Activity 7: Decision Making

Objectives:
- Illustrate group dynamics during critical decision-making junctures.
- Highlight how hidden assumptions may drive our decision-making in particular directions.
- Give participants a chance to reflect on how their style of decision-making impacts assessment and evaluation situations.
- Give participants a chance to reflect on how their hidden assumptions may drive their choice of assessment and evaluation tools.

Playing time:
About 20 minutes depending on size of group.

Number of players:
Best with no more than 10 groups of 4-5, but can be done with larger groups.

Materials required:
Each group should have their own copies of the list of items.

Preparation:
It is important to begin this with little set up, i.e. don’t get overly dramatic about why or where the group was traveling together by plane. Also minimize issues of injury or danger prior to the activity. The Facilitator must be familiar with the process and direction of the activity.

Activity Procedure
Step 1:
The Facilitator tells the groups that they are traveling together in an airplane that they have all helped load prior to leaving on their trip. Thus they all know exactly what is in each hold of the plane. The aft hold and the fore hold both contain enough survival equipment for the group to survive if they need it. The groups are told that they are also familiar with their destination. They have crash-landed their plane in the middle of a barren plain. They only have time to access one cargo hold, either the fore or aft hold before the plane disappears (time warp or magic or atmospheric effect or x). The groups are instructed to look at the list of items in each hold and choose just ten survival items. They are to answer 2 questions: what items will they take out of the plane and which of the two holds (only one) will they broach. Tell the groups they have only ten minutes to make their selections.

Trainer Tips
The purpose of the activity is to highlight how people frequently have hidden, tacit, or unquestioned assumptions when they go into decision-making situations. In this activity is whether or not the group is going to stay at or go from the crash site. The two holds clearly represent these two options without saying so, i.e. the aft hold has large bulk items in it and enough building material to construct a shelter. The fore hold has enough lightweight and appropriate materials for traveling quickly and safely to civilization. The Facilitator should walk around the room and observe how the groups are progressing; you are watching to see when a majority are focused exclusively on one hold in their discussion. Some will have questions about particular items that may be answered as long as it is done in such a way to not reveal the hidden agenda of the activity. The groups usually spend most of their time talking about specific items
and debating how appropriate they are to survival and do not usually openly discuss the “stay or go” question. There is usually one group, sometimes two, that begins to talk openly about staying or going. Keep them under observation without being obvious.

Step 2:
When a majority have selected a hold, or are clearly focused on just one of the lists of items, give a two-minute warning for the groups to wrap up their discussions of the items to take.

Trainer tips
Do not overemphasize that the groups must choose a hold. It will be obvious during your observations that the groups are focused on one or the other, or are engaged in a discussion about staying or going from the crash site. If you see people jumping back and forth between, you should remind them that they can access only one hold.

Step 3:
Stop the discussion and ask those that selected the aft hold to raise their hands. Then ask some of those folks to explain what they chose and why. Now ask for a show of hands of those that selected the fore hold. Ask them to explain what and why.

Trainer Tips
Usually a majority has selected the aft hold and their reasons are usually about how much water they will need and may include some discussion about making or building things. They may or may not say that they had decided to stay near the plane. Do not push for this answer at this point. There is usually only one group that chooses the fore hold. They almost always have discussed the issue of surviving as they travel away from the crash site and head on towards their destination.

Step 4:
Let the participants share their choices and thoughts about their items and the hold. Now ask the whole group what is the essential difference between the two choices. Guide them to the conclusion that it is the underlying question of whether to stay or go.

Debriefing:
The Facilitator should conclude the exercise by pointing out that our assessment and evaluation situations are very similar to this. That we may have an unspoken assumption about what we are looking for, about the kind of service options that will be appropriate, or about the nature of the instruments and tools that are appropriate, but have not openly questioned the appropriateness of any of these for the student of concern.

Follow-up:
Participants may be asked to think of how they can use this information, or this activity in their professional situation.
You are on your way to somewhere familiar to your team. Your team has crash-landed your cargo-plane in the middle of a barren plain. You only have time to access one cargo hold, either the fore or aft hold. Look at the list of items in each hold and choose just ten survival items. Assuming no one is injured, what ten items will you take out of the plane and which hold will you access?

### AFT HOLD
1. a case of hammers
2. 10 lb. sack of sugar
3. a case of nails
4. a crosscut saw
5. a case of canned beans
6. a case of flour
7. 6 8 x 4ft. sheets of plywood
8. a case of screw drivers
9. a case of marshmallows
10. a stack of 2 x 4’s
11. a case of can openers
12. a case of wrenches
13. a case of screws
14. a box of paper plates and cups
15. a box of 6 down pillows
16. a self starting acetylene torch and tank
17. 5 gallon barrel of water
18. 2 large canvas tarpaulins
19. a case of canned fruit
20. a case of Spam
21. a king size mattress and bedding
22. a case of neon colored Band-Aids
23. one 200 foot roll of cable/wire
24. a case of plaster-of-Paris impregnated rolls of gauze
25. a case of Crayola crayons

### FORE HOLD
1. one 1 lb. bag of raisins
2. one 10’ x 10’ plastic tarpaulin
3. one magnifying glass
4. a small metal box of matches
5. a Swiss Army pocket knife
6. part of a New York Times newspaper
7. Three 1 qt. canteens of water
8. 2 pillow cases
9. 2 rolls of gauze bandage strips
10. a coiled rope
11. a compass
12. six granola bars
13. 3 pair of boots
14. a bag of marshmallows
15. a scout mess kit
16. 2 down sleeping bags
17. 6 bandanas
18. a package of chewing gum
19. six oranges
20. a box of Crayola crayons
21. a box of toothpicks
22. a roll of film
23. one 1 lb. bag of lentils
24. two plaster-of-Paris impregnated rolls of gauze
25. one small hatchet