



Theatre School of Resistance



A Manual
for Educators



Welcome to the Theatre School of Resistance! This manual is meant for educators who want to use theatre and other creative art forms to explore issues around belonging, citizenship, racism, and resistance. It is grounded in the popular education models of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) and Pedagogy of the Oppressed (PO) which emerged out of the liberation movements of the fifties and sixties in Brazil. Both Augusto Boal, the creator of TO, and Paulo Freire, who developed PO, grounded their education models in the lived experiences of participants with the objective of learning about and changing unjust social realities. Both techniques have since been adapted and used as an alternative to mainstream education models by people around the world. As such, this manual can be tailored to a wide range of audiences: for example, middle school and high school students, university settings, and community development, social service, or non-profit work.

The Theatre School of Resistance manual serves as a companion guide to Augusto Boal's book *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*. Boal's book is full of theatre games and instructions on how to use them. In this manual, I have organized some of Boal's games and other activities into structured workshops which allow participants to explore the themes of belonging, power and privilege, citizenship, and resistance in a deeply embodied way.

This manual is organized around 8 two-hour sessions. Each workshop includes warm up games, a thought activity, theatre training, and a cool down. Warm up games build group comfort and trust, and get participants moving and expressing with their bodies. Thought activities are discussion groups which tap into tacit, embodied knowledge. For example, the community bundle invites people to share their cultural strength, and the power and privilege walk challenges normative understandings of power and resistance. The theatre training goes

deeper into movement, expression, and storytelling. Cool down activities provide space for reflection and wrapping up each session. Some sessions have homework to prepare for the next session and some require individual journaling time. Feel free to adapt this manual and the activities it contains to suit your own purposes.

Where possible, I give credit for games and activities that have been developed by Boal, other educators, or that I have used as a facilitator. If an activity has no credit, it is something that is widely used and adapted.

The eight sessions in the Theatre School of Resistance work towards a putting on public performance in the style of Boal's Forum Theatre. Forum Theatre breaks down the fourth wall by inviting audience members to become "spect-actors" and providing suggestions to the actors or coming on stage to try something out themselves, all with the purpose of rehearsing resistance. However, Forum Theatre is not necessarily meant to be a polished performance. You may want to create your own program out of this manual and host a performance after one or two workshops.

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01. Belonging

Materials



Name tag



Pens



Yarn



Flip chart paper



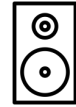
Markers



Journals



Tapes



Speakers and music

Introductions



20 minutes, depending on number of participants

Spider Web

Take a ball of yarn. Introduce yourself as the facilitator and say what you hope to get out of the theatre project. Then, holding on to the end of the string, throw the ball of yarn to someone else. That person then introduces themselves and their hopes for the theatre school and, holding on to the string, tosses the ball of yarn to someone else. The yarn gets tossed around until everyone has had a turn to introduce themselves and everyone is holding on to a piece of the string. At the end, tell people to look at the web of yarn you created and ask: What does it look like? What does it mean? What happens when someone pulls the yarn? Or drops it? Explain that this is a metaphor for this theatre school: We are interconnected and will build strong connections during this training. Just as a spider web is strong, we will develop strength and resilience. If someone is having a bad day, we will hold them up.

Source: Adapted from CAWI's Community Facilitation Guide: Weaving Threads of Inclusion (2012)



Group Agreement



10 minutes

Objective:

To establish a common framework for working together that creates a safe enough space to take risks and share.

Process:

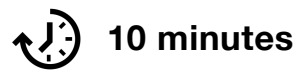
Conversations around oppression and privilege can be difficult. You might wish to preface this discussion with an invitation to participants to practice getting comfortable with being uncomfortable, especially since people with a lot of privilege have not usually built up a lot of comfort with frank conversations around oppression. This applies to topics such as race, ability, or sexuality, for example. The invitation to “sit with discomfort” means: 1) recognizing our feelings of discomfort, 2) temporarily suspending our gut reactions, 3) listening carefully and with an open mind to what others are saying, 4) reflecting and seeing how others’ perspectives might influence our own, and 5) revisiting our gut reactions. After this conversation about discomfort, ask: What would make this a respectful and “safe enough” space for us to work in? Ask for suggestions from the group of things that would make them feel free to contribute, such as the following:

As a group, we agree to:

- Listen while others are speaking (no interruptions)
- Solicit everyone's opinions
- Stay on time
- Keep things confidential (e.g. personal things should not be repeated outside of this workshop)
- Turn mobile phones off
- Respect others' opinions even when we disagree
- Practice sitting with discomfort

Write the brainstormed list on a flip chart paper and seek consensus on the final agreement. Keep the list posted somewhere visible. You and the participants can refer back to this agreement as needed throughout the Theatre School.

Warm up Exercises



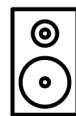
Lines of Four

5 minutes

Process:

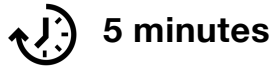
Turn the music on and invite everyone to move around the space and then get into lines of four. The first person in the line of four is the leader. The leader listens to the music and makes a dance step which the three people behind mimic and follow. As soon as you change the song, the leader moves to the end of the line and the next person is the new leader. Change the song every 10-15 seconds.

Source: Theatre of the Oppressed: A Manual for Educators (Midha, 2010)



Requires a music player with loud speaker

Assassins and Bodyguards (aka Bombs and Shields)



Process:

Ask participants to walk around the space. While they are walking, invite each participant to select two other people - one person to be their assassin and one to be their bodyguard. They should keep these choices to themselves and not indicate who they have chosen. The aim of the game is to keep their bodyguard between themselves and their assassin.

After a few minutes, call “Freeze” and check in with the group to see how they are doing. Everyone shares who was their assassin and bodyguard.

Thought Activity



Thermometer

Process:

On flip chart paper, label one end of the room agree/hot and the other end of the room disagree/cold. Read out the statements below one by one. As you read out a statement, invite participants to move along the imaginary thermometer towards the area (agree/hot, disagree/cold) that most reflects their opinion on the statement. All statements are opinion statements therefore there are no right or wrong answers. Let participants know that they can move as others talk if they change their opinion. Once the participants situate themselves along the thermometer, you can ask follow up questions to learn more about everyone’s perspective on each statement. Afterwards, the group can transition to a roundtable conversation using the discussion questions.

The following statements and discussion questions can be modified according to your needs or situation.

Statements (values):

1. I feel like I belong in my (neighbourhood, city)
2. I am involved in my (neighbourhood, community)

3. My city is friendly
4. I feel supported by my city
5. My views matter (to people in power/to friends/to family/to community)
6. I am civically engaged/politically involved
7. I am treated well when I walk/bike down the street
8. Islamophobia affects me or people I love
9. Racism affects me or people I love
10. I feel Dutch (or insert another nationality)

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is belonging important?
2. What does it mean to you to belong somewhere?
3. Do you feel like you belong in this city? Why or why not?
4. What is being done to make you feel like you belong?
5. What could be done to make you feel like you belong more?
6. What do you do to make yourself feel like you belong? What strategies do you use? What practices do you employ?
7. What do you do to make others feel like they belong? What can others do? What can the city or the government do?
8. When do these actions become political? Are they political? Should they be? What does that mean?
9. Do you consider yourself politically engaged?

Source: *Adapted from the Encountering Democracy Resource Guide (Stam et. al., 2016)*

Cool down



Visual Check in

Process:

To create space for reflection, invite participants into a circle. Go around the circle and ask everyone to show how they are feeling by using their body or sounds, but no words.

Source: Theatre of the Oppressed A Manual for Educators (Midha, 2010)

Note: In the first session, it may also be useful to give some time for participants to journal before closing as they may not know each other well enough yet to share deeply. After a talk-heavy session, you can also use movement, symbols, or journaling instead of more talking.

Next session

When wrapping up the workshop, it works well to remind participants about what is coming up the following session and whether there is any homework. For example: Next week we will be talking about power and privilege and what gives us strength. Bring an object with you that gives you strength. This could be from your culture or experience, or something that has special symbolism for you.

02. Power and Privilege



Pens



Papers



Journals



Cloth for Community Bundle

- Group agreement from Week 1
- Objects that give you strength
- List of statements for Privilege Walk

Note: Post safe space/group agreement from last week somewhere visible

Warm up



15 minutes

Objective:

To continue building group rapport, and to develop connections to the physical body.

Name Game

Everyone in the group stands in a circle. The first person says: *My name is _____ and I like to _____* (Insert name and hobby and act out a motion from that hobby). For example: *My name is Kumar and I like to skateboard.* (Action out skateboarding).

The rest of the group says: *(Person's name) likes to (hobby)* and acts out the motion. For example: *Kumar likes to skateboard* and then everyone acts out skateboarding.

The second person then states their name and hobby and acts it out. The rest of that group repeats the second person's name, hobby, and motion, and then repeats the first person's statement. This continues until the last person goes, at which the entire group calls out the last

person's statement and moves along through the whole group until everyone's statement is repeated.

Pass the Squeeze

Process:

Everybody holds hands. Starting with the facilitator, pass the squeeze. It can change direction.

Community Bundle



25 minutes

Objective:

To recognize and honour the wealth of experience and strength that each person brings to the group.

Preparation:

Before the session, ask everyone to bring an object that gives them strength. It could be from their culture or experience. Anything is fine. If anyone forgot to bring something, they can look for something they are wearing or something in the room they can use as a symbol. They could draw a word, image, or symbol on the paper provided, or find a song or poem online.

Process:

Invite everyone to get into a big circle on the floor or sitting on chairs. Introduce the activity, saying:

In order to share what gives us strength as individuals, we will use an exercise that builds upon a First Nation tradition. Some First Nations people carry a small pouch which is sacred to them. This is a personal bundle. It may have in it medicinal herbs or small objects of meaning that give that person strength and courage. Here we will create a community bundle, in which we will each place an object that represents something that is important to us. It may be from our experience or our cultural background. In this way, we can learn more from each other and consider what gifts we each bring to our group.

Place a cloth in the middle of the room. Ask everyone to take out the object they brought to the session. If necessary, show your item first so that people feel more comfortable. One-by-one, everyone shows their item and explains:

- 1) how it relates to their background, culture, or life experience,
- 2) why it is important to them, and
- 3) what about it gives them strength.

When they are done explaining, they then place it in on the cloth in the middle of the room.

Note: This exercise can help to build trust and understanding, but if there is a low level of trust in the group it is important to allow people to only share at the level they are comfortable doing so. Some people may just want to place the object in silence. As such, if people explain the object but do not say why the object is important or gives them strength, you can discern whether to invite them to share more.

Once everyone has shared their short narratives, ask everyone to take a look at the display of objects on the cloth and reflect:

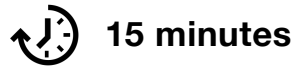
- *What do you notice about who we are?*
- *What is important to us?*
- *What here gives us strength and courage?*
- *What do we have in common?*
- *What diversity is there among us?*
- *How does this diversity enrich our group?*

Say a few words about why strength and courage are important to the group. For example, you can reflect: *As young people who face discrimination, we often need a lot of courage to call attention to injustice.* You could also share: *This is our Community Bundle that symbolizes our collective strength as a group and as contributors to our community.*

Close the bundle by draping the sides of the cloth over the objects. Keep them together during the meeting, as a collection of what is important to the group, and return them at the end of the session.

Source: This activity was created by Tina Vincent as part of a workshop for CAWI's Community Facilitation Guide: Weaving Threads of Inclusion (2012) and has been adapted slightly here for work with youth.

Theatre Practice



Objective:

To energize the group and learn theatre skills. To connect with the body.

Colombian Hypnosis (Boal 2002, p. 51)

Process:

Divide the group into pairs. One person volunteers to be the lead, the other the hypnotized. The lead and hypnotized stand facing each other. The lead extends their hand palm forward. This hand completely hypnotizes the other person. The hypnotized person should follow this hand keeping a constant distance from it. The lead can move their palm anyway they feel. Ask the lead participants to experiment with different levels, angles, and movements. They can move around the room, and slowly work with other body positions. Encourage the hypnotized person to be aware of their body. Do this for five minutes. Swap roles and do this for another five minutes.

Variations:

This activity also works with smaller groups of three to four people following the lead. Another variation is to have one person slowly hypnotize the entire group, with each new participant choosing a different body part to be hypnotized by.

Rhythm with chairs (Boal 2002, p. 68)

Five people have a chair and each create a frozen image using the chair. It can be anything. Number each image one through five. The rest of the group then moves around the space and at any time you may call out one of those numbers which the group then must replicate.

Variation:

Mess things up a bit by calling out more than one number at a time.

Thought Activity



Power and Privilege Walk

Objective:

The purpose of the Privilege Walk is to learn to recognize how privilege can affect our lives even when we are not aware it is happening. It provides an entry point for talking about structural oppression and how to build on our own strength and power. However, this activity also tends to make privilege visible at the expense of those in the room who are less privileged. In order to mitigate this, the purpose of the first ten questions is to point out how none of these statements had anything to do with things we have done or choices we have made. The purpose of the last ten questions is to examine power and privilege in less normative ways by pulling out some alternative ways that people may also experience power.

Process:

- A. Have participants form a straight line across the room about an arm's length apart, leaving equal space in front and behind.
- B. State: *Listen to the following statements, and take a step forward or backwards depending on how it applies to you. Each step should be an average step length. This is not a race. No one is going to check up on you, so if you feel you should take a step then do so, if not then you may stay where you are.*
- C. Read the statements one at a time allowing time for participants to take a step.

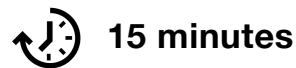
Privilege Walk Statements:

1. If Dutch (or insert another language) is your first language, take one step forward.
2. If your family has ever left your homeland or entered another country not of your own free will, take one step back.
3. If one of your parents was ever laid off or unemployed not by choice, take one step back.
4. If you feel unsafe walking alone at night, take one step back.
5. If you can show affection for your romantic partner in public without fear of ridicule or violence, take one step forward.
6. If you have a visible or invisible disability or illness, take one step back.

7. If you have never felt judged because of the size or shape of your body, take one step forward.
 8. If you were ever stopped or questioned by the police because they felt you were suspicious, take one step backward.
 9. If you feel good about how your identities are portrayed by the media, take one step forward.
 10. If you ask to speak to the “person in charge” and you are pretty confident that they will look like you, take one step forward.
- D. At this point process the activity by saying: *Take a moment to observe where you are in the room. What is your reaction to where you find yourself? Are you surprised at where you are? Did you come to any new realizations? What were some privileges or factors that you have never thought about before? Note that none of these statements have anything to do with decisions or choices you made. What are the ways in which institutions or society has failed you? What systems need to change to address these discriminations? After this reflection, continue with the following ten questions.*
1. If you come from a supportive family environment, take one step forward.
 2. If you have ever successfully changed someone’s opinion on something that mattered to you, take one step forward.
 3. If you have ever interrupted a racist, sexist, or homophobic joke, take one step forward.
 4. If you were ever part of a movement that successfully changed an institution or practice, take one step forward.
 5. If you have a strong understanding of your family’s history and culture, take one step forward.
 6. If you speak a language other than Dutch or English, take one step forward.
 7. If you draw on your family or ancestors for inspiration and strength, take one step forward.
 8. If you feel nourished and supported by your chosen community about the choices you make and the lifestyle you live, take one step forward.
 9. If you get energy and positivity from organizations or groups you are involved in, take one step forward.
 10. If you have ever made a difference in the way your workplace or school treats others, take one step forward.

- E. To close, invite the participants to process the whole activity by asking: *Did any of these statements change how you look at power? How can these strengths be leveraged for positive social change? How can you leverage your position? How can you act in solidarity? What are your thoughts on power and privilege after this exercise? How do you see your privileges? How do you see your power? How can we use this learning as we go forward?*

Cool down



Objective:

Reflect on the day and what came out of it.

Process:

In this cool down, encourage participants to take ten minutes to free write in their journals about the things discussed in the group today. Some questions: *What emotions surfaced for you today? Was there anything you did not want to discuss with the group that you want to express to yourself by writing or drawing?*

From there, get together in a large group. Ask if anyone wants to share any insights from today. After the sharing, say: *Let's stand in a circle, facing outwards. Think of one emotion you want to express right now. On the count of three, turn around and freeze into the emotion you want to express.* After people have had a chance to look around the room at other people's emotions, ask everyone to grab their emotion as if it were a ball, shape it in their hands, and on the count of three, release it by throwing it in the middle of the circle.

Next session

To prepare for the next session, ask participants to take a picture of what being Dutch (or insert other nationality) means to them and bring it to next week's workshop.

03. Citizenship

Materials



Photos



Laptop and projector for photos, or
a tablet to pass around

Warm up



20 minutes

Objective:

To build trust and train in Theatre of the Oppressed techniques

Tangles and Knots

The group stands in a circle. Ask each person to remember who is standing on their left and their right. Tell the group to spread out around the room and walk freely about. Now, call out instructions, such as: *Walk with those with the same colour hair as you – The same colour shoes – The same colour eyes.* Then give more instructions, such as: *Create three circles - Four squares - Two triangles - One star.* Individuals must form themselves into groups to make this happen. Then ask everyone to freeze where they are standing, to locate the people who originally stood to their right and their left and then point at them both, without moving. Very slowly, people will begin to stretch and then then move towards their two neighbours until the entire group is holding hands. This will be a tangle. The group must then try to untangle themselves, without letting go of their neighbours' hands. See if it can work!

Source: *Theatre of the Oppressed: A Manual for Educators (Midha 2010)*

Pushing Against Each Other (Boal 2002, p. 57)


Ask the group to do the following: *Divide into pairs. Imagine a line is drawn between the two of you. In our pair, put your hands against one another's shoulders and begin to push. To cross the line would be to win – you do not want to win! Match your partner's strength, support each other's weight, practice pushing harder or softer.*

Variation:

back to back, shoulder to shoulder, see saw




Thought Activity:

 **60 minutes**

Objective:

To explore ideas around citizenship and belonging

Citizenship photos

 **30 minutes**

Process:

Ask people to send their photos to you electronically. Display the photos via the projector or on a tablet that is passed around. If someone did not bring a photo, ask them to think of an image or an object that represents what being Dutch means to them.

Sitting in a circle as the photographs (or images or objects) are shown, participants can describe why they took a particular picture or chose a certain image and what it means to them. After everyone has shared, have a group discussion about citizenship.

Discussion questions:

1. What does it mean to you to be Dutch?
2. Have your ideas about what it means to be Dutch changed over time? If so, how?
3. What things do you like about being Dutch?
4. What things do you not like and would like to be changed?
5. What other aspects of your identity are more (or less) important to you than your nationality?

“Good” and “Bad” Citizen Images



Objective:

To discuss the concept of citizenship and think critically about categories of good and bad. To introduce the Theatre of the Oppressed concept of “spect-actors”.

Process:

Divide the group in half by doing the following energizer for a few minutes.

Walk the Space: Instruct the group to walk the space, but clarify: *You must not walk in circles but walk with purpose as if you are...*

1. *an elderly person*
2. *a five-year-old boy*
3. *on the moon*
4. *a stressed mom with two fighting kids*
5. *in quicksand*



Continue for a few minutes. At the end, randomly draw a line in the middle of the room and have each side form a group for a five-minute popcorn-style discussion (where everyone rapidly makes suggestions like a kettle of corn popping). Ask one group to discuss what it means to be a “good” citizen and the other group to discuss what it means to be a “bad” citizen. Stress that there are no right or wrong answers.

After five minutes have passed, as a group, they can sculpt their bodies to describe their ideas. For instance, the "good citizens" may be frozen into poses such as cleaning up litter, helping neighbours cross the street, or paying taxes.

One at a time, each group is asked to present their ideas. The whole group presents their images together. Everyone else stands around it. Ask people to walk around and observe the sculpture. Give them a minute. This should be done in silence.

First, ask everyone *What do you see?* Participants should describe what they see only using descriptor statements (e.g. their eyes are closed, or they are holding hands) without giving interpretations or meaning to the image.

Next, ask people to give their interpretation of the group's image by attaching meaning to it. Stress that there is no right or wrong interpretation. You can probe for explanations using some reflective prompts: *What in the image makes you feel that way? Can you explain to us how you arrived at that? Who are these people? What are they representing? Put your hand above a clay model and ask “What is their thought bubble saying?”*

Tell people to remember this image as we transition to the next group.

Now, turn to the other group and repeat.

Group discussion:

Gather the whole group together and ask: *Where do our ideas about “good” and “bad” citizens come from? Are there things about “good” and “bad” citizens that are not really “good” or “bad”? What assumptions do we make about people? Do you agree with these categorizations? How do they make you feel? If you could change something in the tableau/ sculpture, what would it be?*

In the large group, brainstorm ideas about : 1) *What sort of society you want to live in?* 2) *What sort of things do you want to be seen as “good” or “bad”?* 3) *What does it mean to be a politically active citizen?*

Two options for wrapping up:

1. Have each group go back into their original pose of "good" and "bad" citizens, starting with the first group. Introduce the idea of "spect-actors" - people who are watching a theatre performance, but then can stop the action and intervene - by asking the second group to "move" the living sculpture into a more positive image; using no words just moving other people's body parts (with permission) or by miming the pose they want the other person to strike. Then as a group, move back into the first image, and slowly transition (all together) to the second image, thus creating an image of possible transition. Then move to the second group, and give the first group a chance to mold.
2. Have both groups come together in one large group and ask them to create an ideal image based on the discussion about *What sort of society do you want to live in? How would you define "good" citizenship?* Then as a group come up with a tableau that represents that image. Once the group has finalized their new image, ask them to remember it. Then ask them to go back into their image from the very first pose of "good" and "bad" citizens and slowly transition (all together) to the second image, thus creating an image of possible transition.

Source: This activity combines Boal's *Imaging exercises* (2002, p. 176-186) with the *Good Citizen / Bad Citizen exercise* from the *Encountering Democracy Resource Guide* (Stam, et. al., 2016).

Cool down



Go around the room, and have each person share one word that captures how they are feeling right now. If they do not want to share, they can say "pass".

Check in about the workshop and how it went for everyone.

04. Power and Resistance

Materials



Newspaper



Journals



Pens

Warm up



15 minutes



Ninja Warriors

Have everyone stand in a circle and shout out in one breath “Ninja Warriors”. Whoever can say the word for the longest without taking another breath gets to start. Participants must eliminate others by hitting their hand. However, they are only allowed to make one continuous movement, like a martial arts move. For instance, if they are farther away from someone they want to touch, their one movement might be a step towards that person. The person being targeted may also move back, but also only in one movement. This goes around in a circle until there is only one person left.


UP: Number Game

Standing in a circle, participants count off, with every multiple of 7 being replaced by UP. If they mess up, they step out of the circle.



Thought Activity

Newspaper Theatre

 60 minutes

Objective:

To explore how daily news subtly influences perceptions. To prepare for Forum Theatre.

Process:

Divide the group into smaller groups of three or four people. Ask the groups to: *Skim the newspapers and pick out stories you find interesting. Have a short two minute discussion about the stories. Then, choose one of the stories and act it out as a group. You should all be in agreement about which story you want to enact. For the acting, do not discuss much. Everyone has already heard what the story is about, so start acting it out right away. For instance, while one person in the group explains the news story, the others could just start enacting it.*

After the group has practiced, each group performs their play to the other groups who form an audience. Ask the audience to describe what they thought the story was about. Now ask the performing group:

- *Which story did you choose? Why?*
- *What did you want to highlight?*
- *What worked for you? What did not?*

Turn to the audience and ask:

- *What worked for the you? What did not?*

Ask these questions so the group can learn what elements go into a story and also how the audience perceives the performance.

Discussion questions:

You may want to explain how how Living Newspapers began in the 1930s followed by a discussion about:

- *Where does news come from?*
- *Who decides what news should be published?*
- *Who writes the articles and from which power perspective? Do the people who are written about have a chance to say if the perspective given in the newspaper is correct?*

Source: Theatre of the Oppressed A Manual for Educators (Midha, 2010) / The Theatre of the Oppressed (Boal, 1993)

Cool down



15 minutes

Process:

Ask everyone to get out their journals and take five minutes to free write about today. Do they have any ideas about situations of oppression or injustice that they would like to act out and rehearse strategies for the coming weeks? Any thing that was triggering for them today that they might not like to discuss in a large group but want to process? Come back together in a large group. Discuss how everyone experienced today's session.

Pass the Gift

After sharing, ask everyone to stand in a circle. The first person mimes a gift with their hands, and gives it to the person next to them. That person can either pass the same gift along, or transform it into something else and pass it along to the next person.

Source: Theatre of the Oppressed A Manual for Educators (Midha, 2010)

05. Resistance

Materials



Tapes



Flip chart paper



Markers



Props, if needed



Journals



Pens



Quotes (see www.catalystcentre.ca/school-of-activism/resource-library/quotes-about-ethicsvaluesmorals/)

Warm up



20 minutes

Objective:

Build trust and communication among participants

Blind Car (Boal 2002, p. 121)

Divide into pairs. One person stands in front of the other and closes their eyes – that person is the blind car. The person behind is the driver who gives directions by touching the car's back with their hand:

Touching the left shoulder = turn left

Right shoulder = turn right

Press centre of back = move forward

Level of pressure denotes speed

No touch = stop





(Fill-in-the-blank) Machine (Boal 2002, p. 94)

Objective:

To build connections and find rhythm. To increase awareness of sound and motion.

Process:

Select a word such as anger, joy, or any word participants would like to play with. One person goes into the centre and imagines themselves to be a part in a big, complex machine. They do a repetitive motion and create a sound to go with it. Someone else goes into the centre and connects themselves to the first with a different motion and sound. Another participant joins and the machine gets bigger until everyone is playing a part and making a sound with their motion. Ask the first participant to increase their rhythm. When the machine is about to burst, ask the first participant to gradually slow down, thus slowing down the whole machine. Ask them to slow it down until it stops.

Two by Three by Bradford (Boal 2002, p. 106)


In pairs begin counting one, two, three. Each partner says one number at a time. Once this has been mastered, replace the count number one with a sound. Then replace the count number two with a physical action. Then replace count number three with a sound and physical action.

Variation:

Run the exercise with the whole group standing in a circle. Thought Activity



Thought Activity

 15 minutes

Objective:

To discuss ideas around how change happens

Process:

Before the session starts, hang inspiring quotes around the room. Ask people to circulate around the room and read the quotes hanging on the walls. Have people stand next to the quote that speaks to them the most. Depending on the size of the group, invite everyone to discuss what they found compelling about these quotes either as a large group or in smaller groups. Back in a large group, ask: *How have you seen change happen? What preparation needs to happen? What contexts need to be in place?*

Source: Adapted from the Catalyst Centre for Change www.catalystcentre.ca/school-of-activism/resource-library/quotes-about-ethicsvaluesmorals/



Theatre Activity

 45 minutes

Objective:

To discuss different scenarios of oppression and get a sense of how people can resist. To practice Forum Theatre techniques.

Image Theatre (Boal 2002, p. 176-186)

First, have everyone work alone, thinking about a story of time when they faced oppression. They are welcome to use their journals to write down some notes, or go back through their journals to get inspiration.

Then, ask people to get together in groups of three or four and discuss these experiences. Pick one story that as a group they want to share with

everyone. As one person is telling their story, the others should start acting it out, just as they hear it being described. They then present this to the group.



Now, explain the concept of the Joker (the person who acts as an intermediary between the actors and the audience in Boal's Forum Theatre) and then model the concept of the Joker. Ask the first group to re-play their performance. After their performance, you, as the Joker, facilitate the participants making up the audience (now "spect-actors") to come up and try out

different scenarios to address this oppression. They may only replace the protagonist, or add additional characters to support the protagonist. Explain that there is no right or wrong intervention. This is a rehearsal of change and a tool to explore possibilities.

After several “rehearsals”, applaud the actors. If there is time, invite a second group to perform, using the same process of rehearsals. At the end, gather the group in a circle and debrief. You can ask: *How did you feel about their first experience with Forum Theatre? What did you think of the role of the Joker? How did it feel to see other people intervene in your story? What was it like to do the intervening as “spect-actors”?* In your opinion, is Forum Theatre a good way to rehearse resistance?

Cool down



15 minutes

Ask everyone to pull their favourite quote off the wall, turn it over, and write on the back one action that they commit to practice against oppression going forward. When everyone is done writing, gather into a circle. If they want to share their commitment, they can, and then they place their paper into the middle of the circle. If they don’t want to share their commitment, they can share one adjective that describes how they are feeling after today’s workshop, and then place their paper into the middle of the circle.

Thank everyone for their participation and ask the group if there are ways we can support each other going forward. At the end of the discussion, everyone can take their quote and commitment home.

06. Belonging and Storytelling

Warm up



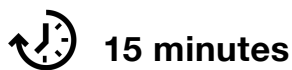
Find the Messenger

Everyone stands in a circle. One person leaves the room. Ask one person in the group to volunteer to be the first messenger. Their job is to pass the message by winking to another person without being discovered. Then that person passes the message along by winking, also trying not to be discovered. Invite the person back into the room and have them stand in the centre of the circle. The first messenger then starts. The person in the middle of the circle then tries to find the messenger by seeing someone wink. They have three guesses. After the third try, someone else can move into the middle of the circle.

Variation:


When the person is out of the room, everyone picks a different body signal that they will use to pass the message along without being discovered. Go around the circle a couple times so that everyone can memorize each other's body signal. When the person is invited back into the room, they have to try and find the messenger by looking for body signals.

Thought Activity



Take out your journals and recall from memory the first time that you felt different from others. It can be when you were four years, in primary school, or it can be a couple of months ago. Try to remember this memory as well as you can. Write down specific details: how old you were, how you felt, how your surrounding looked like, which concerns you had, etc..

Story Building

 50 minutes

1. Tell your memory to another participant

15 minutes

Share your stories in groups of two. Ask and give feedback to the other person. Focus on giving feedback as a listener/audience that is interested in specific memories in which you can live in when hearing it. For example, use your senses. What can you see, smell, taste, touch, feel?

2. Adjust your story with the feedback you received

10 minutes

Make adjustments in your journal according to the feedback you received. Try to give more body to the story, bring it to a direction that fits your feeling best.

3. Switch partners and share again

15 minutes

Get in different groups of two. Share the adjusted version of your story to the other participant. Perform it! Ask for feedback from the other participant.

4. Adjust your story one last time

10 minutes



Monologue Performance



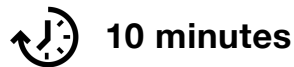
Take turns performing your stories to the whole group. There is no right, wrong, long or short. Everything is good. After every few stories, the audience is invited to give feedback to the performers. Ask the audience to listen with their ears (what did you hear), eyes (what did you see) and heart (what did you feel) to share constructive feedback. At the end, congratulate everyone for being storytellers! End with a question and answer period about what can make storytelling stronger.

Source: This workshop was prepared by guest storyteller Shah Tabibi

<https://shahofholland.wixsite.com/officialpage>

info@shahofholland.com

Cool Down



The Magic Box

Have everyone stand in a circle. Silently, everyone thinks of two experiences that stood out to them from today's lesson. Have everyone pull those two experiences from where the memories of them hang in the air. Participants should hold their experiences between their palms. There is a big imaginary box in the middle of the circle in which everyone will put their two experiences. They hold their palms up to their lips, take a deep breath, and blow their experiences into the box. Everyone takes another deep breath and blows on the box really hard to push in the sides of the box. They do this three or four times. Once they have shrunk the box (imagine!), everyone rubs their palms together, and they use the magic in their fingers to make the box levitate. Everyone takes a deep breath and blows on it one more time to smash the box against the ceiling. The box breaks into a million tiny pieces that float down silently – like snowflakes. Let everyone close their eyes and soak in the experience, smile and quietly exit the room.

Source: Theater of the Oppressed A Manual for Educators (Midha, 2010)

07. Open Space Technology and Theatre

Materials



Flip chart paper



Tapes



Markers



Dr. Suess quote



Journals



Pens

Warm up



15 minutes

Three Duels (Boal 2002, p. 82)

Duel one: partners stand facing each other, covering their knees with their hands, changing knees from time to time. They score points by touching the other person's knees while avoiding having their knees touched. First person to three wins.

Duel two: the same as above but with bare feet, with each person balancing on one foot while trying to touch (gently!) the other person's foot with theirs.

Duel three: Same as above but with an outstretched hand with a finger pointing out (like a sword).

In the manner of the word

Gather the group in a big circle. One person volunteers to leave. The group then selects an adverb, usually something ending in -ly such as "enthusiastically". Once an adverb is selected, the person is invited back in the room. That person then has to try and guess which word was chosen by the group by asking different people to do an action "in the manner of the word". For example, ask: *Hodan, can you talk on the phone in the manner of the word?* and Hodan will

act out talking on the phone enthusiastically. Once the person has guessed correctly (or after a number of unsuccessful tries) a new person can leave the room and the process repeats.

Thought Activity

Open Space Technology*

Objective: To write scenes and brainstorm for the final performance.

Introduce Open Space Technology by talking about mobility and the four principles of OST.

Open Space Technology believes in:

1. The Law of Two Feet: You have two feet. Use them.
2. Bees and Butterflies: Pollinate. People who like to move around. They bring insights and ideas from other groups and provide cross-pollination.
3. Trees and Flowers: Provide stability and continuity that allow conversations to build and reach fruition.

Four principles apply to how you navigate in open space:

1. Whoever comes is the right people

Whoever is attracted to the same conversation are the people who can contribute most to that conversation—because they care. So they are exactly the ones—for the whole group-- who are capable of initiating action.

2. Whatever happens is the only thing that could've

We are all limited by our own pasts and expectations. This principle acknowledges we'll all do our best to focus on NOW-- the present time and place-- and not get bogged down in what could've or should've happened.

3. When it starts is the right time

The creative spirit has its own time, and our task is to make our best contribution and enter the flow of creativity when it starts.

4. When it's over, it's over

Creativity has its own rhythm. So do groups. Just a reminder to pay attention to the flow of creativity -- not the clock. When you think it is over, ask: Is it over? And if it is, go on to the next thing you have passion for. If it's not, make plans for continuing the conversation.

Brainstorming

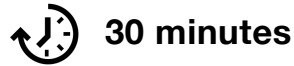


After introducing how open space technology works, gather the group in a circle. Remind everyone about the topics you have acted out so far. Have the group brainstorm ideas for the final play. These can be broad general themes, or specific ideas for a scene. Write these on flip chart paper. Remind people that if they are suggesting something, they are also taking responsibility for ensuring that it gets discussed, whether as the convener of a particular discussion or by bringing it up in another discussion. Ask participants: *What other themes, ideas, or stories came out of our workshops so far that you would like to take to the next level? What haven't we discussed that you would like to discuss and act out?*

If the group has difficulty thinking of topics, come prepared with ideas. Inspire yourself from previous sessions and the themes you have been working on as a group. Some examples could be:

- Belonging
- Racism
- Islamophobia
- Resistance

Small group work

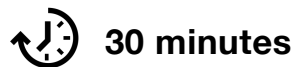


When the group is done brainstorming, participants self-divide into groups based on their interest in the themes. In small groups, they discuss what ideas they want to cover in their scene. Encourage participants to immediately start acting out these scenes, whether through image theatre or a sketch, as people are talking. By the end they should have developed a short sketch about their topic. If only one person wants to work on a particular topic, they can develop a monologue or sketch on their own.



The sketches do not have to be complete; the goal is to convey an idea. Remember that the principles of Open Space Technology apply (i.e. people can move around, not all themes need a small group discussion).

Performance with feedback



Gather everyone together and take turns performing the monologues or sketches. After each performance ask for the group to provide feedback: *What worked well? What resonated with the audience? What do you want to keep for the final performance?*

*For more info on Open Space Technology see Owen, Harrison (2008). *Open Space Technology: A User's Guide (3rd ed.)*. Berrett-Koehler.

Cool Down



Ask each participant to reflect on today's session and take a few minutes to journal about it. After journaling, gather in a circle and ask each participant to share one word that describes how they are feeling about today's session. After everyone has had the chance to share, ask

participants to collectively take a deep breath in and out once, a second time, and on the third breath out, everyone should say AAAHHH and slowly melt to the floor.

Next session

The next session will be a rehearsal of Forum Theatre. Ask everyone to take some time before the next session to reflect on the last seven sessions. They can use their journals. Ask them to think of what material might work for a play, and to come prepared with a short story line or script for a scene of oppression.

08. Rehearsal for Forum Theatre

Materials



Blank paper



Example of Forum Theatre
from YouTube



Laptop and projector for photos, or
a tablet to pass around

Warm up



15 minutes

AEIOU (Boal 2002 p. 113)

One person stands in front of the rest of the group. The group must make sounds using the letters A, E, I, O, and U, changing their volume depending on how far away or near the single person is. The person can move around the room. The group should be trying to communicate a thought or emotion to the person, not just making a noise.

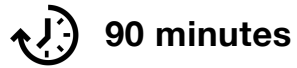
Variation:

Do this activity in pairs. OR substitute the vowels for singing.

Tell your own story (Boal 2002 p. 144)

Get in groups of two or three. One person recounts an experience that actually happened to them, the others then illustrate that story with their bodies. If participants have trouble thinking of a story, ask them to share something that happened to them today, or this week. The storyteller cannot intervene while it is being re-enacted. Afterwards, discuss the differences. The storyteller should compare their reaction with the actors'.

Forum Theatre



Objective:

To experiment with Forum Theatre, learn how it works, and try out the role of spect-actors and the Joker.

Introduction

20 minutes

Explain Forum Theatre and show an example from YouTube. Ask everyone what differences they find between this kind of theatre and the usual theatre that they have experienced. Some key things to draw out are:

- The local nature of the problem or oppression
- Short length of the play
- Presence and role of the Joker to provoke and engage the audience
- Breaking the fourth wall and inviting the audience to change the play so that they transform into spect-actors
- Multiple enactments of the play using different strategies suggested by the spect-actors

Ask everyone to share the scene or idea they prepared for homework and write each suggestion on a single sheet of paper. If there are not enough suggestions, write your own. Place these sheets of paper on the walls around the room. Feel free to group similar ideas together. Ask everyone to wander around and to stand next to the paper (or groups of paper) that they would most like to act out. Ideally, the story they pick should resonate with them and their own experiences. It does not need to be their own. This should naturally sort everyone into groups of three to eight people. If groups do not form, ask for volunteers to move to form groups. See if there is anyone in the group who would like to take on the role of the Joker. If not, a facilitator can be the Joker.

Story boarding

20 minutes

In these groups, ask them to brainstorm the storylines or scripts for the scene that they came up with. Each group's scene should be relatively short (between two and eight minutes depending on how long you want the entire play to run for). Each group then thinks about how they could enact the story they have chosen. They can draw or write descriptions, or jump right into acting it out. Reassure participants that these sketches can be rough. They will have the opportunity to refine them as we move forward. The goal is to have an idea of how the scene will run from start to finish. The dialogue can be improvised.

While the groups are working, make sure the Joker is familiar with their role.

Forum

10 minutes

Come back into a large group and ask each group to give a quick synopsis of their scene. Ask the whole group to decide which order they should be performed in.

Dress Rehearsal

40 minutes

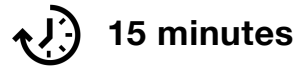
Ask the Joker to begin the performance by introducing themselves, the idea of Forum Theatre and "spect-actors", as well as the themes that will be covered in the performance. In this case, your "audience" is the participants, but explain to everyone that this is a dress rehearsal for a public performance. Each group then performs in the order that was decided. After each group has gone, everyone provides feedback for each scene. Some questions to ask:

- *Was the oppression clear?*
- *What was done well? What did you enjoy?*
- *What could be done better? Was anything unclear?*

After this feedback session, ask for one scene to volunteer for Forum Theatre, where the rest of the participants will act as audience members and "spect-actors". The Joker comes back on to introduce the scene and explain to the spect-actors what they should do if they have a

suggestion for the actors. Run through the scene, this time with interruptions from the audience. Remind the actors that their role is to support the suggestions of the spect-actors, while staying in character.

Cool down



Process:

Come back into a large group. Ask participants how they felt in the Forum Theatre: *What was it like to be an actor? Spect-actor? Or Joker? What was done well? What could be done differently? What do you need to do to prepare for the public performance?*

After the debrief, ask everyone to rub their palms together with the good energy from today, and create more good energy with the friction. Then, following the rhythm of the facilitator, everyone claps and on the fifth clap, with a shout, pushes all the good energy towards someone of their choosing in the group, or the entire group, palms facing forward.

Note:

It is not necessary to practice a lot before a public performance of Forum Theatre, since it will be improvised based on spect-actor suggestions. However, you may want to include some rehearsals depending on the comfort level of your participants.

Next session...

...is the final performance. Enjoy!



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About the author

Valerie Stam is a PhD Candidate in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Carleton University in Ottawa, Canada. Using participatory theatre and interviews, her research explores the experiences of second-generation Black and Muslim youth in the Netherlands and how they navigate belonging, citizenship, oppression, and resistance. With support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), she spent over a year as a guest scholar at the University of Amsterdam conducting her research. Together with The Seed, Valerie developed and facilitated The Theatre School on Resistance over 14 weeks in Rotterdam.

Valerie has over 17 years of experience in local and international development work, having done work and research in Ghana, Senegal, India, Canada, and the Netherlands. She is also the co-editor of Generation NGO (Between the Lines), a collection of reflective stories by young Canadians working in international development. Her professional expertise includes facilitation and adult pedagogy techniques, arts-based and participatory research, anti-racism and anti-oppression work, gender, political participation, citizenship, migration, social housing, and community gardens.



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