Embedded Evaluation

Happiness prescriptions

The Beaney's Paper Apothecary project wove the feedback into the activity itself. The project asked community groups to devise wellbeing 'prescriptions' using the museum displays, then dispensed these to the public from a two week installation apothecary built from recycled paper. The paper prescriptions asked visitors to record any side-effects, comments and reactions to their cultural treatments via a tear off slip to post into the feedback box.

The Beaney's chemists also asked audiences how did the cultural treatment make you feel? They grouped feedback under headings:

- Exhilarated
- Invigorated
- Peaceful
- Fun
- Happy
- Very happy
- Uplifed
- Negative
- Inspired

Tear off 'how do you feel?' slips on happiness prescriptions at the Beany were posted straight back

Mystery object

Another museum-appropriate method of focusing a discussion was used by Reading Museum. The objective was to see if engagement with the museum had any effect on wellbeing or resilience. Before the exercise, participants were asked to stand, put their hand up or sit in response to four statements:

- I can be creative at Reading Museum
- Reading Museum treats me as an equal partner
- I get to do what I am interested in at Reading Museum
- I play an active part in Reading Museum.

Participants worked with a facilitator and a mystery object and discussed it together. After its true purpose was revealed, they were asked the outcome questions again to see if there had been any change.

Happy labels

The Story Museum gave people labels to write comments on, and tie on to artefacts or the architecture. A similar technique has been used by youth clubs asking for feedback on their venue. Visitors are furnished with red and green 'flags' or post-it notes, and asked to place them wherever they choose around the space to feedback their good and bad views.

Labels at the Story Museum asked for immediate feedback that became part of the display

Mood tree

Another approach developed by the Story Museum was the Mood Tree, which they learnt about from a school teacher who used it with her primary school class. The museum used colour coded leaves which could be fixed to model trees placed at the beginning and end of the exhibition. Red, orange and green leaves indicated bad, so-so and good mood. At the end of the day the leaves on each tree could be counted to see if there was a change.

Other commissions used the same approach, but with lego bricks, sticky stars or colour coded smiley faces, attempting to find imagery that was relevant to the project. Shakespeare's Birthplace Trust found the technique a challenge at busy times, so care and testing is needed with the design.

A similar technique has been used by supermarkets for example, to capture customers' 'votes' on where to spend charitable money. You provide boxes (transparent or opaque depending upon your motivation) marked 'good', 'bad', average' or some other scale for people to put one token in at the end of an experience.
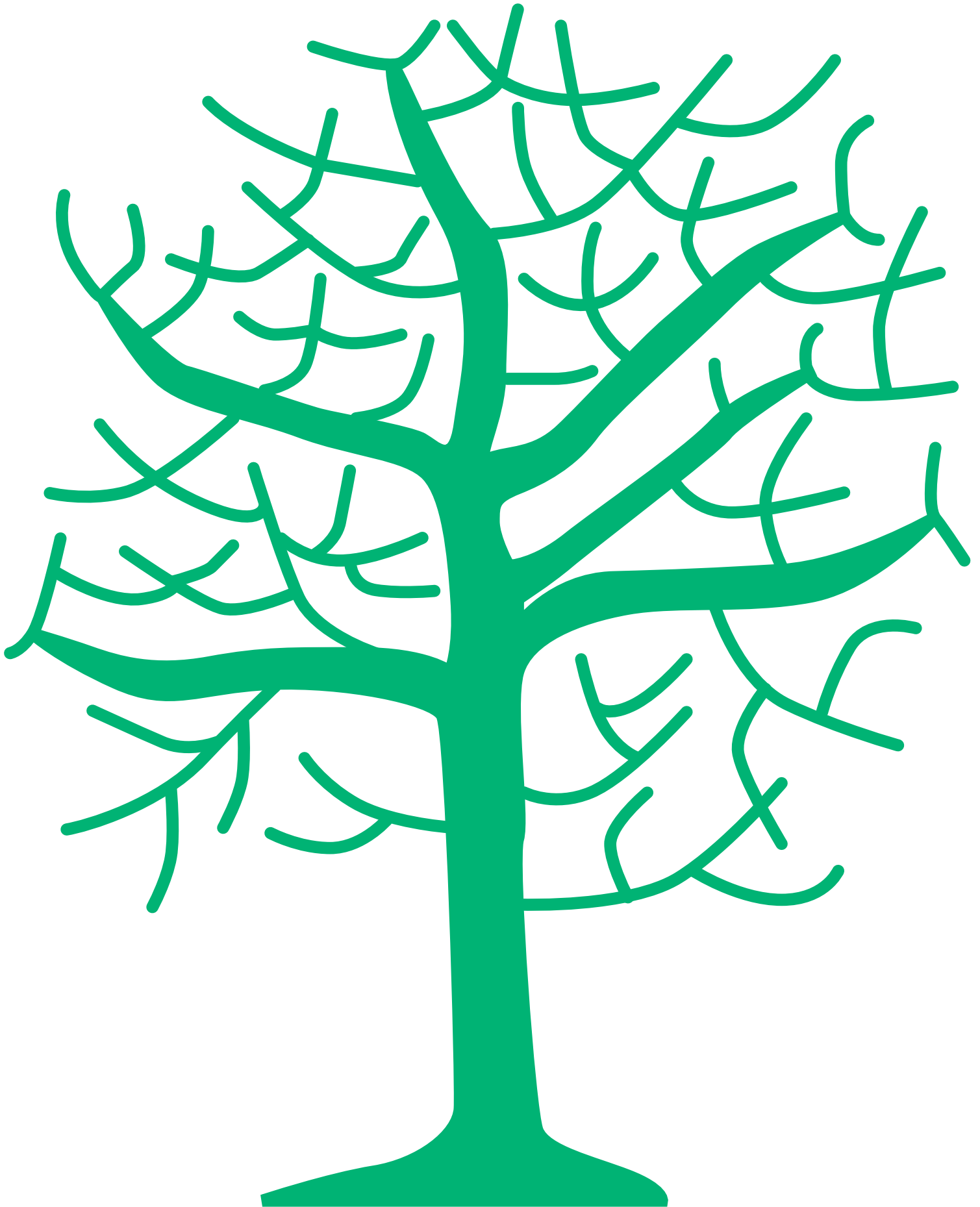
Mood tree guidance

1   Choose a leaf that best represents how you feel right now – green for happy, yellow for in the middle, red for not at all happy and stick it on the tree.

2   We have another tree to complete at the end of your visit.

Mood tree

Mood tree leaves