

# Exploring Assumptions Workshop

## Organizer Guide

This 75 minute reflective activity introduces participants to the One Small Step conversation process by examining how we form assumptions based on limited information. Using real OSS participant bios and conversation excerpts, participants practice the same experience OSS participants have—writing a personal bio, examining a partner's bio, and then listening to how assumptions evolve during actual conversation. This program provides practice asking open questions, gives insight into how we perceive others, and creates a pathway to signing up for OSS conversations.

## Advanced Planning: Goals and Steps

### Goals:

- Introduce participants to the One Small Step matching and conversation process
- Examine how we form assumptions based on limited information about others
- Practice writing personal bios and reflecting on what they reveal
- Experience how conversations across difference can challenge or confirm initial impressions
- Practice asking open questions
- Create a direct pathway to signing up for OSS conversations

### Steps:

The first step is gathering materials from the One Small Step program, including example participant bios, photos, and recorded conversation clips. Select a pair that demonstrates both confirmed and challenged assumptions.

Next, create a worksheet that guides participants through the activity with ample space for reflection. Include sections for writing their own bio (250 characters), noting initial impressions of example bios, recording how these impressions shift during conversation clips, practicing writing open questions, and final reflections.

Prepare an explanation of how the OSS process works nationally—how participants are matched based on different perspectives, how they receive each other's bios before meeting, and how conversations begin with partners reading each other's bios in the first person.

Set up audio equipment to play (captioned) conversation clips clearly for the entire group. If possible, arrange for visual display of bios and photos to enhance the experience.

Develop a facilitation guide with prompts for group discussion about the nature of assumptions—how they can be protective yet also limit authentic connection. Include guidance on creating a brave space for honest reflection.

Create a simple take-home resource with links to more OSS conversations that participants can explore on their own time (the StoryCorps Online Archive, linked below), as well as clear instructions for signing up at [takeonesmallstep.org](http://takeonesmallstep.org).

Establish a comfortable room setup that allows for both full group discussion and paired reflection activities, with writing surfaces accessible to all participants.

## Marketing

Promote the program as an opportunity to experience the One Small Step process firsthand and understand how we connect across differences. Emphasize that this is a chance to practice self-reflection and asking better questions in a supportive environment.

Create program descriptions that clearly explain the format option you choose (individual station or group activity) and what participants can expect. Highlight that no special knowledge or preparation is required.

Use email outreach to community groups interested in dialogue, civic engagement, or community building. Partner with educational institutions, faith communities, or civic organizations.

Develop social media posts with intriguing questions that prompt initial reflection, such as "How much can we know about someone from a brief snapshot?" or "How do our assumptions shape our interactions?"

Encourage staff to personally recommend the program to community members who express interest in community connection, psychology, or bridging divides.

Document program sessions through photos (with appropriate permissions) to use in future marketing materials and showcase the reflective atmosphere of the program.

## Budgeting

The program requires attention to the following costs:

- Printing for worksheets, bio examples, and take-home resources: \$15-20
- Equipment for playing clips (if not already available): \$0-100
- Marketing materials: \$0-25 (signage)
- Program supplies (pens, name tags): \$15-25

Tips to cut costs:

- Use digital projection for bios and photos rather than printing multiple copies
- Create digital take-home resources accessible via QR code
- Utilize existing your own known tech for playing clips

## Day-of-event Activity

Before the event, arrange the room to accommodate both full group discussion and paired conversations. Set up audio equipment and test all conversation clips to ensure clarity.

Prepare worksheets, pens, and any physical materials needed for each participant. Consider creating a display of additional OSS conversation information as a resource corner (see printable conversation card decks and bookmarks below).

Create a welcoming environment with clear signage explaining the workshop's connection to the national OSS program. Have information readily available about signing up for actual conversations.

Test the technology for playing conversation clips and displaying bios/photos. Have backup options available in case of technical difficulties.

Take photos of the setup and, with participants' permission, during the activity to document engagement for future promotion and evaluation.

## Program Execution

Begin with an introduction to the One Small Step program and how it works nationally—matching people with different perspectives for conversations that begin with reading each other's bios in the first person. Introduce group agreements

(linked below), ask for any additional, and confirm with a thumbs-up from all participants.

Participants may pair up and ask each other at this point, "What assumptions do you think people make about you?" Then brief share-outs (of their own experience).

Explain the concept of assumptions—how they're natural when we have limited information, can sometimes protect us, but can also limit authentic connection. Emphasize that awareness of assumptions - catching ourselves making them, and asking open-ended questions - is key to deeper understanding. Play "Cassandra and Dave" video (linked below) (10 mins).

Guide participants in writing their own 250-character bio, explaining that this is exactly what they would do when signing up for an actual OSS conversation. Encourage them to include thoughts, beliefs, experiences, and values that feel important to who they are (15 mins).

Show archive photos and play audio clips of participants reading each other's bios at the beginning of their conversation, followed by selected portions of their actual dialogue that might confirm or challenge initial assumptions (15 minutes).

To choose an interview for this portion, explore our [archive](#). Interviews can be sorted by keywords, locations, and languages.

Facilitate paired or small group reflection on what surprised participants, how their perceptions shifted, and what this reveals about how we form impressions of others.

Guide participants in reviewing their own written bios, considering what assumptions others might make and whether these would accurately reflect their full selves. Allow time for revision if desired. (5 mins)

Facilitate a brief activity on formulating questions that are open and contain fewer assumptions (10 minutes). Provide examples of assumption-laden questions versus open questions (e.g., "I see you're a doctor. Did your parents want you to become a doctor because, as you said, they are immigrants?" versus "How did you decide to become a doctor?"). Have participants practice reframing assumption-based questions into more open ones, using the bios they've been working with as inspiration.

Conclude with a discussion of how awareness of assumptions can enhance our connections with others, both by recognizing our own assumptions and by asking questions that don't impose assumptions on others (10 minutes).

Provide clear next steps for those interested in participating in an actual OSS conversation (they have already written the bio!), including the website ([takeonesmallstep.org](http://takeonesmallstep.org)) and what to expect in the process. The printable OSS bookmark, has a QR code to sign up (linked below).

Document the session through photos (with permission) and gather feedback on participants' experience and likelihood of signing up for OSS.

## Advice

Frame assumptions neutrally as a natural human process rather than something negative. This helps participants reflect honestly.

Allow ample time for personal reflection throughout the activity. The insights come from participants' own realizations about their thought processes.

Create a brave space where participants feel comfortable sharing by using your own examples. Emphasize that everyone makes assumptions—awareness is the goal.

Keep the focus on personal reflection. Redirect conversations that veer toward arguing positions rather than understanding processes.

Practice asking questions without embedded assumptions. This is a key skill for authentic dialogue and helps participants prepare for more authentic human connection going forward where open questions lead to deeper understanding.

Take photos throughout the workshop (with appropriate permissions) to document engagement and create visual resources for future promotion.

Emphasize that participants have already completed the most challenging part of OSS signup (writing their bio) and encourage them to take the next step while motivation is high.

Follow up with participants after the workshop to see if they pursued OSS conversations and what insights they gained from the experience.

## Solo Activity Adaptation

This activity can be adapted for individual exploration through a self-guided station:

Set up a private listening station with headphones, a tablet or computer, and printed materials packet including:

- Clear step-by-step instructions
- Activity worksheet
- Example OSS participant bio clips
- Reflection prompts
- Access to selected OSS conversation clips & "Cassandra and Dave" video

- Information on signing up for OSS (bookmark to take away, with link to sign up, below)

Guide participants through the same basic flow. Include a section on formulating questions without assumptions, with examples.

For found digital resources, consider creating a QR code linking to additional OSS conversations that participants can explore on their own time.