

ACTIVITY: PERCEPTIONS OF POWER

Understanding the balance of power within a partnership is essential to understanding how the partnership functions and to participating in the partnership. However, the perceived balance of power is often quite different from the desired balance of power or even the actual balance of power. Once you are aware of your group’s feelings about the balance of power, you can work together to maintain or change that balance.

OVERVIEW

This activity works best at the beginning of a meeting, before participants have had a chance to discuss their roles in the youth-adult partnership. It also works well to book-end a meeting – opening and closing with the same activity to visualize how participants’ feelings about the group’s balance of power have changed over the course of the meeting. Participants line up according to their perception of their influence in the group’s power scheme, and the conversation in Step 3 discusses how balances of power affect the group’s work.

OBJECTIVES

- To examine what participants feel is their position of power relative to the group
- To explore whether young people feel that they are as powerful as the adults

TIME REQUIRED

Approximately 15 minutes

SUPPLIES

You’ll need a flip chart and markers for this activity.

WHAT	TIME	HOW	MATERIALS
Step 1: Setting the context	5 min	Tell the group, “Understanding the balance of power in true partnerships is critical to the work we are trying to do with youth and adults. The power balance can be one of the challenges partnerships encounter. Today, we’re going to talk about power relationships within <i>this</i> group and examine how you feel those relationships affect what we hope to do.”	
Step 2: Lining up and counting off	5 min	Instruct participants to put themselves in a single-file line that stretches from the person who feels he or she has the most influence in the group to the person who expresses a feeling of having the least influence. Explain that this must be done silently: participants are not to talk or compare notes. They are doing this on their <i>own</i> perception of their influence, not anyone else’s. When participants are in a single-file line, have the group count off, from one to whatever number of participants there are, beginning with the person who is in the “most influence” position.	Enough space for your group to stand in a single line

continued next page

WHAT	TIME	HOW	MATERIALS
Step 3: Reflecting and discussing	5–10 min	<p>Ask a series of discussion questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ How did it feel to do this activity? ■ How did it feel to be at one end of the line or the other? How about the middle? ■ What did you notice when everyone lined up? ■ Think about another group you're involved in: How would that group line up? Where would the adults be standing? The youth? ■ What do you think made different people stand in different places? ■ What can we learn about youth-adult partnerships from this activity? ■ What would you most like to remember about this activity? <p>Appoint a group member to, using the flip chart and markers, take notes on the discussion. Revisit this activity and these notes as your group's work progresses.</p>	<p>Flip chart</p> <p>Markers</p>