Assumptive Stepping Stones

This is a great (physical) exercise that can be used to illustrate how assumption/beliefs drive decisions and actions and why it is so easy for people to arrive at quite different conclusions even when faced with the same evidence.

Ideally, to run the exercise you'll need something to represent stepping stones. You only need 15-20 minutes for the whole exercise.

Instructions

Ask all participants to huddle together in a circle in the centre of the floor facing outwards. Give each person 3 'stepping stones'

The start point (where they are now) should be marked with a centre stone which represents a **truth** that everyone accepts, but from which can be derived a number of conclusions e.g. the King's Coronation is going to cost a lot of money.

State the 'opening phrase', and then ask each person to lead on from this by stating what that means e.g.

- "which means that we will attract lots of tourism"
- "which means that cuts will have to be made in essential services"
- "which means we all get a day off"
- "which will provide a perfect platform to showcase our arts"
- etc

Each time someone makes a statement, they should place a 'stone' in front of them and step onto it.

Then, complete the exercise again, working from their CURRENT POSITION. E.g. if their last statement was "it will attract a lot of tourism", their next 'which means that' may be "which means that transport to and from the event will be a nightmare".

Complete a third round, and then chart up all the different 'truths' that have been reached in three short steps from one universally accepted reality.

Now, ask participants to work in pairs and work backwards from their current position by asking questions of each other, and understanding HOW they reached the conclusion they did.

Debrief

Lead a discussion to identify how this can be useful at work.

What can be done when we are faced with opinions or decisions that we don't understand or agree with?

Virtual version

You can ask people to draw a flowchart, either on their own on paper. Allow then to work individually and then put them into small break out rooms to share their final destination, and then examine the steps each took to get there.

Or they can work as a group set up a Jamboard (or similar) and ask them to draw their paths out from the centre (probably best limiting to around 6 people per group to do this)