

“ANALYTICAL IMAGE”

Activity developed by: Associació La Xixa Teatre



OVERVIEW

Based on Augusto Boal's Rainbow of Desire techniques, this activity will guide us through a liberating journey of self-discovery, through which we will gain a deep understanding of ourselves in the face of conflict. We will learn how to navigate the complexity of our emotions and feelings to find alternatives to resolve conflicts in our relationships to others.



TIME



2,5 hours

PARTICIPANTS



Minimum 15 participants, no maximum.

MATERIALS



None.

OBJECTIVES



- To explore the diversity and complexity of the relationships developed in Youth work
- To discover different ways in which to manage these relationships
- To empower Youth workers by guiding them to recognise their strengths and resources to face difficult situations and conflicts that arise in their professional context.

STEP BY STEP INSTRUCTIONS



Ask a Youth worker to volunteer to share a personal story, and invite them to move to the front. Invite the rest of the group to take a seat and to observe until called upon.

First stage: improvisation

- Ask the person who has volunteered to share a personal story where they came into conflict with someone else (a young person, another Youth worker, a parent, etc.) within their professional context, and that caused them negative emotions (dismay, anger, sadness, incomprehension, etc.). Once the person has shared their story out loud, explaining who was in the story, where and when it took place, and what happened, ask them to select other participants from the group to play the different characters. Note that the technique is more effective when the scene only consists of the protagonist (our volunteer) and an antagonist (the character who will represent the person who the protagonist came in direct conflict with).

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- Give support to our volunteer (the protagonist) to set up the scene where the conflict happens (setting-up the “stage”, providing information about the characters to the participants who are taking on the role (names, who they are, context information, etc.). This should not take more than a few minutes. In the meantime, the rest of the group should be attentively observing and listening to the process.
- Once the scene is set-up, count to three with the entire group and say “action!” to initiate the improvisation. Say “stop!” when the conflict has been established and/or reaches its peak, or if the protagonist asks to stop the improvisation.

Second stage: the formation of images

- The facilitator asks the protagonist to make an image of how they are feeling at the moment. Ask the participants in the “audience” if anyone recognises that image and invite a person who feels related to that image to take the place of the image. Ask the protagonist to make another image of how he or she is feeling at the moment, and repeat the steps until all the feelings of the protagonist are being represented through images on stage. When the protagonist feels all their feelings have been unveiled, ask the other participants to propose other images of feelings that might be present. The facilitator asks the protagonist if they recognise the image: if they do, the image stays, if they do not, the image dissolves and the participant goes back to the audience.
- Repeat the same steps with the antagonist, by asking the protagonist how he or she thinks the antagonist is feeling, doing and image, asking someone in the group to take the place of the image, and so on.
- The images can be metaphorical, surrealist, expressionist, magnified, deformed, etc., as long as the protagonist can relate to the image within their story. About five images per character is a “good” number to complete the exercise, although there might be more or less images, depending on the needs of the protagonist. It is important for the sake of the exercise to have the same number of images for the protagonist and the antagonist.

Third stage: the formation of couples

- Ask the protagonist to pair the images of the antagonist and the protagonist, moving the images around the room until each pair has their own space. At all times the participants who are on stage must keep their images and must stay focused, at the service of the protagonist.
- Focus on one pair of images (at that moment the rest of “the images” on stage can silently relax, staying neutral and observing). The facilitator asks the images to do one movement that they feel relates to this image, and to repeat the movement (like a GIF).
- The facilitator asks the actors or actresses who are playing the images to incorporate a movement to their image and to repeat that movement (like a GIF), and then to add a sound to the movement. When both actors have incorporated their movement and sound, the facilitator will “activate” first one image, then the other, then both at the same time for some seconds. This will help the actors get into the character. In the meantime, the protagonist is observing how these images of him or herself start “coming to life”. When the facilitator says “action!” the actors will stop their sound and movement, and start the improv of the story, while keeping their image. This means that they can have a dialogue but they cannot move out of their image. Allow the improv to continue for a short time.
- Repeat this same steps with all the pairs of images.

Fourth stage: re-improvisation

- Ask all “images” to take back their places on stage, like in the initial scene. Invite the protagonist to take back their initial place in the scene (thank the actor who is being replaced, and ask him/her to sit with the rest of the participants who are in the “audience”).
- Explain that the protagonist and antagonist will now do the improvisation again, only this time the protagonist can move the images – both of the protagonist and of the antagonist – around to help him or her face the situation and interact with his or her antagonist.

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- Ask all actors or actresses on stage to get ready and together with the audience count to three and say “action!”. When the improv starts, the facilitator can help the protagonist by “activating” images (more or less loudly) to remind him/her the images are there to be used.
- The protagonist can start the scene more than once to try different strategies. The facilitator can provide support by being attentive to when to start and stop a scene, and in general accompanying the protagonist in the process.

Fifth stage: the desire

- Once the protagonist has tried different strategies, ask the “image-actors” to move to the sides of the stage (staying available but at a distance from the centre), and the protagonist and the antagonist stay at the centre of the stage to do the improv one last time. This time, invite the protagonist to do whatever they desire, regardless of social norms or consequences (as long as the real actor or actress does not get hurt), that is, to fulfil their deepest desire in that situation.
- Count to three to give the “action!” command, and stop when the protagonist has completed their desire. If necessary the scene can be repeated until the protagonist manages to complete their desire.
- When the last improv stops, thank the protagonist and all participants, and sit in a circle for debriefing. If necessary, take a five-minute break before moving on to debriefing.

DISCUSSIONS



It is important to encourage the discussion from a personal point of view, where each person talks about their own feelings, and their own way of experiencing the activity, rather than generalising or giving advice. It is particularly important to refrain from giving advice to the protagonist since he or she - and very likely others in the group - will be in a state of emotional agitation after undergoing this exercise and will require some time to process what has happened. The debriefing of the activity should be done using a “circle of trust” format: with all participants sitting around in a circle - on the floor or in chairs, as desired by each person - the facilitator selects an object which is significant to them. Holding the object in their hand, the facilitator will very briefly express how they feel, invite others to do the same if they wish to do so, and pass the object to the person sitting next to them. The person with the object can choose to speak about how he or she feels, or can just silently pass the object to the next person in the circle.

HINTS



- It is important to agree on a confidentiality rule about what has been spoken in the group at the beginning or at the end of the activity.
- The fact that the protagonist exposed their story publicly does not mean they want to speak about it afterwards.
- The facilitator should be familiar with Image Theatre and Rainbow of Desire techniques before trying out this activity with a group.

THEORY



Boal A. (1995). *The Rainbow of Desire*. Routledge: New York.



INTIMACY,
RELATIONSHIPS &
IRIS INTERCULTURALITY
IN YOUTH WORK

<https://intimacycrosscultures.eu/>

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