Fears and Hopes Activity

Purpose: To surface expectations and concerns—help participants to see that their fears and hopes are shared by others and that they are out in the open and will be addressed.

Time allotted: 30 minutes.

Group format: Large group

Supplies: Individual writing materials, newsprint and markers

Facilitation tips: Be sure that all fears and hopes are written down, as expressed, without comment or any sense of judgment, except perhaps, “That’s interesting.” Do not be fearful of having folks express their worst fears, it always makes things go better once expressed. Plus, we want to know what to not do! This activity segues very well into norm settings (see below).

The Activity (include time allotted to each segment):

1. Ask participant to write down briefly for themselves their greatest fear for this meeting: “If it’s the worst experience you’ve had, what will have happened (or not happened)?” And then, write your greatest hope, i.e., “If this is the best meeting you’ve ever attended, what will be the outcome(s) that will have taken place by the end? (3-4 minutes)

2. If time, ask participants to share their hopes and fears with a partner. (3 minutes)

3. Have two newsprint sheets—one labeled “fears” and one “hopes”, and list everything that folks call out. Ask that they avoid repeats.

4. This activity transitions very well into norm-setting: In order to reach our hoped-for outcomes, what norms we need? (see activity)
Reflections questions following the activity:

1. Did you notice anything surprising/interesting while doing this activity?
2. What is the impact of expressing negative thoughts?
3. Why did we ask you to do this activity? What might it accomplish?
4. Would you use this activity in your school? In your classroom?

Source: