talking about our passion: Why I became an activist

Key explanations points:

explain that everyone has their ‘first’ story—the one we hold on the surface, the one that we are comfortable with. This is the intimate story we share on occasion, the one that becomes our history. But it is the other stories we want to unearth, the ones that reveal the deeper, truer reasons behind our activism—that help us to reconnect to ourselves, to the passion and those beginnings.

And when these deeper truths are shared in this space, we connect to each other on another level. We see that we have a lot more in common than we ever expected.

In addition, this helps us to form connections before ideological differences regarding our organisational or theoretical frameworks emerge—first we see each other as coming from similar places.

This exercise can then flow naturally into discussions about our identities: who we are as activists and what connects us.

No tests and variations:

This exercise can be used any time you want to encourage participants to leave their comfort zone and get to a deeper truth. You could, for example, ask for an example of a situation in which they were hurt or betrayed by another activist—then ask for a different story, in which they were the one to hurt or betray someone.

This style of ‘switching’ can be used in relation to other topics, but it should only be utilised once in a workshop, and with care and respect.

Summary:

1. Ask participants to take a few minutes to think about why they became an activist.
2. Once they are ready, and have that story in their mind, tell them to forget it—that is not the one you want them to talk about.
3. Ask them to tell the real reason they became an activist...

Exercise:

Format:

Group exercise

Time: 60 minutes

Required material: None

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Time: 105 minutes

Activities:
This session consists of three activities: a ‘brainstorm’ during which participants shout out words that define security in their lives; an ‘integrated security presentation’ in which facilitators explain the development and meaning of the concept; and a ‘group discussion’ that gives participants an opportunity to reflect and ask questions.

Session objectives:
- to introduce the integrated security framework; and
- to ensure that participants have an opportunity to define their own concept of security, and to challenge ‘received’ ideas about the parameters of security.

Adaptation notes:
This session has been consistently effective and should not require specific adaptation.

The group discussion session is the first ‘open session’, where participants have an unstructured opportunity to begin sharing their stories and concerns. Facilitators should be flexible and allow time here for whatever arises – this will flow into the next, more structured session on assessing challenges and threats.
EXERCISE:

**Defining Security for Ourselves**

**FORMAT:** BRAINSTORM

**TIME:** 15 MIN  
**REQUIRED MATERIALS:** FLIPCHART PAPER AND MARKER PENS.

**SUMMARY:**

Participants shout out one- or two-word answers to the following question: what does security mean to you? Answers are written on a flipchart. This is the springboard for the following presentation on the integrated security framework.

**KEY EXPLANATION POINTS:**

- There is always energy – and great honesty – in our initial thoughts.
- Can you tell us the first thoughts and the first words that come into your head when you hear the words ‘safety’ and ‘security’?
- Do not think about it, just shout it out!
- We will not discuss the answers, just list them for now.
- There are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers – this is your definition of security.

**FACILITATION NOTES:**

- have one facilitator write the answers on a flipchart while another facilitates the process;
- depending on how much information is gathered, use stacking or other methods to combine the ideas and incorporate them into the next session;
- this is a fun exercise, once people get the hang of it and start to shout out... everything (which is the point). It is meant also to be empowering, because it is redefining security, breaking down the public–private barriers and taking security out of the usual restricted, patriarchal constructs; and
- this exercise sets the stage for the following, major presentation on ‘integrated security’, outlining the workshop’s conceptual framework.
Integrated Security Presentation

SUMMARY:
This is a strong presentation and sets the tone for the workshop as it introduces its conceptual framework. Key points include how ‘well-being’ and ‘safety’ are interlinked, and an introduction to the ‘personal’ side of security.

FACILITATION NOTES:
• This presentation can be adapted from the manual’s section on ‘What is integrated security?’ within the Summary, which explains the concept of integrated security.
• In addition, portions of this presentation must be adapted specifically to the participant’s context – this information is drawn from pre-workshop interviews and research (as explained in Part One), as well as from the first part of Day One.
• After the presentation, request participants’ reactions to the integrated security presentation. Did anything surprise them, or particularly resonate with them?
• This will be the first opportunity for the participants to begin talking about their experiences and the impacts of the work on their lives. This session should be essentially open and unstructured, with facilitators ensuring that all participants have a chance to speak. The reactions and stories that emerge will help guide the next session on challenges and threats, as many challenges will manifest themselves.
• At the end of this session, facilitators will need to a) respond to specific reactions and b) extract some key themes from the stories for their closing remarks.
underlining that these and other stories more will be discussed in the next session.

Alternative option:
Introduce and weave into the text the presentation on ‘threats’ in this session, rather than in the following Session 4, to keep the discussion flowing.