

Synchronizers: Cheat Sheet & top examples

A good conversations comes from being in sync. Literally, “being in sync” means a situation in which two or more people or things move or happen together at the same time and speed. It means you share the moment completely. It has your full attention *and* your commitment to making the most out of it. You are synchronized and tuned into each other. You lean into the moment, allowing for a good level of connection to emerge.

This cheat sheet explains three types of Synchronizers:

1. **Thinking Synchronizers:** Bringing minds together in the moment.
2. **Movement Synchronizers:** Bringing bodies together in the moment
3. **State Synchronizers:** Bringing bodies and minds together in the moment

Synchronizers, just like ice breakers, energizers or mindsetters, are exercises you do together as a group at the start or end of a workshop or in between workshop activities. They are short and powerful exercises to get synchronized and ready to co-create.

Whether you choose to apply Thinking Synchronizers, Movement Synchronizers or State Synchronizers depends on the type of people you are facilitating and their initial state. If you are working with a group of ‘thinkers’ who like to reason and



analyze, applying a Thinking Synchronizer will be your safest bet. But a Movement Synchronizer will help them 'get out of their heads' and become more intuitive.

A group of people who are more about feelings and less about rationale will naturally enjoy Movement Synchronizers. But a Thinking Synchronizers might help them become more analytical. With all groups, State Synchronizers are very effective. But sometimes a large part of the group come into your workshop with a critical and closed initial mindset. State Synchronizers need a level of surrendering. If the participants aren't ready from the start to have this kind of openness, State Synchronizers could make them even more critical.

Use your facilitator's sixth sense to evaluate which synchronizers suits the people and the moment in the best way.

01 – Thinking Synchronizers

What are they?

The purpose of these group activities is to engage everyone's minds in the present moment. By having the whole group focus on the same interesting puzzle or question, you bring everyone together mentally and emotionally. This might sound simple, but it can be tricky - the activity needs to really grab people's attention! The best way is to tap into what makes people feel good, safe, and happy.

If you want to create your own Synchronizers for thinking, consider coming up with an exercise that plays on their sense of significance and belonging, triggering the release of serotonin, dopamine and oxytocin. These feel-good hormones will



capture their attention and even put them into a better state for learning, memory and creativity.

The atmosphere needs to be light and playful; the exercise needs to be intuitive. We don't want to nurture critical thinking with a Synchronizer. Therefore, preferably, a brain "teaser" is not something to analyze but rather something that "teases the brain" from the *heart* or the *gut*, from instinct.

01.01 - VERSUS

This Thinking Synchronizer demonstrates that there is no right or wrong; there are only perspectives. People take temporary stands based on what they know so far. It creates unity from diversity while keeping everyone emotionally engaged, fitting with the spirit of "I may be wrong".

STARTING POINT

Everyone stands up and gathers in the center.

INSTRUCTIONS

"I will provide a couple of choices that will divide you into two groups each time based on your preference. I will ask you each time to respond by taking your position on my right side for Choice A and on my left side for Choice B.

Let me share the first question.



Do you prefer winter? Move to my right.

Do you prefer summer? Move to my left.”

MECHANICS

1. Call out each question, pointing out the left or the right for each choice.
2. Allow for everyone to move to their preferred side/choice.
3. Narrate it like a show host, building excitement about the similarities and differences.

ENDING POINT

End with a reflection on how we are different and similar at the same time, so as to help everyone appreciate the diversity in the group as well as their feeling of belonging.

CHOICES/QUESTIONS

1. Winter OR summer
2. Dog-lover OR cat-lover
3. Coffee drinker OR tea drinker
4. Reading a book OR binging on television
5. Fast food (salty) OR ice cream (sweet)
6. Holidays primarily for relaxation OR primarily for exploration
7. Being poor together OR being rich alone
8. Having lifelong security OR experiencing lifelong adventure
9. You wish to be celebrated for your success OR respected for your character



10. You are a teacher OR a learner by nature

A sense of ownership among participants is essential for success. This is because execution requires participants to take action and to commit to making the workshop's results a reality. A lack of sense of ownership or commitment can lead to participants being less likely to take action, even if they had a positive experience at the workshop.

01.02 - Count to 20

This Thinking Synchronizer is well known and is often introduced as an energizer, ice breaker or mindsetter, while its value is primarily in the synchronization of thinking. There is a small challenge necessary to draw everyone's attention and thinking into the moment. While the previous Synthesizer asked provocative questions to draw in attention, this one is about counting together while tuning into the shared moment and each other's presence in it.

STARTING POINT

Everyone stands up in a circle facing outwards, shoulder to shoulder, with their backs towards the center.

INSTRUCTIONS

"As a group, we will try to count to 20, with everyone trying to say the next number without saying it at the same time as someone else. There are no agreements, and



there is no order in calling out allowed. You are to only call out at random, trying to be the only person calling out the next number.

If the next number, going up to 20, is called out at the same time by two or more people, we will start again from zero.”

MECHANICS

1. Marie calls out 1; Jack calls out 2; Mark and Ben accidentally call out 3 together.
2. The facilitator stops the counting and invites the group to start again.
3. Ben takes a chance to start with 1; the counting continues ...
4. Counting ends at 20 or starts again when two or more people simultaneously call out the same number.

ENDING POINT

End with a reflection on how it works better when everyone slows down and intuitively feels whether it is the right moment to call out the next number instead of trying to rush and call out each number as quickly as possible. Synchronizing our minds is about connecting our minds into a collective mind. This happens only with the full presence of each individual, settling into the moment.

DIFFERENT VARIETIES

1. Count to 20 (as explained above)



2. The alphabet
3. Each other's names
4. All the months in a year
5. All the hours in a day (or count to 24 😊)

02 – Movement Synchronizers

What are they?

The purpose of these group activities is not only to shift your participants' consciousness from their minds to their bodies; in other words, to become more aware of their bodies and get out of their minds. These activities also help participants synchronize their physical presence, connecting them into a collective presence.

To draw attention into a collective presence, we move collectively, experiencing our bodies collectively - not only the sensations of our body movement but also the space our body takes up in space and in the presence of other bodies.

Now, it starts to sound woolly.... Let me bring it back to the essence: it is about getting out of our *thinking* mode and into our *doing* mode.

If you want to create your own Synchronizers for movement, take into account the fact that people who spend most of their conscious, awake time in thinking mode, in their heads, will feel awkward suddenly moving their attention to their body - together with other people. It requires a level of vulnerability. If you make people feel uncomfortable, they might disconnect instead of synchronize, which obviously defeats the purpose. So go easy on the group; stick to simple or familiar



movements. Come up with a type of movement that could be natural for most people, like a collective, oversized yawn.

I will start with an easy example that comes from improv and theater. Just like with Thinking Synchronizers, the atmosphere here needs to be light and playful. You do not want to create blockage and hesitation - we are looking for a flow of movement.

02.01 - The Stopwalk

This Synchronizer is, again, probably not a surprise, but our aim is to reposition these exercises. We want to emphasize the synchronization benefits and, therefore, repackage exercises to give them more meaning for yourself and your participants. The Stopwalk is the easiest way to synchronize movement. It creates a connection in the present moment that goes beyond aligning thoughts.

STARTING POINT

Everyone stands still, positioned randomly across the room. This means not in a circle nor in a line.

INSTRUCTIONS

“Take a deep breath in through your nose and slowly breathe out. Feel your presence among your fellow participants. Notice your position compared to the others.



When someone starts walking, everyone starts walking. When someone stops, everyone stops, as of now ...”

MECHANICS

1. Allow for a couple of minutes of Stopwalking.
2. Point to two or three people in the middle and ask them to stand still, close their eyes and raise their right hand when they think the group is moving and their left hand when they think the group is not moving. (Ask everyone to not bump into them and to keep a safe distance.)
3. End the exercise after a couple of minutes.

ENDING POINT

End with a reflection about how we have a thinking presence - we usually process the moment by thinking about it - but we also have a bodily presence, which can provide us with hunches; this is our intuition. We have three brains: one in our head, one in our heart and one in our gut. When we quiet our minds, it often provides space for our intuitive feelings to arise. This can happen already by just sensing your body without thinking, like paying attention to your movement or breathing. It will lower your analytical filter and give space to more intuitive thoughts.



POSSIBLE MOVEMENTS TO USE IN THIS TYPE OF EXERCISE

1. Walk and stop
2. Dance and stop
3. Rotate and stop (this one might become funny)
4. Stand up and sit down
5. Point in the same direction and point in another direction

02.02 - Stretch & Match

Another fun exercise commonly practiced in workshops is doing a collective stretch. A different and more challenging version is the Dance & Match. Both activities require the participants to mimic each other's movements, thereby generating similar sensations in a similar rhythm. If you start thinking too much, it will interfere with the doing, especially while practicing the Dance & Match. While the Stopwalk is a more gentle approach to Movement Synchronizing, these activities take it up a notch to get you out of your head and into your body, together.

Let's start with the Stretch & Match.

STARTING POINT

The group creates a circle facing each other and leaving a bit of space in between each other.



INSTRUCTIONS

“Anyone can start by doing a simple stretch. The rest of you will mimic this movement, doing the same stretch. When finished, this person can point out another participant to continue with doing a stretch. Again, all the others mimic the same stretch.

Each stretch needs to be different each time. That way, we cover the full body by the time the last participant presents their stretch to the group.”

MECHANICS

1. One by one, each participant does a stretch for the others to “match” or mimic.
2. After each stretch, the participant points to the next participant to continue the stretching.
3. Facilitator(s) can join and also be pointed to for the next stretch.

ENDING POINT

End with a reflection about how synchronized body movement can also release some tension together and get the group into a collective bodily state. Stretching releases tension in the muscles and joints and results in a group feeling of relaxation, maybe even increased blood flow. It is a good way to have a group reset and start working together again.



Alternative: Dance & Match

The same mechanic applies, only this time it works incrementally and therefore becomes an exercise similar to the memory game, “I packed my bag”.

1. The first person demonstrates a simple dance move (for example, an MJ leg kick).
2. Everyone mimics the dance move continuously.
3. The person at the first person’s right repeats the move and adds one more.
4. Everyone does both moves simultaneously and continuously.
5. The next person to the right adds another move, and everyone adds it simultaneously.
6. See how far you get until it becomes one big chaos with people forgetting all the moves, or it becomes a great dance scene with everyone in sync.

This alternative will work really well with some music and usually lifts the mood unless some people are not into dancing or have some disabilities. Be mindful of the capabilities and comfort zones of the crowd you are facilitating.



03 –State Synchronizers

What are they?

Thinking Synchronizers focus on the mind while synchronizing. Movement Synchronizers focus on the body while synchronizing. State Synchronizers focus on the body-mind connection while synchronizing. These last Synchronizers induce a shared state.

The connection between the body and the mind is the nervous system. Thinking can trigger a reaction in the nervous system, more specifically the autonomic nervous system, which influences the state of the body, relaxed or stressed. The state of the body, induced by stress hormones like cortisol or “happy” hormones like oxytocin, influences what we think about and how we see the world.

At the center of your state and your nervous system is your breathing. Your breathing represents your state, and your state is aligned with a certain kind of breathing: short and quick breathing high up in the lungs or slow and deep breathing low in the belly. The way people breathe reveals the state they are in. Conscious or deliberate breathing, on the other hand, can also induce a state, down-regulating or up-regulating your autonomic nervous system.

With breathing, you can manage your nervous system and, therefore, your state. Conscious breathing in a group can synchronize a collective state. This is powerful but rarely practiced on the corporate floor in meeting rooms or workshops. State Synchronizers using breathwork are the most powerful exercises you can do, however, to synchronize a group of people.



If you want to practice a breathwork technique with a group to synchronize their states, make sure you are very familiar with the technique and have a clear intention about what kind of state you would like to achieve. Participants who have never practiced breathwork will struggle with longer breath holds and too-slow breathing. A feeling of air hunger can trigger their sympathetic nervous system and stress them out. There are breathwork techniques that put people to sleep and breathwork techniques that fire them up.

When synchronizing participants' states in a workshop environment, your aim should be to balance their autonomic nervous system right in the middle between "sympathetic" and "parasympathetic" - what we like to call the "Relaxed Focused State".

The best-known breathing technique for a Relaxed Focused State is **BOX BREATHING**: 4 counts in, 4 counts hold, 4 counts out, 4 counts hold; repeat 10 times. Align your counts with a second or even a bit less to avoid a shortage of breath among inexperienced participants. BOX BREATHING is always a safe technique to apply when synchronizing state.

Our technique also starts from a simple 4-count slow breathing, which is the perfect foundation to build on.

03.01 - Become One

As with any breathwork exercise, the result depends on the intensity of the practice. Participants who are only pretending to participate won't feel the effects as much as the others. They won't feel part of the collective. As a facilitator, it is important to think about "set and setting". Everyone needs to first get into the right



mindset before practicing breathwork together, and the setting needs to be a good fit with breathwork.

Set. To get full participation in the exercise, the participants need to understand why they are doing breathwork. They need to understand that breathing together aligns everyone's heart rhythms and, therefore, also their state. It brings everyone together, coming from a stressed or tired state, into a Relaxed Focused State. It creates the same starting point again for everyone. There is only one way to do this, and that's by breathing together.

Setting. Some participants might feel discomfort closing their eyes while breathing and, at the same time, feel awkward keeping their eyes open, facing other people. It is also not preferable to practice breathwork in the midst of a busy spot surrounded by other people. The right setting would be a quiet room with people facing the same direction, having a good amount of space between each other.

When everyone feels comfortable to engage in the exercise together, then this Synchronizer is the mother of all Synchronizers. Doing breathwork together is the most powerful way to synchronize a group of people, body and mind.

STARTING POINT

Everyone finds a comfortable position in the room and sits up straight in their chairs. They can decide themselves whether they want to close their eyes or focus instead on one point in the room.



INSTRUCTIONS

“We will be taking a couple of slow breaths together. In through our nose and out through our nose or mouth. I will count until 4 for the inbreath and again until 4 for the outbreath. As you focus on your breathing, be aware of the other people in the room breathing together with you, like one breathing community.

Sit up straight, don't slouch, open up your chest fully. We will go for 10 rounds of slow breathing.

Breathe in ..., 2, 3, 4, breathe out ..., 2, 3, 4, ...

(After 5 rounds) Sense the potential of having all these minds together in one room on your in-breath... and then become aware of how you are part of this group, bringing your contribution, on the out-breath.

(After another 5 rounds) Now, let's stop counting our breaths and just observe your breathing as you breathe in and out. Take a final deep breath in through your nose and breathe out with the longest extended exhale possible without having to gasp for air afterwards.”

MECHANICS

1. Everyone sits down with an open chest and straight back.
2. 5 rounds of counting the in-breath and out-breath, 4 counts each.
3. Suggest focusing on being part of the group.
4. Continue with the next 5 rounds.



5. Allow everyone to breathe naturally without counting a couple of times.
6. Finish with a final deep breath.

ENDING POINT

End with a reflection on how a collective Relaxed Focused State is the ideal starting point to restart the collaboration. It helps everyone to open up to each other's perspectives again and find the energy for synergy.

UPGRADE THE BREATHING EXERCISE WITH ...

1. Gestures and sounds

Extra instructions: "Lift your arms on the inhale and lower your arms on the exhale together with a sigh or a humming sound." The gestures will increase the intensity, and the sound will stimulate their vagal nerves even more to help them relax, if that is what the group needs.

2. Pauses

Turn this breathing into box breathing by adding 2-4-count breath holds after breathing in and after breathing out.

Extra instructions:

"Breathe in ..., 2, 3, 4, Hold ..., 2, 3, breathe out ..., 2, 3, 4, Hold..., 2, 3, breathe in ..."



These breath holds will increase levels of carbon dioxide, which results in better oxygenation of the brain and body. It may help the participants to sharpen their focus.

3. Intention

An exhale serves to expand a feeling which can also be visualized. Inhale serves perfectly for bringing a feeling back to you, which can also be visualized. By adding an intention to the breath, which helps with getting a sense of space combined with strong emotion, the participants will more easily get into a creative state, a state of flow. It significantly elevates the intensity and effect of the breathing practice.

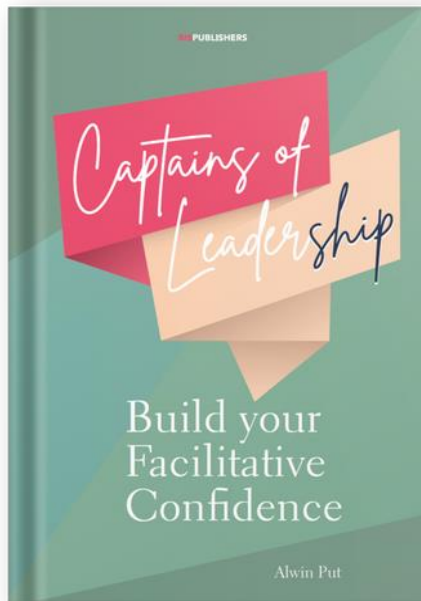
Extra instructions:

“As you exhale, try to let a feeling of appreciation for this collaboration expand and embrace the whole group. As you inhale, bring that feeling of appreciation from the group back to yourself. As you imagine expanding this feeling towards the group and receiving this back from the group, focus on your heart area. Breathe the feeling out of and into your heart area. Your heart area represents intuition and connection.”

Slow breathing is a basic breathing practice to get everyone back into the right state for collaboration. There are multiple breathing techniques you can apply as a State Synchronizer, for example, 4 counts in, 7 counts hold, and 8 counts out to bring everyone into a very relaxed state; or another example is to have the group collectively practice fast and short breathing for a very short while for an energy boost.



Breathing is a powerful synchronizer, but everyone experiences breathing differently. Always make sure you don't push people to or over their limits. It is better to be on the safe side and apply breathing techniques that are easy and comfortable for everyone.



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