

## RE-MEMBERING CONVERSATIONS



### MAIN FEATURES

|                                  |                                     |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Reinforced skills (TASC Cluster) | CONSTRUCTION - LEADING - SUPPORTING |
| Suitable for                     | Teachers, Students                  |
| Difficulty level                 | Medium                              |
| Individual setting               | Yes                                 |
| Group setting                    | Yes                                 |
| Minimum number of participants   | 1                                   |
| Average time length              | 60 minutes + 60 minutes             |
| Special Equipment                | Yes                                 |
| Online                           | Yes                                 |

## 1. DESCRIPTION

It is a particular way of interviewing that White (2007) called “Re-membering Conversation”, which invites people to think of their identity as multi-voiced, in contrast to the notion of identity as “encapsulated self”. In this multi-voiced sense of identity, people find that their lives are joined to the lives of others around them and shared as precious themes. This sense of identity features positive but non-heroic conclusions about one's actions in life and who one is. The term “re-membering”, was originally coined by Barbara Myerhoff (1982, 1986), an anthropologist who worked in several different contexts, including with elderly Jewish communities of Southern California. Myerhoff used the term “re-membering” to describe a special type of recollection. To signify a special type of recollection, the term ‘Re-membering’ may be used, calling attention to the reaggregation of the figures who belong to one's life story.

In this exercise, it is stressed that identity can be understood as a group of relationships, an “association”, or a “club” of our life, in which there are different members: significant people from our past, present and imagined future. White (2007) proposed that we can decide who the members of our club of life are, upgrade them, honour their membership, or in some cases, downgrade or even revoke them. Finally, in this exercise, the time sequence (the typical timeline activity done at school) for “re-membering” others is considered as the main tool to recollect their role in people's lives.

## 2. AIM / BENEFITS

Remembering conversations opens the possibility of revising the membership of the club of our life. We can give more voice to those who think to make valuable contributions to our identity based on our experiences and relationships with them. As a group activity, this exercise can help students better understand their identities in terms of the people that helped shape them.

## 3. COMPETENCIES CLUSTER(S) RELATED

CLUSTER NR 1 CONSTRUCTION, NR LEADING, AND NR 4 SUPPORTING.

### *Why*

The exercise is mainly focused on constructing, leading and supporting dynamics, considering the TASC framework.

1. Considering constructing, Relationship as a co-construction of meaning and Relationship as a mutual influence process can be the pivotal elements to develop this competence. During the re-membering activity, in fact, we have the possibility to reframe the role of people in our life, and mostly to understand better that people become people through other people.

2. Considering support, avoiding blame can facilitate effective students' identity exploration and, therefore, focus the attention on the positive characteristics and roles of people involved in the student's life.
3. On the other hand, the dynamic of leading makes us understand the importance of the various roles that power can have in students' identity formation. For example, teachers can have different roles in students' life than the other students, as well as parents or other meaningful authority figures.

#### 4. HOW TO DO THE EXERCISE

Consists of three parts: a first part in which students assign "certificates" of participation to their identity to various significant persons; a second part in which these certificates are inserted within a timeline; a third and final part in which significant people (the members of their club) are connected to the person and to each other through common happenings, events and situations. The exercise can be done by a single student, or in groups, or by the entire class of students. See the various possibilities in the tip and tricks section.

##### ***Step 1: "Certifying" the membership of others in our personal club***

In the first part, the student is asked to fill in the "certificates" of participation in their personal club for each important person in their life, from the past until today, and also assuming possible important people in the future. Not only individuals can be considered, but also any organisations or groups of people who have nevertheless played an essential role in the student's life. You can use the certificate formats prepared ad hoc or large post-its, filled in with a wide-tipped marker. In compiling the certificates, the student must explain why the person was, or is essential, or will be in her future life (this should be the reason that justifies membership in the personal club).

##### ***Step 2: Plotting the certificates in a timeline***

Once all the personal club membership certificates have been filled in, the required task is to place them within a timeline that starts from birth or early childhood and extends into the near future (for example, between 20 and 30 years of age, i.e. the age for students of possible inclusion in adulthood). The timeline should have units of time that are understandable (for example, single years) and clear. If post-its have been used, it is sufficient to stick them in the timeline at the point where the significant subjects in the student's life have appeared. If, on the other hand, printed sheets have been used (handouts, see the special materials section), you can use adhesive tape to stick them or glue them. To stimulate the process of reflection, the student can add notes next to the certificates or other written and graphic methods to add information to the presence of the certificate at a certain point of their timeline, especially if it is information not present inside. of the certificate.

### ***Step 3: Connecting the certificates inside the timeline***

At this point, it is necessary to connect the points of the timeline of the certificates of belonging to your group, to highlight not only the possible connections but above all the networks of relationships that create the student's identities. For example, an important person can be connected with another important person, so it is good to identify the relationships or describe the events that bind the two people. Or, if students have indicated an organisation or a group, they can connect it with individual people who subsequently joined it, and so on. This linking process gives a better idea of the two main mechanisms recalled by this exercise, namely the "remembrance" (the participation certificates are compiled and inserted in a timeline) and the redefinition of belonging to one's own personal sphere (defined by the relationships between the individual memberships and between them and the student). The connection is made simply with lines, which can also have a direction, then become arrows if there is a need to highlight relations of directional influence ("subject A has subsequently joined group C"). Or in addition to lines, words can also be used to describe these relationships, or images, clippings, etc. The outcome should be a long and dense timeline with all the main players in the club, their place in time, and their relationships.

## **5. DEBRIEF**

The debrief part consists of at least two moments of reflection with the students. The first moment focuses on each certificate of participation in your personal club through these questions:

- Let's go back to the person about whom you created the membership card. What would you say was the most important contribution that he/she made in your life? What is one positive change in your life that has to do with knowing him/her?
- On the other hand, what do you think this person would say was the most crucial contribution YOU made in his/her life di lei? What is one positive change in this person's life that has to do with knowing you?

These questions can help refine and improve the graphical representation in the timeline, possibly even modifying it.

The second moment intercepts the set of relationships that emerged in the timeline through this question:

- If you keep these memberships active, if you continue to nurture your relationships with these people, what effect do you think this may have on your identity and on your plans for the future?

## 6. SPECIAL MATERIALS

To be carried out, the exercise requires some materials to be prepared. For example, the membership "certificates" of the personal club are cards on which are printed some essential information to be written about each person or group: a) the name of the person who is analysing their own club; b) the name of the person or group being analysed belonging to their club; c) the reasons for belonging to the group. A printable format that can be used as a club membership card is available in the attachment. Alternatively, it is possible to use similar material, such as simple rectangles of paper, or large post-its, also to facilitate the subsequent work of filling the timeline. For the timeline, a horizontal billboard and coloured markers are sufficient to draw and fill in the timeline with references to the various cards and the reasons that justify belonging to the club.

## 7. TIPS AND TRICKS

The exercise can be carried out both in the individual version (the club of a single student) and in the group version (e.g. The 5A classroom's club). They could be the two phases of a single process: first, we work on individual identities, and then we explore those at the classroom level also to grasp the possible interactions and overlaps. A first suggestion, therefore, is to carry out individual work, especially with students who feel less comfortable within the classroom, with the help of classmates. This work can be followed by the construction of the classroom's club, considering the collective contribution of all students within it.

As for the people or groups to remember, they do not need to be people or groups with whom the students have had to deal directly: they can also be fictional characters (from books, TV series, ...), or characters famous for sport, music, art.... In some cases, it is not necessarily a question of people in the strict sense of the term: they could be considered events or events that are not necessarily superimposable on people.

Another suggestion concerns the presence of positive and negative roles in the process of remembering and attribution. In principle, people, groups and events related to positive memories should be considered. It is possible, however, that in remembering the past, some people pass from a positive to a negative connotation and vice versa. It is the aim of the "owner" of the club to decide who to keep inside and what hope for change (positive vs negative and vice versa) to give to their members.

## 8. ON-LINE VERSION

You can make an online version of this exercise. It can be easily created in the digital version (for example using the appropriate apps on the drive), both in the individual version and in the group.

## 9. BIBLIOGRAPHY - SITOGRAPHY

- White, M. (2007). *Maps of narrative practice*. WW Norton & Company, New York.
- Russell, S., Carey, M. (2002). *Remembering: responding to commonly asked questions* ([link](#)). The International Journal of Narrative Therapy and Community Work, 3.