

Section III: Stuff You Can Try: Activities for Social Action

For those of you interested in introducing Social Action to the young people with whom you work, this section provides suggested exercises you can use with the Social Action process.

As we hope this volume has demonstrated, Social Action is not simply a collection of techniques and activities; it is a clear process of addressing problems and issues as a community. Within that process, Social Action principles guide all that the teacher-facilitator does. However, there are certain exercises and activities that Social Action workers have found particularly useful over time, and many of these were shared during the cross-national events that were part of the NWP/CSA collaboration. In addition, teacher-facilitators in the project found they could develop new exercises and adapt exercises they already used in their classrooms to ensure they fitted with the principles and process of Social Action as they developed their role as teacher-facilitators. This section provides a window into the concrete activities that they used as they worked with young people.

The suggested activities, of course, are just that—suggestions. You should not feel restricted to using these activities, nor should you feel as if you must use them exactly as they are. A key to facilitating Social Action work is to get to know your group and what they want to achieve; then you can adopt, adapt, develop or create exercises which will help them meet their goals. The central principle behind these activities is that Social Action workers are not leaders, but facilitators. In Social Action activities, the content comes from the group. As a teacher-facilitator, you are trying to create a process that enables a group to

identify the issues and concerns that they face, to understand why these exist, explore how they can take action to change things, take that action and reflect on what has happened in a cyclical process. All the activities in this section are designed with this in mind: to enable the young people you work with to provide the content of Social Action, to facilitate them in talking about the things that are important in their lives, help them analyze why things are this way and consider how they can take action to change things.

Finally, Social Action is a process with an interlocking set of principles, and so it is crucial that any activity is in keeping with the principles of Social Action. Promoting social justice and challenging inequality and oppression is central to Social Action. Social Action is derived from a recognition that all young people have skills, experience, and understanding and are experts in their own lives; that all people have rights, including the right to be heard, the right to define the issues facing them, and the right to take action on their own behalf; that injustice and oppression are complex issues rooted in social policy, the environment and the economy; and that people working collectively can be powerful and collective action should be encouraged. With these principles in mind, many group activities can be seen as useful and as advancing Social Action.

What follows is a typical Social Action sequence of activities, designed to create a community that can identify, analyze and take action to address the problems it faces or things that are important to the group. This process could happen over a three-day event, a summer school or form the basis of a term's project with young people on a community activity or in the classroom. An activity can take a couple of hours, or many weeks to complete. Yet the activities should not be used in an ad hoc manner; they should be part of a purposeful plan linked to the what? Why? How? Action, and Reflection stages of the Social Action process and designed for the specific group of people you are working with, each one

builds on and takes further the content created by the young people in the previous activity and discussions. Finally, while these are activities that the teacher-facilitators in this collaboration found useful in the classroom, they can also be used in community settings and with adults as well as young people. They are flexible and adaptable activities, and because they are designed to enable the people to provide the content they can be used in a wide range of settings with a wide variety of people.

Each activity is described in the following pages. We have not been prescriptive about how or at what exact stage in the process they can be used, as the reality is many exercises can be adapted and used at different stages. However, the name of each activity is followed by the stage of community building or of the Social Action process at which it might be particularly useful and appropriate.

Icebreakers (*choose thoughtful icebreakers that have worked for you in the past; be clear about what you want ice-breakers to achieve and select them accordingly*)

Metro map (*identity*)

Naming the Group (*identity*)

Community Vocabulary (*method*)

Devising the Vision (*purpose*)

Movie Poster (*What?*)

Four faces (*Why? – in this case, but could be used at various stages depending on the statements used*)

But Why? (*Why?*)

Codes (*Why?*)

Sculpts: (*How?*)

The group decides on an action that it wants to take to address the issues they have identified.

Worst Nightmare: (*How/Act*)

Force field analysis (*How/act*)

Now/Soon/Later: (*Action*)

Messages (*How or Reflect*)

Revisit the Vision and the Community Vocabulary (*Reflect*)

METRO MAP

PURPOSE:

- Understanding others' backgrounds
- What brought us together?
- What do we have in common

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT: it works well at the very beginning of large-scale events. It can also be used during a training, event, or semester if the group needs to be reminded of where they came from and that they have a common purpose, or if commonality or diversity is important to your group's process and is in danger of being forgotten.

WHY WE LIKE IT: This activity acknowledges commonality and difference in the sound knowledge that the final destination is definitely the same. It allows participants to identify themselves more accurately as individuals rather than as "teachers" or "street kids."

HOW WE DO IT: Divide participants into small groups of between 4 and 8 people. Give each group a piece of flipchart paper and a different color marker for each member. Show what the small group should do by drawing a circle in the center of a piece of paper and write in the circle that the only thing you know to be true about the group: that they have all, for some reason, turned up in this room. Their final destination on the Metro is this training, class, conference or meeting. The question is what brought them here. Which significant events in their own personal history led them ultimately to this place? Ask each individual in the room to identify three crucial events in their own lives that led them here and to draw a line from the edge of the flipchart to the final destination marking them as stops on a map.

Ask the small groups to do this with each member taking a turn and explaining to the small group what they are writing and thinking as they mark the stops.

When the map is complete, ask the group to consider two questions:

- a) What do your backgrounds have in common? Are there any factors you can identify that led several of you down this path?
- b) What is different about your routes? How divergent are the paths that led to this room?

ISSUES TO CONSIDER: The facilitator must acknowledge that some events that led participants to the room may be of a personal nature and people may not want to share them. Advise group members that in this case they should write that "something happened" without describing it.

MATERIALS: Flipchart, lots of different colored pens.

VARIATIONS, ADAPTATIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS: it is possible to use this exercise in one big group if the facilitator wants to use it for team building purposes or thinks that full disclosure is important to the group's process

REFERENCES: devised by Cathy Burdge for a training called “Working with Street Children” as part of the Centre for Social Action’s work on deinstitutionalization in Ukraine.

NAMING THE GROUP

PURPOSE:

- exploring identity
- creating common identity
- bringing people together

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT: This can be used at the beginning of an event or group project.

WHY WE LIKE IT: It allows group members to choose an identity for themselves that is not necessarily how they are typically described or identified. It can be surprising and fun.

HOW WE DO IT: The facilitator divides the large group into smaller groups of 4 to 6 people. Each participant takes turns telling the other members of their small group two things: a) something they are proud of and b) something it is important for other people to know about them.

When everybody has had a turn, the facilitator asks the small groups to think about the things that have been said and identify something the individuals in these groups have in common. They should use this as the basis of their decision for a group name. What do they wish to call themselves?

ISSUES TO CONSIDER: The group should consider that their name may become public during the course of a longer project. The group may not wish to be identified by the name that they choose for too long.

MATERIALS: Flipchart to write up names.

VARIATIONS, ADAPTATIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS: Sometimes it is helpful to ask the small groups to imagine they are in a band and giving it a name.

REFERENCES, CREDITS, LINKS: Devised by Ian Boulton and Jennifer Fleming for a Centre For Social Action Summer School.

COMMUNITY VOCABULARY

PURPOSE:

- deciding how to talk with each other
- setting language boundaries
- looking at good and bad experiences in groups

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT: It can be used in any learning setting, preferably at the beginning of a process.

WHY WE LIKE IT: A community vocabulary helps set language boundaries in workshops or classes. It gives group members ownership of the language that will be used in a direct fashion. It also gives the facilitator clues about the group's preferred methods of working, past experiences, and ambition for the process ahead. Finally, it is organic and develops throughout the session.

HOW WE DO IT: Divide the large group into smaller groups containing at least 3 but no more than 7 members. Ask each group to think about the session, workshop or class in which they are participating, and their opinions, expectations, hopes and fears about what is going to take place. Then, ask the small groups to produce two lists of words or short phrases titled "Words We **Want** to Hear" and "Words We **Don't** Want to Hear."

By the time the groups have finished making their lists, the facilitator should have prepared two pieces of flipchart paper labeled to transcribe the lists. Call on each group to share three words or phrases at a time until all of the contributions are listed under their respective categories. Then, place the papers on the wall of the room and explain to the group that the words we want to hear illustrate the way the large group wants to conduct discussions and communicate how group members want to be treated. These desired words also show how the group wants to be viewed. The other list tells everyone what the group wants to avoid: which words they find offensive, boring, confusing and off-putting. Explain that this second list often reveals something about previous negative experiences that group members have encountered in similar settings.

Finally, mention that the lists can be expanded throughout the process as our discussions develop and more words attract or repel group members.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER: The second list is not meant to be a form of censorship, merely an indicator of the group's intentions regarding the verbal content of the course. It should be taken seriously, but treated lightly if one of the words is used by a group member.

MATERIALS: Flipchart and pens.

DEVisING THE VISION

PURPOSE:

- deciding on a definitive purpose
- negotiation
- setting a measure for success

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT: At the beginning of a class or workshop.

WHY WE LIKE IT: This exercise introduces the notion that negotiation is an integral element of groupwork. It sets a clear, agreed-upon, and hopefully realistic agenda that will aid the facilitator in planning and the group in maintaining focus. It helps to legitimize some discussion and activity and to outlaw others. It is an aid to evaluation devised by group members themselves.

HOW WE DO IT: At the beginning of a class, semester, etc., the facilitator invites each participant to write down the 3 things that they wish to achieve by its end and write them down. Participants should share this list with a partner and the pair then negotiates a joint list of three goals they wish to achieve based on similarity, preferred wording and importance. Each pair then joins up with another pair and another round of negotiation takes place producing a refined list of 3 things between the participants. These are then fed back to the whole group. The facilitator takes note of everything that is said and then begins a whole group negotiation on the definitive three things the group will achieve by the end of the project or term. The final three are written on flipchart and placed prominently on the wall. The facilitator explains that the group will revisit this list at the end of the course and decide to what extent the group has achieved its aims.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER: The most difficult part of the exercise is the final negotiation. This needs to move along briskly without ignoring participants' ideas or imposing the facilitator's. Sometimes it may be necessary to add a fourth aim to save time. The facilitator may need to remind the group several times that this is a vision for this course, not the primary subject under discussion. The exercise is meant to encourage ambition but not set unrealistic expectations.

MATERIALS: Flipchart and pens.

HOW WE BEHAVE IN GROUPS

PURPOSE:

- exploring individual behavior
- opportunities for examining the positive and negative aspects of different ways of behaving in groups
- consideration of how a facilitator should act in a group and how to ensure the participation of all group members

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT: After doing the Community Vocabulary and Devising the Vision activities, this process can help the group identify how to together in more detail. It can also be used at any stage during the process if the facilitator (or a group member) has identified that the group is not functioning to its full capacity.

WHY WE LIKE IT: This activity allows participants to reflect on their own behavior and to acknowledge how they contribute to groupwork. It also pushes them to consider the ways in which they may sometimes be difficult to work with.

HOW WE DO IT: Using all available wall space, the facilitator attaches six pieces of paper to the walls, spaced as far apart as possible. On each piece of paper she or he has written two words:

Intellectual/Thinking

Emotional/Feeling

Light-hearted/Joking

Argumentative/Challenging

Quiet/Listening

Practical/Doing

Ask group member to think about their own behavior as individuals when they are in the company of other people in an organized setting. Instruct group members to consider which of the words on the walls describe their typical behavior as a group participant: with what words does each individual *most* identify? The facilitator asks group members to stand under the paper that best reflects their behavior in groups. Once the group has assembled in smaller groups under each piece of flipchart paper they are then asked to consider the two questions below and to discuss them with the people they are standing with.

a) What is helpful about this behavior in groups?

b) What is unhelpful about this behavior in groups?

The groups are given 10 minutes for this discussion. Then the facilitator goes to each group

in turn asking them to share what they learned or talked about with the large group.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER: It is important to stress that the mode of behavior chosen by the members in this activity is not a label that they are stuck with through the rest of the workshop, class or project. They are only being asked to identify with one way of behaving just for this activity. Also group members must be self-critical as well as exploring what is helpful about the various behaviors. If this is not happening the facilitator must change the focus to what is unhelpful about any given behavior, e.g. "Yes, jokers can be fun in a group but let's think about what people may find difficult about people who frequently participate to make jokes."

MATERIALS: Flipcharts, pens, a large room.

VARIATIONS, ADAPTATIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS: During the feedback the facilitator may ask the group: who do you think has the most difficulty with this way of behaving? Where is the potential for conflict in the group?

IDEAL SPECIMEN

PURPOSE:

- exploring skills and having fun
- identifying training needs
- deciding roles

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT:

- If a group is about to take on a new role or task (a research project, for example), this can be used to see what skills and attributes they need.
- It can be used if a group wants to give a message to another group.

WHY WE LIKE IT: This is a flexible exercise that can be used for a variety of purposes, and encourages reflection on the key attributes of particular groups of people.

HOW WE DO IT: Divide people into groups of 4 or 5 and ask them to think about the qualities or skills required to fill the particular role or job they are considering; to dream up the Ideal Specimen. Next they need to think of how they can represent these qualities and attributes visually. Participants are to draw their ideal version of, for example, an Ideal Social Action worker, an Ideal Police Officer or the Ideal Student or Teacher. Words and writing are not allowed in this exercise, only drawing.

Once people have finished their drawings, each is displayed for the whole group. For each drawing, the others (who did not draw that particular picture) are asked what they see in the picture and these qualities and attributes are listed on a piece of chart paper. As each drawing is considered in turn a full list of descriptions is compiled.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER: Facilitators should assure participants that artistic ability is unimportant and provide enough assurance to encourage participants to draw.

MATERIALS: Chart paper, lots of different colored pens and imagination!

VARIATIONS, ADAPTATIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS: Once the lists of qualities have been created they can be used to identify if there are skills needed that are not currently in the group or to create messages for those who have these jobs or roles.

MOVIE POSTER

PURPOSE:

- deciding issues
- creating an agenda
- how does the group see things?

In this activity participants use visual representation to express what is important in their lives.

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT:

This is a versatile exercise that is appropriate for use with many groups. We have used it with such varied groups as street children in Moscow, teachers in America, and young people on estates in Britain (called housing projects in the United States).

WHY WE LIKE IT:

- People are not used to expressing themselves through drawing and the exercise may help participants to articulate different aspects of their lives than if they had to answer verbally
- Creates camaraderie
- Particularly freeing for adults
- It is fun
- There is no need for reading and writing at this stage of the exercise
- The pictures can stay in the room
- Good in bi-lingual settings

HOW WE DO IT:

Ask people to divide into at least two groups depending on the size of the whole group. Group members are asked to imagine that a movie will be made of what happens in their lives: neighborhood, community, school, family or other groups and settings that are important to them.

Participants should consider what is going on in their lives including the positive and negative things that happen where they live. What makes them angry or happy, what are they afraid of, what frustrates them? Ask them to think about what would be in the movie about their lives. Then they need to create a poster advertising this movie that would represent the things they have been discussing. Each group will draw a poster on which the only written words should be title. You might suggest that participants consider what they want people to understand about their lives by looking at their poster.

Once all of the groups have completed their drawings, display them. Take each poster in turn and ask the groups that did not create the poster what they see while the creators listen quietly. The facilitator asks a variety of questions that get other groups to describe the other poster(s) such as: what do they see in it, what does the title mean to them and do they see themselves in the poster? Make a list of the responses on flip chart paper. After you have made a thorough list, ask the group who made the poster if what people have seen is what they intended, and if they think anything has been left out? Everything that is

said is valid and recorded, even if it not what the artists intended.

Once the first poster has been fully discussed, move on to the next one until all posters have been considered.

After all of the posters have been discussed, the list is put on the wall. This is a list of problems and concerns that will form the group's agenda.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER:

- The exercise can take some time, as people need to discuss, agree and decide how to depict things and then actually draw them, as well as they discussion of the posters.
- It is important to reassure people that this is not an artistic competition and that any quality of drawing is fine.
- This is a good exercise to use near the beginning of a group or course, as it lets participants tell you about what is important in their lives.
- It is crucial that information about people's lives is used - this is not an activity for the sake of it.

MATERIALS:

- Many colored pens
- Flipchart paper
- Masking tape to put posters on the wall

VARIATIONS, ADAPTATIONS & DEVELOPMENTS:

This exercise can also be used with professionals. You might ask them to consider the lives of the people they work with. It is important to develop the exercise by using the information gained.

REFERENCES: Youth Agenda, published by Centre for Social Action and the Guinness Trust, 2000 ISBN 1874436 80 0 http://socialactionnet.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Youth_Agenda.pdf

FOUR FACES

PURPOSE:

- uncovering opinions
- recognizing a variety of opinions
- opportunities to change your mind

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT: This exercise can be used with virtually any group, including young children or adults. It is extremely versatile and can help facilitate a quick and fun discussion or a lengthy serious debate.

WHY WE LIKE IT: This activity can help a group explore relevant issues and opinions. People express an opinion by placing themselves near a face or expression, so all people participate without necessarily having to speak.

HOW WE DO IT: Create controversial statements for your group. It is best to do this once you know the group and have been listening to them and hearing their differences of opinion and unresolved issues. The statements need to be carefully worded to allow for difference of interpretation and opinion. If you don't know the group, use statements that have worked well with similar groups. You want to provoke debate and discussion, not deliberately foster conflict. Always have more statements on hand than you need, and though have some idea which you will use, decide which ones you will use as you listen to the discussion.

Draw 4 faces with very different expressions on 4 pieces of paper: one very happy, one happy, one slight unhappy and one very unhappy face indeed. Explain the faces and what they mean. Read a statement. Ask people to stand by face that best reflects their opinion or level of agreement with the statement. People must express their personal view point. So if someone personally agrees with the statement strongly they would stand by very smiley face.

Ask people at each face to talk amongst themselves about why they have chosen where to stand and what they want say to the others to encourage agreement.

You can do this in a variety of ways:

- ask someone who hasn't spoken before to make a statement for the group
- ask groups to discuss amongst themselves and choose one person to present views
- ask a group to select three main points they want to make

After the discussion is over ask groups to discuss amongst themselves all the points of view heard and see if they want to review their position. People are encouraged to talk and share and change their minds given others' points of view. Remember to let people move about if they want to change their views. It is not uncommon for people to take up a number of positions before finally deciding what their position in any given statement is.

It is possible to vary the tone of this exercise considerably. You can suggest that group members actively persuade others to join them, or just state their opinion and see if that

encourages people to move.

The exercise can take a very long time, allowing for a lot of discussion and debate, or can be a speedy quick opinion finder exercise. It is good to end with a consensus statement (if you can find one), as participants can become heated and even upset.

Here are some examples of statements we have used in the past with groups of teachers or students:

You learn more in school than in the rest of your life.

Education should always be enjoyable.

It is important for learning that a teacher is liked by their students.

It is essential for learning that a teacher likes their students.

It is detrimental to learning if a student does not like their teachers.

It is possible to do Social Action in a classroom.

Your own personal beliefs as a teacher get in the way of the people you are working with learning.

Adults learn as much from working with young people as they learn from us.

Education should prepare young people for employment.

Literacy means different things to teachers than students.

Teachers have a responsibility to students beyond the classroom.

We can't do anything about colleagues who are not interested in empowerment.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER:

- It is important to consider the statements carefully.
- Sometimes people will feel isolated.
- It can get heated, but this can be a good thing.
- Not often but occasionally the whole group agrees with each other.
- Rehearse well how you will explain what the four faces represent, as it can seem confusing to the participants.
- This activity is not about creating conflict, but airing opinions.

MATERIALS

The statements, paper for the four faces and a space for people to move around.

VARIATIONS, ADAPTATIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS:

You can connect this discussion to the Action stage: eg. "OKAY so what does this mean we need to do?" or "What tips would you have for this situation?"

BUT WHY?

PURPOSE:

- analyzing issues
- looking at causes of issues, concerns or problems
- considers the consequences of not taking action

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT:

This is an excellent activity to use once a group has identified the problem or issue they want to address and need to consider WHY it exists (what causes it) so they can target their actions most effectively.

WHY WE LIKE IT:

This activity explores of the causes of problems. Without the analysis, understanding can be shallow and group members might blame people, rather than see the complexity of a situation. This encourages people to think about the causes of a problem or issue, rather than moving straight from identification of problems to trying to solve them. This allows for a variety explanations or possible causes.

HOW WE DO IT: This is a two-stage process that gets a group to consider the consequences and causes of a situation. Stage 1 explores why something is a problem, and Stage Two is a discussion of why it exists.

Stage 1:

The group agrees on a key problem or issue for which they want to investigate ramifications and attendant problems. This explores the scale of the problem and paints a picture of just how destructive a problem can be if no action is taken to address it. (Because, after all if not much happens if you don't tackle it then you might want to tackle something else).

Write the problem in the center of a piece of flipchart paper and get input from the group to create a web of consequences. Each line should go as far as people can suggest consequences and then the facilitator should start a new one, making connections between the lines. The facilitator should ask questions to prompt further thought. Once a line seems to have reached its end the facilitator should ask if there are any new lines.

Make all the connections and look for commonalities – the connections are interesting and the links are pointers for what's most important. These don't have to be the point of intervention, but they help prioritize what issues to deal with.

Get the group to think about where they can make a difference, what they feel comfortable working on and what they can address practically.

Pick one thing, and then continue to Stage 1.

Stage 2:

Now the group does a linear exercise - "this is a problem, what causes it" and on and on.

Take chosen item from the line, which may be a clarification.

There is usually more than one root cause for a problem and so the group may need to start again with the problem and take a different route, to get the full picture. The line is much influenced by who starts.

If the group believes that the first causal analysis doesn't show the full complexity of the situation they can run the second stage again. This will give them a more comprehensive analysis of the causes, but the activity is really about looking for a starting point, any starting point.

Look at the linear routes and pick out words about action (understand, clarify, prioritize, perceptions, explain etc)

Which words suggest gaps or action?

Try to find a starting point for action, something to start a plan for doing.

In addition to the detailed analysis the group should also look for the following:

- What are the main themes?
- Who's responsible for what?
- What do we learn?

ISSUES TO CONSIDER:

This can be a complicated activity; so all instructions need to be very clear. It is worth going through an example with the whole group; they understand how it can work before they go into small groups.

It is good if a small group can gather around a piece of chart paper, either on the floor, the wall or a large table.

MATERIALS: Chart paper and pens.

REFERENCES OR SOURCE: adapted from Training for Transformation Book I.

CODES

PURPOSE:

- deeper understanding of a group's views
- structures the examination of the discussion about a topic
- deeper analysis

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT: Codes can be used once an agenda has been established and the group members feel safe with each other. They are particularly useful as a lead-in to the Why stage.

WHY WE LIKE IT: This is a thoughtful exercise that allows for considered discussion of an issue in an oblique or even abstract way. The image should provoke relevant thoughts and comments but remain open to any interpretation. Codes allow us to take a group through the Social Action process. They also make issues personal to individual participants.

HOW WE DO IT: The facilitator presents an image he or she has chosen for the group to consider in silence. The image may be a drawing, a photograph or a mime. The group members are informed that they will be taken through a series of questions after the presentation. They do not discuss the image with each other until the facilitator begins to ask the questions. Then, slowly and carefully, the questions begin. They are:

1. What is happening?
2. Does this happen in real life?
3. Why does it happen?
4. Where are you in this?
5. What needs to change?

The pace of the discussion should be slow, with the facilitator leaving long pauses between questions to allow the group to further reflect on the image and the responses given by fellow members at each stage of questioning. Follow-up questions should be kept to a minimum and used only for clarity, i.e. would you like to repeat that?

ISSUES TO CONSIDER: The image needs to be chosen carefully. It should be ambiguous. It should have some allusion to power relationships and decision-making. If a photograph is used it is impossible to obscure all reference to geography, race, gender, age or class. Photographs can make group members pay attention to small details and provoke serious, intense discussion if chosen carefully. Participants are sometimes taken by surprise by the emotions evoked during this exercise. The facilitator needs to be prepared for this and adopt a suitable tone and pace.

MATERIALS: Suitable materials to be codes, websites can provide some interesting photos (check copyright).

VARIATIONS: Anything can be a code. It is possible to use a song or poem or role play. We find, however, that the quiet brought about by the consideration of a silent visual image aids the conversation that follows.

CHANGING YOUR MIND

PURPOSE:

- how do people learn?
- what has helped us in the past?
- discovering ways of learning through role play

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT: We often use this activity in Training the Trainers workshops or working with teachers, but it is equally applicable to work with students.

WHY WE LIKE IT: It allows people to reflect on their own experience, and draws out some general lessons about how people learn.

HOW WE DO IT: Ask people to think by themselves of a time as a child or young person that they changed their mind about something that was important to them. It needs to be something they are prepared to share. It doesn't have to be too personal. The focus is to be on the circumstances and who and what was involved - it is the process of changing their mind that is important.

Ask them to think about the following questions:

1. What was the topic and what was your original position?
2. Under what circumstances did you change your mind?
3. Who or what was involved?
4. What was your relationship with them?
5. What was new position?

In small groups, all participants share their examples and think about what lessons can be drawn from their experiences about how people learn. Then they need to agree on 3 lessons for learning about how people learn (changing one's mind is part of learning). These are then written on a flipchart.

The final stage of the exercise is to consider what the implications for facilitators and educators of these lessons and what actions we can take, or build in to our practice which take this into account.

- What does this tell us as facilitators
- What does this tell us about how people learn?
- What we need to do to take this into account?

ISSUES TO CONSIDER: It can be helpful to offer an example (that doesn't give all the answers) or can ask for volunteer.

MATERIALS: Pens, flipchart paper.

VARIATIONS, ADAPTATIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS: It is possible for people to role play an example, to show the processes and people that can be involved in people learning and changing their mind about important issues.

SCULPTS

PURPOSE:

considering problems with out words
finding out what needs to change
getting everyone involved

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT: This is most useful at the beginning of the How phase.

WHY WE LIKE IT: This is active, creative and places the burden for solving the problem on the onlookers not on those who have identified it; it also works as a form of consultation. It gives groups hope, acts as a spur to action. It is non-verbal, so it does not include discussion of the problem. The only discussion takes place after the second sculpture is completed: How can we get from Picture A to Picture B?

HOW WE DO IT: Ask group members to think about one of the issues that have been uncovered during the What? phase. The group is then divided into small groups and asked to present the problem in the form of a body sculpture, i.e. a still and silent picture using only the people in the group: no props or words.

Each group presents its sculpture in turn. The other groups observe the picture and are asked what it portrays and how it could be changed so that the problem presented is solved. The facilitator then invites participants who are not in the sculpture get up and physically move the people around in the sculpture so that the situation is improved. The new sculpture should illustrate of the problem presented after effective action has been taken.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER: Sometimes participants in the sculptures try to hold impossible positions for a long time. The facilitator should allow them to rest while the onlookers are deciding on their actions. The exercise also involves close physical contact and being manipulated by other group members. People who feel uncomfortable with this aspect are allowed to opt out the physical part of the activity and can still join in the discussion.

MATERIALS: None.

VARIATIONS, ADAPTATIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS:

In one variation, small groups are asked to show sculpts that depict three phases:

The current situation

Transitional period while action is taking place

The situation in the future

This variation asks the group members to provide solutions themselves and is used to focus on the period before the chosen strategy is completed. This is best used after the How has been decided so that the group can examine the difficulties they will face.

REFERENCE: Everyman Youth Theatre, Liverpool, 1972.

THE THREE C'S

PURPOSE:

- identifying who might be involved in or have an influence on the project
- considering who will help us, or stand in our way?
- beginning to develop action plans

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT: You can use this at the How stage in the creation of the Action Plan. It can be used alongside The Force Field Analysis (see p. 150) and the SWOT (consideration of **S**trengths, **W**eaknesses, **O**pportunities and **T**hreats, p. 147).

WHY WE LIKE IT: This activity introduces political realities to the group at a key stage in an accessible way. There will always be opposition to change, and the opposition's motives will not always be easy to identify. There will always be activists and proponents of change who will be easy to attract. It is the task of convincing the undecided that the change you seek is worthwhile, or in their interests that is the key to creating a movement for change. This notion helps young people to solidify their thinking, to think tactically and to plan negotiation.

HOW WE DO IT: Once a group has agreed on a goal, ask them to think of three groups of people:

- a. who agree with their goal and will help them
- b. whom they will need to convince
- c. who will oppose them

The group is then asked to produce lists of these people under the headings: Cooperate, Campaign and Confront.

Ask the group to consider that more people may be on their side than is immediately obvious and to consider who else will benefit from the group achieving their goal besides themselves. Are there benefits to their parents? Journalists looking for a story? Similarly, the group should consider that those who will try to stop them achieving their goal may not be people who disagree with them. Perhaps they are envious, or in competition for funds or attention.

It is the middle group to which the facilitator insists the group should pay attention when devising its action plan. The group should think about who they need to convince and how they are going to do it.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER: The facilitator's job here is to ask the group to consider the outside world by asking questions rather than positing her or his own opinions. The Three C's introduces outside personalities and influences into the group. It is vital that the construction of the lists and the discussions around them are conducted in a disciplined, focused way. This is not an opportunity for the group to abuse people who disagree with

group members.

MATERIALS: Flipchart, pens.

VARIATIONS, ADAPTATIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS: This activity can be done alongside the SWOT analysis (see p. 147) by asking the group to leave people out of the SWOT and just focus on institutions, events, qualities etc. The Three C's then allows for a greater concentration on the people involved. Actions to increase strengths, lessen weaknesses, use opportunities and diminish threats can then be placed on the Force Field Analysis (see p. 150). Similarly, actions that will help to bring the unconvinced on to the group's side can be added.

SWOT

PURPOSE:

- analysis and reflection
- planning an event
- evaluating a group's work

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT:

During the How or the Reflection stage of the group

WHY WE LIKE IT:

It can be used as a planning or a reflection exercise. It can help a group evaluate what it has been involved in or look forward to future work.

HOW WE DO IT: The teacher facilitator should begin by introducing what SWOT stands for: **S – Strengths, W – Weaknesses, O – Opportunities, T – Threats.** Then the teacher facilitator should identify with the group the plan or event they will “SWOT.” Put 4 flip charts on the wall, one for each part of the SWOT, and get group members to write their ideas on the paper. Alternatively you can use Post-its and get people to write them for each part of the SWOT and place them on the appropriate chart.

When everyone is finished, go through each flip chart with the group as a whole or divide the group into 4 and they can work in small groups. You can discuss ideas and reach consensus or rank ideas in levels of importance.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER:

Make sure everyone is able to participate or their ideas are represented.

MATERIALS:

Flip charts, marker pens, post its and pens

VARIATIONS, ADAPTATIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS: it is possible to change the words to help the group understand better. For example,

Strengths – what was good?

Weaknesses – what was bad?

Opportunities – what could happen now?

Threats – what might stop things happening?

Training – what help do you need?

REFERENCES, CREDIT AND LINKS: Participation, Spice It Up.

WORST NIGHTMARE

PURPOSE:

- helps people get advice on concerns they have about doing something new and address their fears about the process

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT:

You can use this at the planning stage of any activity.

WHY WE LIKE IT:

This helps people see there are ways to deal with their anxieties. It also shows them how their colleagues or fellow students can be an important source of support.

HOW WE DO IT:

Ask people, working alone, to think of their worst nightmare or greatest worry about a new thing they are considering doing. In small groups (it is best to have 4 or 5 groups in total) share the “nightmares” and choose one to put in box in centre of a flipchart. Divide paper into four quarters. Pass to next group.

Suggestion 4

Suggestion 1

Nightmare

Suggestion 3

Suggestion 2

(need a graphic)

The chart paper is passed from group to group so each group’s “nightmare” is considered by the other groups who make a suggestion about addressing the worry until it is returned to original group. They consider the suggestions and decide on something they will actually do to reduce this concern.

MATERIALS:

Flipchart paper and different colored pens.

VARIATIONS, ADAPTATIONS & DEVELOPMENTS:

You can suggest they leave one box spare for the original group to consider all suggestions and make a decision about what they are going to do in light of the advice and suggestions they have been given.

Ideas could be written on adhesive notes and arranged according to the group’s likes and dislikes.

Once all the sheets are completed and each “nightmare” has been offered a number of

solutions, spread all the pieces of chart paper on floor and ask everyone in the large group to read them all and then:

- mark ideas they think will work
- star ideas they most want to try

Ask each group to develop their response to the concern and prepare a presentation on how it could be implemented for the rest of the participants: How can we overcome this “nightmare”?

FORCE FIELD ANALYSIS

PURPOSE:

- what will help us achieve our goal?
- what will work against us?
- how can we maximize the strengths and diminish the weaknesses?

[insert Figures A.1 & A.2]

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT: This activity is one of a series used in the planning process, at the end of the How stage.

WHY WE LIKE IT: This allows participants to examine the strengths and weaknesses of their strategy and take full advantage of the former and to lessen the latter. It offers a simple clear visual illustration of what is on their side and what is against them and a way forward. It assists in the preparation of the action plan.

HOW WE DO IT: It is important that people doing this activity are in groups with others they are actually going to be working with. Ideally groups should contain 4-6 people, but you may need to be flexible about this. Give each small group a piece of flipchart paper and some pens. The teacher facilitator then demonstrates the activity to the whole group. First a circle is drawn in the middle of the paper then lines extending from the circle to the paper's edges, dividing the paper in half. The groups write their most immediate goal in the circle. The members then make two lists: things that will help them achieve their goal; things that will hinder them in reaching their goal. Once the lists are complete they transfer the lists onto the flipchart. They must judge the strength and importance of the items on their lists. The things that will most help go on the top half of the paper near the goal. The things that will most hinder go on the bottom half of the paper near the goal. Less important factors are placed a little further away from the goal. Relatively unimportant or weak factors are placed far from the goal.

The group members then devise a series of actions that will do two things: move the positive factors that are further away from the goal nearer to it (strengthen their affect), and move the hindering factors as far away from the goal as possible (weaken their affect). The group members write these actions on the flipchart paper.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER: Sometimes the factors working against the group outnumber those that will help. This is not necessarily a problem but it may cause the group to look again at whether the goal they have set themselves is realistic.

VARIATIONS, ADAPTATIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS: This analysis is a good basis for a consultancy session. This can be done between groups or with the teacher facilitator. It can also be done as a way of visually representing a SWOT (see p. 147) analysis, the strengths and opportunities placed on the top half of the paper in order of importance and the weaknesses and threats on the bottom half.

MATERIALS: Flipchart paper and pens, small post-its are also good as things can be written on them, but moved around the analysis before agreement on where they should be.

NOW/SOON/LATER

PURPOSE:

- making a plan
- deciding who does what
- deciding on broad timings

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT: It is produced during the Act phase of the training and used after the training is over.

WHY WE LIKE IT: The plan is flexible; it commits people to a time scale rather than specific dates. It can be changed easily after the training. It admits the involvement of other parties but places the major responsibility on the participants themselves. It can be used by people of all ages and in any position. We have known people take the chart back to the office with them and put it up on the wall to remind them of what needs to happen.

HOW WE DO IT: Each group planning an action is invited to write down an action plan using a matrix with a "Time Frame" across the top and a "Responsibility Frame" down the side. This consists of nine squares:

[insert Figure A.3]

Ask group members to list the activities necessary to carry out their idea(s) for action. Then get them to answer the questions: who will do it? and when does it have to happen? Every activity should be written into one of the boxes. For example: By us and Now in the first box; or: With Help and Soon in the fifth box. When every activity has been allocated a time and a responsible person(s) then the action plan is complete.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER: There should never be anything in the seventh box (By Others and Now). Social Action begins with the people in the room. We cannot rely on outsiders to begin things for us.

MATERIALS: As usual, flipchart paper and pens. Small post-its can also work, as they can be moved from one place to another on the force field drawing.

THE SWIMMING POOL

PURPOSE:

- how confident do we feel?
- where are we in relation to other group members?
- using an extended metaphor within the group

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT: This works best with a group of people who have been together for some time and feel it is time to take stock of how they are working together. It is also a suitable way of beginning team-building sessions. It works for groups that are engaged in new activity once they have embarked on a course of action. Through this, the groups can consider they feel at this point and what help is necessary for them to continue.

WHY WE LIKE IT: This activity provides the group with an extended metaphor through which they can discuss their feelings of comfort, confidence, uneasiness, fear, tiredness etc. This is a less threatening way of bringing these matters to light than simply having a discussion.

HOW WE DO IT: While explaining what is being drawn as it appears on the flipchart paper, draw a representation of a swimming pool containing as much detail as possible: a shallow end, a deep end, ladders leading to both, ladders in the middle, a high diving board, medium level board, and springboard, changing room, lifeguard, an entrance and exit, a spectator's gallery etc. Once the pool is complete, the teacher facilitator then asks each group member to take turns placing themselves in the pool. The placement depends on the terms presented by the teacher facilitator. The facilitator might instruct participants to use the pool to illustrate the stage they are at in their classroom practice, to show how confident you are as a social action trainer or what stage the group is at just now.

Once everybody has placed themselves in relation to the drawing, group members are invited to make observations about the completed picture. What do they notice? What does this tell us? Does anything require immediate attention?

ISSUES TO CONSIDER: Sometimes group members hide behind the metaphor to avoid having a serious, honest discussion. The teacher facilitator may occasionally need to remind the group members that "this isn't really a swimming pool." Similarly, sometimes group members with a grievance can use the exercise to hurl veiled abuse at colleagues. In these instances, the teacher facilitator should accept that the metaphorical approach may not be helpful and open a more explicit conversation with the group.

MATERIALS: Flipcharts, colored pens, a clean floor.

VARIATIONS, ADAPTATIONS AND DEVELOPMENTS: Group members often want to add their own detail to the pool and its environs. This should be encouraged. The group may have another metaphor that they find more meaningful than a swimming pool, and the teacher facilitator has to judge whether the new suggestion is as rich.

MESSAGES

PURPOSE:

- talking to the outside world
- formula for campaigning
- creating momentum

WHEN YOU CAN USE IT: This works best at the end of a stage of a project when the participants have clarified some of their ideas and now want a response from the outside world.

WHY WE LIKE IT: The prompts are written in the form of a demand, a reminder, a challenge and an inspiration. This makes participants think through what they wish to happen in a more complete way than if they were simply asked to produce recommendations. It also lends forward momentum to the work, taking it outside the training room or class.

HOW WE DO IT: The facilitator gives participants four prompts by, and they are asked to complete them as sentences. The prompts are:

You must....

Please remember.....

What about trying.....?

It would be a good idea if.....

The group completes the sentences as messages to be delivered to policy makers, institutions, authorities or managers that can have some effect on the group's goals. The messages are then collected and the group decides on a method to deliver them to the appropriate people. This can either be through an intermediary, by the participants themselves, by letter or through a written summary or report of the course itself.

ISSUES TO CONSIDER: Sometimes participants are uncomfortable making demands and may avoid doing this directly.