

The Invisible Card

Summary: A volunteer is asked to select “cards” from an invisible, non-existent deck. No matter which choices the volunteer makes, the only card remaining matches a pre-selected real playing card hidden in the room.

Uses:

- The importance and role of choice or autonomy in feeling independent, motivated, and successful
- The role of mentors and coaches in the empowerment process
- The importance for teachers and trainers to create a supportive environment for learning
- The impact parents and teachers can have in maintaining respect and taking young people seriously
- The ability to take upsets in stride and deal with change gracefully
- The outcome of any project is co-created
- There are several paths one can take to reach a goal, so knowing your goal is critical
- And many more...

Materials: One Playing Card

Participants: Any number

Set Up:

Before participants arrive, hide one playing card somewhere in the room. Remember the card.

Procedure:

This trick is successful when you are able to use whatever the person says to help you reach your goal which is to reveal the hidden card. You will do this by offering only one of two choices at each step. However, each step reduces the number of cards in the imaginary deck by half. Eventually, the person will be left with only two cards to choose; one will be the hidden card.

Suppose the hidden card is the 4 of Spades. Steps and options might look like this:

Step	You Ask...	The Person Chooses	You Say
1	Do you prefer red cards or black cards?	Black <i>Or...</i> Red	Good, let's look at your black cards. Good, put the red cards aside and let's look at the black cards.
2	Of the black cards do you prefer Spades or Clubs?	Clubs	Good. Put them in your pocket for safe keeping and let's look at the Spades.
3	Now, some of the Spades are face cards and some are number cards. Which do you prefer?	Face cards	Good. Put them in your pocket with the others you are keeping and what do you have left?
4	Now, those number cards are either high, above 5, or low, below 5. Which do you prefer?	Low	Great. Set the high cards aside and hang onto the low ones.

5	Look at your remaining cards: Ace, 2, 3, and 4 of Spades. Which do you prefer, even or odd numbered cards?	Even	Great. Set the odds aside.
6	Of the whole deck, you are now left with only the 2 and 4 of Spades. Of these, which do you prefer?	Four	Wonderful. Hang onto the 2 and toss the 4 into the air. (Follow an imaginary card fluttering around until it comes to rest at the place of the hidden card. Reveal the card.)
		(Or...)	(Or...)
		Two	Wonderful. Set the 2 aside and keep the four but instead of putting it in your pocket, hide it in a secret place. (Pause a moment.) I bet I can guess where you've hidden the 4 of Spades. (Pause again and reveal the card.)

In the example above, notice the process is to affirm each choice that the person makes then direct attention to the remaining portion of the deck that contains the target card.

The trick is easiest to perform if you stay with one volunteer. With practice, you can include others by having them pass along various portions of the invisible deck. The good thing is that you can choose the target card days ahead of time and practice the sequence of questions that will help you eventually arrive at that card.

Discussion:

This is a critical step where you help people make connections to your learning point.

- What is a short “recap” or description of what just happened?
- What did people do or say that surprised you?
- How does this activity relate to the topic of today’s meeting or training?
- Why might some people say this is a good example of how to offer choices?
- Some people would say this trick is nothing more than manipulation. How might you respond?
- Why is it important for people to have choices no matter what their status is?
- How is this like the world of work; of parenting; of being a student; of voting; etc.?
- What are the similarities between facilitating this trick and being a manager, teacher, coach, or trainer?
- If we were to do this activity again, what would you do differently?
- If you had a chance to lead the activity, what would you do differently?
- How might you modify your own behavior as a manager, teacher, coach, or trainer after seeing this activity?