

## *Finding the Root Causes of Success*

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This is a pair and share exercise to help the students interact with one another, learn about themselves, others' life experiences, practice interpersonal skills, and learn that there is power in teamwork. This occurs as the students share life experiences that required the people around them (a team), the ability to adapt, and demonstrate resilience in overcoming a challenge.

This exercise can be adapted for many different environments. It is an exercise that applies critical social theory in a creative way. It is especially effective in classes where students are diverse culturally and generationally. Expressing our own and hearing the life experiences of others promotes unity, understanding, and empathy and builds relationships and community in the classroom.

It also exposes the students to the creative tool called Mind Mapping, which is used in many innovative methodologies.

### **Purpose**

How can this be impactful? The top three reasons 31% of hiring managers overlook Gen Z applicants is due to a real or perceived lack of soft skills. Specifically in these areas: <sup>i</sup>

- Adaptability
- Collaboration within teams
- Resilience to overcome challenges<sup>i</sup>

### **There is One Rule**

Whatever information the student puts on the Mind Map, they agree to allow their partner to ask questions and discuss it. Make sure to warn them not to disclose any information they don't want to or are not prepared to discuss.

### **Duration: 1 Hour**

- 1) Ask the students to pair with a partner. In diverse groups pair people of different cultures, backgrounds, and generations together.
- 2) Describe the exercise for them:
  - a. They will be using a creative tool that is used for innovation and creative problem-solving.
  - b. The tool is useful in our personal and professional lives.
  - c. Mind Maps are a tool to help explore ideas, events, problems, and solutions.
  - d. Today they are going to use the tool to identify a situation in their life for which they faced a challenge and overcome the challenge.
  - e. The purpose is to learn from each other, get to know one another and build relationships in the classroom.

i. Source: The Business Journals <https://www.bizjournals.com/bizjournals/news/2024/01/28/hiring-managers-gen-z-workers-workplace-workforce.html>

### Step 1: 15 minutes

- a. Show the class an example of a Mind Map.
- b. Hand out a blank Mind Map and sharpies/markers, one per student.
- c. Ask the students to put their name in the middle of the Mind Map and a challenge they faced and overcame.
- d. Have them fill in the Mind Map with the people that helped them through the challenge.
- e. Then fill in how the person helped them through the challenge in the rest of the Mind Map diagram.
- f. Encourage the students to briefly write (i.e., crib note form) how each persons' assistance made them feel and what they were experiencing during each step.
- g. Let them choose the level of detail.

**Note:** Some students will ask clarifying questions. Let them know there is no right or wrong way to fill out a Mind Map. Ask them to use their own ideas and creativity.

### Step 2: 30 - 45 minutes

- 1) Ask the students to share their Mind Map diagram with their partner and tell their story.
- 2) Have one student share and then the other student.
- 3) Stand back and watch the magic.

### Conclusion

From my experience the students not only get a better understanding of themselves, but also the encouragement that they are not the only ones that have had and are facing challenges.

Look at these statistics regarding Gen Z in the job market.

A 2024 article from The Business Journals<sup>i</sup> stated that 31% of hiring managers are skipping over GenZ applicants:

- 94% of hiring managers say they have encountered inappropriate behavior during job interviews.
- 58% said GenZers didn't dress appropriately for the interview.
- 57% said they struggled with eye contact.
- 41% lacked communication skills.
- 39% said GenZers aren't prepared for the workforce.
- 19% used inappropriate language.

Using creative exercises in the classroom can help build these skills in our students while learning to achieve course outcomes and learning objectives of the subject being taught.

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i. Source: The Business Journals <https://www.bizjournals.com/bizjournals/news/2024/01/28/hiring-managers-gen-z-workers-workplace-workforce.html>