

Metro North Health CULTURE & ENGAGEMENT



Role reversal activity

Time: Approximately 15 minutes.

Materials needed: Scenario cards (printed or digital), timer (optional), pens/paper (optional).

Participants: Pairs (or groups of 3 with an observer).

Values in Action: Teamwork, Integrity, Respect, Compassion.

Outcomes: Promotes empathy, collaboration, and deeper understanding of diverse workplace perspectives.

Purpose

This activity helps build empathy, respect and emotional intelligence by encouraging participants to take on someone else's perspective during a common workplace challenge. Stepping into another person's role helps reduce judgment, strengthen communication and build more collaborative relationships.

How to run the activity

Step 1: Pair up participants (1 min)

- Organise participants into pairs.
- For an odd number, form one group of three or have an observer provide feedback afterward.

Step 2: Distribute scenario cards (2 minutes)

Give each pair a workplace scenario card. Example scenarios include:

- Conflict over shared responsibilities
- Ethical dilemma: to report or not report a mistake
- Feeling overlooked for a promotion
- Team member failing to meet deadlines

Ask pairs to briefly discuss their initial perspective on the situation and how they would respond.

Tip: Use real or fictionalised examples relevant to your workplace for greater impact.

Step 3: Role reversal (8 mins)

Ask participants to switch roles and argue from the opposite perspective.

Examples:

- Someone who supported transparency now argues for discretion.
- Someone who sympathised with the employee now represents the manager.
- Someone who emphasised fairness now argues for organisational priorities.

Encourage participants to commit fully to the new role, even if it challenges their personal views.

Tip: Encourage “I” statements (e.g. “*I felt sidelined...*” rather than “*They probably felt...*”).

Step 4: Debrief discussion (5 mins)

Bring the group together and ask a few reflection questions:

- “*How did it feel to argue from a view you didn’t initially support?*”
- “*What shifted in your thinking as a result of this exercise?*”
- “*Did any new insights emerge about workplace dynamics or your own assumptions?*”
- “*How can this kind of perspective-taking help us collaborate better?*”

Optional variation: Invite a few pairs to share their scenarios and insights with the wider group.

Key Takeaways

Summarise the key insights and benefits:

- **Empathy and Respect:** Helps team members understand others' values, emotions, and motivations.
- **Better Communication:** Seeing the full picture enables more constructive dialogue.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Understanding both sides builds fairness and clarity.
- **Team Culture:** Encourages a mindset of curiosity and compassion — not assumption or judgment.

Wrap-up message:

“This wasn’t about winning an argument. It was about understanding what it feels like to stand in someone else’s shoes. Let’s carry this openness and empathy into our daily interactions — it’s the foundation of trust, collaboration, and a positive work environment.”

Optional enhancements

- **Scenario bank:** Prepare a set of scenarios specific to your team culture and Metro North values.
- **Observer Role:** Add a third person to take notes on listening skills, empathy, or language used.
- **Repeat later:** Revisit this activity after team changes or during times of tension to rebuild understanding.