

ART OF ASKING – DRAMA GAMES

This activity was developed by In Touch,
based on Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and Rainbow of Desire



OVERVIEW

The aim of this activity is to learn to ask, accept and express one's desires verbally and non-verbally and learn to deal with rejection. By staging real-life situations, we are addressing the topics of how it feels when we risk rejection, as well as our own or the other's boundaries.

DURATION



At least 120 minutes (depends on the number of participants)

PARTICIPANTS



Adaptable for 10– 15 participants (better with less)

MATERIALS



Space

PREPARATION

Write down a couple of rejection situations for the drama game. Think of real-life situations which may be relevant to your target group. Don't forget to include topics that you want to address in your training (such as gender equality, discrimination or relationship dynamics). Write a concrete and realistic situation (you might want to use the needs assessment as a source of inspiration), but leave enough open so that they can play freely. For example, don't specify the gender of the characters – it's up to the participants to decide on the characteristics of their characters.

OBJECTIVES



- Connect words and gestures with each emotion; learn to express feelings verbally and non-verbally
- Understand ambiguous relational dynamics better (including power dynamics), learn self-reflection skills
- Understand better how many ambiguous or contradictory feelings / emotions can be simultaneously present behind one single identity position in a relationship

"I'm searching for a language. People speak many different languages: There's the one they use with children, another one for love. There's the language we use to talk to ourselves, for our internal monologues. On the street, at work, while traveling - everywhere you go, you'll hear something different, and it's not just the words, there's something else, too. There's even a difference between the way people speak in the morning and how they speak at night. What happens between two people at night vanishes from history without a trace."

Svetlana Alexievic; Secondhand Time, The last of the Soviets

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INSTRUCTIONS STEP BY STEP



- Invite participants to make small groups of 3 or 4. Invite them to choose one of the prepared situations that they are going to act out.
- Invite them to follow the story and to create specific characters (age, gender, social status, etc.). Make the story build up to a climax or crisis, but there is no need to find an end to the story.
- Invite the small groups to perform their situations and stop when they reach the climax.
- At this point, as facilitator, you step close to each of the characters asking “How do you feel?” (Naming the character, not the person.) You may want to put your hand on the shoulder of the character as you speak, thus expressing your support and presence. Important (!): you are asking the character, the participant in their role, and not about their personal feelings.
- After asking everyone on stage about their feelings, invite the audience to say anything that they would like to add on how they think the characters might feel in that situation. If someone raises their hand, invite them to come to the “stage”, put their hand on the shoulder of the character and say out loud how the characters feels.
- After gathering all kinds of feelings, invite participants if they want to come on stage to take over some of the roles and try out another scenario for the same story.
- You can repeat the story many times (depending on how much time and suggestions you have). As facilitator, you can briefly frame the changes you see on stage.
- You can end by naming the path you have journeyed on together, and by thanking the actors and audience.



DISCUSSIONS AND DEBRIEFING



Debriefing is important: help participants to understand what happened. How many emotions did we recognize? You can talk about emotional communication. You can explore and reflect on our roles in a relationship, and on social expectations regarding our roles. Discuss power dynamics with special regard to different power positions (power over someone, power within, power with). You can discuss how rejection feels, what they have learnt from this activity.

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TIPS AND HINTS



To do this exercise we need an intimate and safe group. The physical space is also important. If possible, we may want to do this exercise in the same room that we worked in together on previous days (with Safety rules, Yes and No, etc.). This may become a very sensitive exercise. It is important to feel the boundaries – facilitators have to hold the space – to let participants to express emotions, but help them to turn it into empowerment. You may want to continue with the exercise until it you feel the situation has evolved.

It might also help if you prepare your participants for theatre and acting with small theatre intro activities.

Use your imagination and feed the participants skills to act situations in a metaphorical way if they want to. That helps people feel safe when acting.

Encourage participants to use humour as a tool on stage!

EXAMPLES

A couple of examples for the situations you want to give to your participants:

“You are at home with your partner. Your partner wants to have sex with you. You are tired. You try to communicate that you don’t want to have sex. Your partner feels hurt and rejected.”

“You are at home when your partner comes home and says that the two of you will have to break up. Your partner is in love with someone else from a different gender than yours. You feel hurt and rejected.”

“You are with your partner at a dance club. Your partner is dancing with someone but you have your partner’s telephone. You accidentally see that a stranger has sent a naked photo to your partner’s phone. You are upset and you begin to argue with your partner. ...”

THEORY



Boal, A. (1992) *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. Routledge: London.

Boal, A. (1995) *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy*. Routledge: London.