundred pennies from the 1940s to the present time. You can have more than one penny per year. Consider the group you are working with in terms of the range of years for your pennies. You will be asking people to share particular memories from that year, so you won't want to go back too far if you have a "younger" group.

Put the pennies in a container with a lid. Shake them up and pass around your group asking everyone to select one and look at the date. If it is too early for their birth date or for their memory bank or if they can't read the date, the person may select another penny.

Then ask each person to consider some important memory from the date on the penny. Depending upon your focus for the meeting you may ask for very specific memories, such as "what was your educational experience during this year?", "what developmental stage were you in during this year?", "what was going on in our country during this year?", or simply "what was your most significant memory of this year?".

For educators, the educational experience question is always interesting. You can make it more specific by asking what specific curriculum or pedagogical models they remember from their year, or what kind of educational "reform" was popular that year.

Ask participants to line up or form a circle in order of their "penny" years, and give them one minute to share their memory (you can take more time depending upon the size of the group and how much time you choose to take for this activity). You may see some interesting patterns develop in the sharing. Debrief by asking people what trends or patterns they noticed or interesting observations they made.