

INTIMATE GALAXIES

Activity developed by In Touch (using the “social galaxies” activity created by Eva Molnar for the Artemisszio Foundation further developed by Élan interculturel)



OVERVIEW

Exploring the complexity and nuances of our relationships, of the multitude of layers, differences, overlaps between our intimate/sexual/erotic relations

LEARNING CONTEXT

This activity can be done online, offline with social distancing, and offline with physical contact.

DURATION



45-60 minutes (3x15-20min)

PARTICIPANTS



5 to max 15 participants (with a smaller group, you can create a more intimate atmosphere)

MATERIALS



A4 or A3 white papers
transparent tracing paper
markers

OBJECTIVES



- Become aware of the impact and role of time / space / regularity and dynamics in our intimate relations
- Become aware how we use time / space / communication channels / language
- Become aware what makes a relationship intimate; what are personal factors that make one relationship particular and special
- Become aware of our own personal characteristics in flirting (with whom, where, how, aim of flirtation, definition, techniques, language, communication, gender roles, social norms, power dynamics, etc.)

For the social galaxy of close / intimate relationships:

- Becoming aware of the types of relationships we have and the people who are important to us
- Becoming aware of the relationships we lack and would like to develop

For the social galaxy of flirtations:

- Becoming aware of why we like to flirt
- Becoming aware of whether we are initiators or receivers when we are flirting and what it brings out in us
- Becoming aware of our own definition and “personal language” of flirting

For the social galaxy of sexuality:

- Having a better understanding of our own sexuality
- Imagine other ways of experiencing our own sexuality

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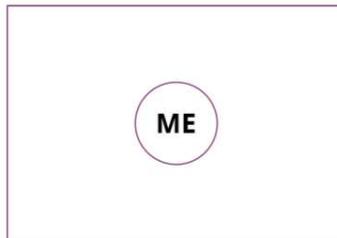


INSTRUCTIONS STEP BY STEP

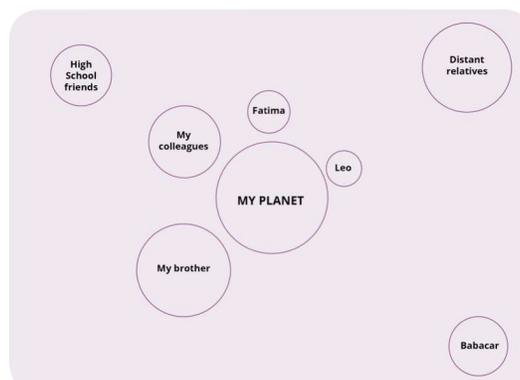


Activity 1: Galaxy of my close / intimate relationships

1. Distribute sheets and markers to participants.
2. Explain that they will present the galaxy of their close / intimate relationships. Each planet in this galaxy represents a person or group (e.g., “colleagues”, “high school friends”, “family”, etc.).
3. Ask participants to draw a circle in the middle of the sheet of paper that represents their planet and write “my planet” or “me” in the middle.



4. After this, participants draw the other planets, writing in the middle of each planet the person’s first name or a key word to designate the person or group they are thinking of. The planets are placed according to the following instructions:
 - The distance between each planet and your own depends on how often you meet.
 - The size of each planet depends on the importance of the relationship (how important it is for YOU). If this relationship is asymmetrical in any way, feel free to show it with a symbol, colour or an arrow.
 - Next to each planet, write the needs fulfilled (or expectations, or motivations) by that relationship and in what way (listening, sharing political ideas, dancing...).
 - Feel free to use colours, draw anything that is typical of that relationship, show what language you use, etc.



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- *Variation 1: Encourage participants to explore the characteristics of their close relationships based on identity elements.*
 - Choose three categories, such as: social class, gender, skin colour or age, education, family status, sexual orientation.
 - Distribute three sheets of transparent tracing paper per participant: one sheet per category. Define colours for each category, e.g. Layer 1: Gender / purple: men / orange: women / pink: other gender
 - For the first layer: Once you have defined your first category and the colours, ask participants to put the layer on the sheet of their social galaxy. Following our example for gender, all the relationships that involve men are coloured in purple, those with women in orange and others would be in pink. If your planet does not represent a person, but a group, make pie charts (if 20% are women, colour 20% of the circle in purple). Then do the same thing for the second and third layers. You can evaluate the galaxies with the layers in different ways. Participants can share freely what they see/ learn about their relationships based on this identity exploration.
 - *Variation 2: Ask participants to identify the relationships based on different characteristics such as:*
 - where they feel the most secure/safe
 - where they feel the most energized
 - where they feel the most creative
 - where they feel the most at home
 - where they feel the most able to be themselves
5. Close the session with a roundtable discussion or with a discussion in small groups. Participants share their experiences and explain what they learned about themselves during this activity. You can discuss topics depending on what you want to work with further, or on what comes up in the group. A few topics to discuss:
- describe the quality of intimacy in your relationships (how you define it for yourself)
 - embodiment / boundaries
 - personal motifs in relationships (those given / chosen (based on affection / common interest, etc.)
 - communication/ verbal, not verbal/what is the common language
 - space, distance, proximity, - expectations / social norms
 - multiculturalism in the relations in any ways

Activity 2: Galaxy of my flirtations

6. Distribute sheets and markers to participants.
7. Explain that we are going to present the galaxy of places where we get involved in flirting. Each planet in this galaxy represents a place. For example: bars, the street, parties with friends, university/schools, conferences, workplaces, dating applications, Instagram, etc.
8. Ask participants to draw a circle in the middle of the sheet representing their planet. Participants should then draw the other planets, always writing the type of place in the middle of the planet.
9. The planets should be placed according to the following instructions: - The distance between each planet and their own planet depends on how often flirtation happens in this place. Encourage participants to use colours to indicate how they feel about that particular type of flirting (whether they like it or not).

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10. Finish with a roundtable discussion. You may want to encourage them to focus on topics regarding their flirting actions such as: time / space / regularity and dynamics of those situations. What language they speak (mother tongue or foreign languages, dialects, slangs, etc. – how does it make a difference). Do they flirt via social media (how the written communication or video chat or phone works – explore differences and similarities). They can share their personal characteristics in flirting (with whom, where, how, aim of their flirtation, their definitions of flirting, what kind of techniques they can recognize. You can explore how gender roles, social norms, power dynamics have an impact in different types of flirting.

Activity 3: The social galaxy of my sexuality

11. Distribute sheets and markers to participants.
12. Explain that they are going to present the galaxy of their sexuality. Each planet will represent a partner, a relationship, an activity, a place, etc. (their lover or sexual partners, but also the people they talk about sex with, like friends, doctors, activities related to their physical/sexual well-being, etc.) – something that makes them feel “connected” to their sexuality. Sexuality is meant in a broad sense, encourage participants to think about anything and make it clear to them that the point of this exercise to map sexuality for themselves, not for others. If someone does not have a partner, that is also fine. You can inspire participants to explore the definition of sexuality for themselves.
13. Ask participants to draw a circle in the middle of the sheet of paper that represents their own planet.
14. Participants should then draw the other planets, always writing a key word in the middle of the planet. An example: The keyword can be a planet itself or a feeling what I connect to it. If the planet is the love of my life, John, the name of the planet can be “love of my life” or “John”. If the planet is my gynaecologist, the keyword could be: “doctor” or “fear” or “health”, any of them. The planets should be placed according to the following instructions:
 - The distance between each planet and the participant’s own planet depends on how often they have this relationship/activity.
 - The size of each planet depends on how much they enjoy that planet.
15. Invite participants to imagine the planets that they dream of or lack, and that would allow them to experience their sexuality even more fully. Invite them to draw these dream planets as well.
16. Finish with a roundtable discussion. Participants can share their experience and what they have learned during this activity.

