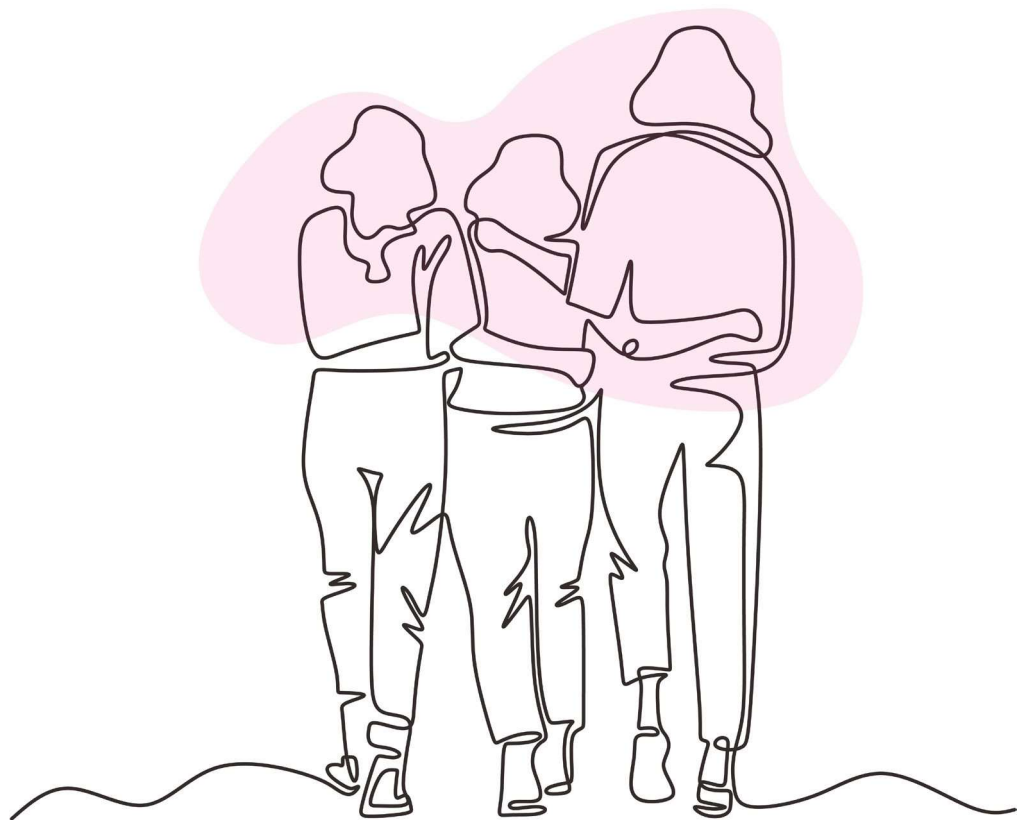


STRENGTHENING PERSONAL SAFETY IN SAFE SPACES



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Strengthening personal safety in safe spaces, resource pack for professionals

Authors:

Baarendse Lies, City of Mechelen – Belgium

Park Eri, University College Roosevelt – Netherlands

Van Leuven Alexander, City of Mechelen – Belgium

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The ORPHEUS-consortium

City of Mechelen – Belgium

Portsmouth City Council – United-Kingdom

University of Portsmouth – United-Kingdom

Artevelde University of Applied Sciences – Belgium

Greta Grand Littoral – France

Ceapire – Belgium

University College Roosevelt – Netherlands

Contourdetwern – Netherlands



Project Management and secretariat

Project Manager: Hilde Lauwers, hilde.lauwers@mechelen.be

Administrative and financial expert: Kathy Marivoet, Kathy.marivoet@mechelen.be

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Introduction

Why this training?

The training ‘Strengthening personal safety in safe spaces’ enables safe space facilitators to create an exceptionally safe space in which to discuss social frustrations and co-create an approach. In this sense, it flanks all other ORPHEUS trainings, which are more substantively about applying specific frustrating themes themselves¹.

The goal, then, is to create a positive environment in which to discuss themes that participants feel they cannot discuss - let alone tackle - in legitimate mainstream spaces, such as the kitchen table, a class group or the association. We want to provide professionals with knowledge and skills to develop and monitor enhanced group dynamics.

How to use this resource pack?

Participants receive this resource pack after the training. It provides material that can help them in strengthening that personal safety for youngsters. Therefore, it follows the same steps as the training. We start with a theoretical background, and list methodologies that professionals can use in their groups to create a more safe space, to get more acquainted, to help a group develop and to evaluate the group(s) dynamics).

The methodologies mentioned in this resource pack are just the tip of the iceberg. You can find a lot of other methodologies in books about group dynamics and/or online, on eg websites of youth organisations, or consultancy companies. So, do feel free to use other methodologies, adapted to your context, timing and space, so the aim to strengthen personal safety and foster a positive group climate is reached.

¹ www.orpheusproject.eu

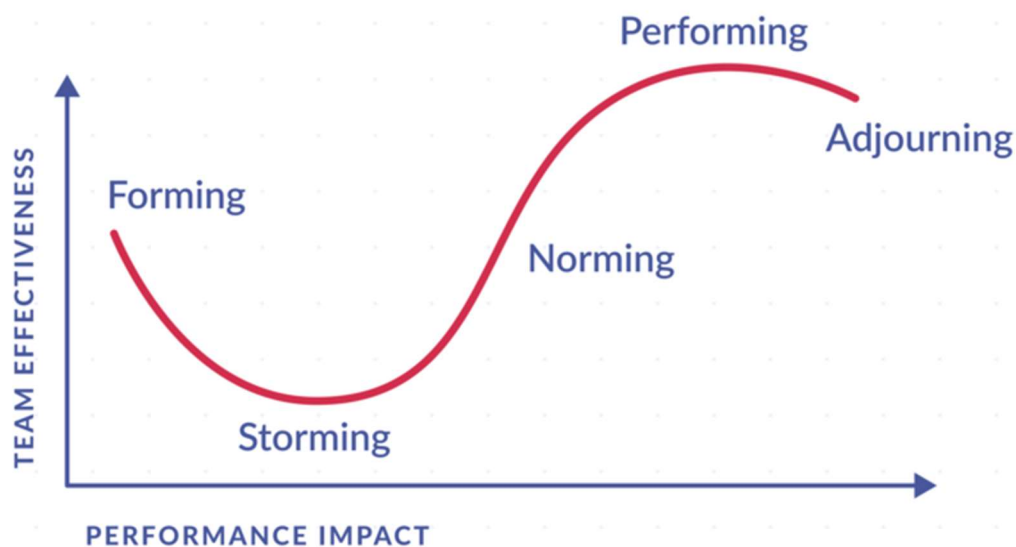
<https://www.orpheusproject.eu/en/toolkit/training-material>

Models for understanding group dynamics

Many models exist to better understand and influence the rise and evolution of groups. Two relatively well-known models are explained here. However, these are not the only models and we certainly do not want to claim that they are the best. Nevertheless, we feel that these provide good insight without being too complicated, which is why we specifically chose these models.

Tuckman's model

Tuckman's model explains which phases a group of people goes through to form a group.



1. Forming:

- Uncertainty, testing boundaries, both of the people you work with and of the tasks you have to perform. Wait and see attitude.
- This allows you to build a relationship of dependency with your leader and team members.
- Team members usually behave independently in this phase. They are motivated, but ill-informed about the team's goal. So they are insecure and concerned, but will not show it.
- A lot of talking and little listening
- If not formally appointed, a leader will now arise. He ensures the creation of trust and psychological safety. The leadership style is therefore conducive. In this way the team members discover which direction they should go.
- ➔ In this phase, a lot of attention and time will go to making agreements, setting standards and establishing procedures
- ➔ How can you facilitate this phase?
 - "Forcing" acquaintance through methodologies such as in the beginning of this session: pure acquaintance, but also looking for similarities.
 - Make agreements, such as letting everyone speak up, respect for each other's opinion, active involvement ...
 - ...

2. Storming:

- There is more trust among the team members.
- Conflicts arise about the way of working together, interpersonal issues and the goals of the team.
- Members show their personality during a discussion.
- Frustration or disagreement about goals, expectations, roles and responsibilities arises and these are expressed openly.
- In expressing their own personalities, they are hindered by the fear of falling out of the group, and stimulated by the fear of having to adapt too much to the group.
- Role of the team leader: guiding the difficult transition phase, stimulating the team to express their opinion, rewarding team members for their input.
- Team leader must remain neutral so that team members learn to resolve conflicts themselves. This is very important in the next phase.
- ➔ The focus is mainly on relationships and atmosphere and not on the task
- ➔ How can you facilitate this phase?
 - Make sure everyone can express their opinion
 - Giving positive feedback
 - Motivate and stimulate
 - ...

3. Norming

- When the 'storming' has been completed, peace returns and you can talk about cooperation in a structural way. A sense of unity arises.
- Problems are now tackled in a constructive way.
- The rules, values, norms and methods of the team are further elaborated.
- Team members are more open to each other, the collaboration will run smoother in this phase. People respect and accept each other.
- People work constructively on solving interpersonal problems, group cohesion and motivation levels rise.
- ➔ Emphasis is on harmony at all costs
- ➔ How can you facilitate this phase?
 - Make sure that appointments are noted, so that everyone knows clearly what is expected.
 - Then release the group, let them go on their own
 - Support only when necessary: with questions or problems that arise, and then address the group as a whole, not just one individual
 - Organize team building events to strengthen the connections between group members

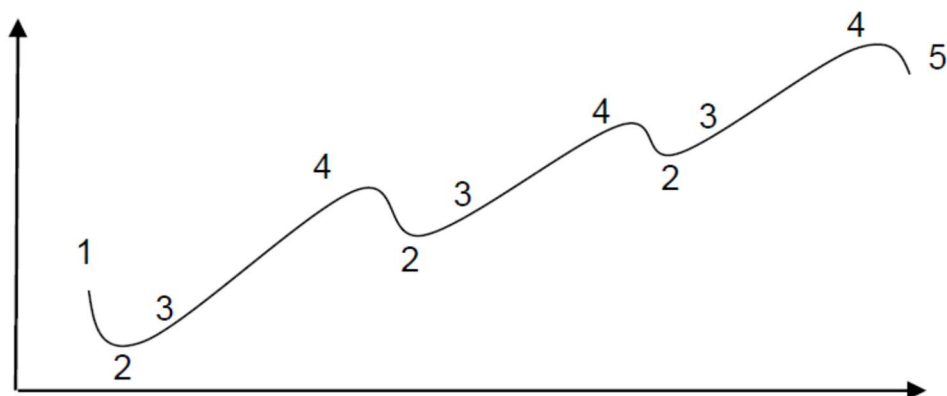
4. Forming

- Everything is now focused on the completion of the assignment.
- The team functions as a close-knit group: openness, unity, direct communication.
- Working is pleasant and goes without saying.
- The team has a clear understanding of the purpose of the assignment and is fully behind it.
- The way of working together is now clear.
- The team can now make decisions without interference from the team leader.
- That team leader can now delegate.
- ➔ Emphasis is on working on the task.
- ➔ How can you facilitate this phase?
 - Not, everything should go smoothly here
 - However, the model is not always linear, so one can always "fall back" to a previous phase, where you can / must play a role.

5. Ending/Mourning/Adjourning

- Tasks of the team are completed.
 - Group will have to disintegrate
 - Because of the fear of missing the group, people start to distance themselves from each other before the final end.
 - Motivation level will drop as a result.
 - As a team leader it is advisable to pay attention to the dismantling of the team. A final drink, for example, can offer explicit time and space for this and has a symbolic effect as the end. A closing of the period is certainly important.
- How can you facilitate this phase?
- Organize a farewell moment, even if only 1 of the group members leaves the group, which is also a change of the group
 - If there really was an assignment (eg for politicisation), give feedback, share any results and let them write down recommendations for future actions, for example.

It is also important to note that relapse often takes place within the phases. Certain events can again entail a storming, norming and performing phase, which is represented visually below.



TORI-theory (Gibb)

The TORI model is another model, that expresses a group's movement toward (T) trusting relationships, (O) open communication, (R) self-realization and (I) interdependence. It is seen as a cascade: when we trust people we will be more open about what we want, what we care about, what matters... This openness leads to greater realization. We are more likely to get what we want, what we care about, what really matters to us when we are more open about it. This leads us to the next step, a greater independence: a community, a thriving, vital, healthy organism, as a natural consequence of this cascade. which provides (additional) information about how a group moves from nothing to trust relationships, open communication (Openness), self-realization (Realization) and mutual involvement (Interdependence).

Phases

1. Acceptance

The group members must first accept themselves (self-confidence) before trust can be placed in others. The next step is to trust others. This can be done by getting to know each other, looking for similarities, bringing authenticity... (see also part 1: Acquaintance). But also by creating clear expectations: what is expected and when, how... by, for example, drawing up rules.

2. Knowledge flow

This phase is characterized by the exchange of information in an open manner. There is confidence to share opinions, to challenge each other in this, and also to accept the differences. Disagreements and conflicts are still possible, but are dealt with in a constructive manner.

This is not always easy, and the supervisor plays a major role here, for example by giving or agreeing communication guidelines, allowing everyone to participate, making agreements about possible decisions ...

3. Goal forming

In this phase there is cooperation and participation. Group members help each other and listen to each other. They are involved in the possible goal and want to achieve this together. This will work well if the decisions have been made together, if they were based on good discussions beforehand. After all, it is "their" decision. There is a clear goal, which must be achieved now. Good agreements must be made to achieve the goal.

4. Organisation and control

We are mutually dependent on each other. Everyone has his task and role, and will act accordingly. Each group member has confidence in the other. Tasks are distributed well, problems are solved spontaneously.

Checklist for group leaders

| Leader moves away from: | Leader moves toward: |
|--|--|
| 1. Being impersonal, "in role" | 1. Being personal, non-role |
| 2. Selecting my behaviors because they are helpful or therapeutic (a role prescription) | 2. Responding to my current feelings and perceptions (showing my self) |
| 3. Focus upon relations between role and role (leader and member; member and member) | 3. Focus upon relations between persons and persons |
| 4. Responding to what patients or members seem to need (programming) | 4. Responding to how I see and feel about my relationships now (being spontaneous) |
| 5. Screening my responses and modeling appropriate, relevant, helpful, role, or professional aspects of self | 5. Minimal screening but sharing all areas of self, however relevant or professional they may seem to me to be |
| 6. Responding to the other as a client, patient, member, or person needing help | 6. Responding to the other as a unique person, qua person |
| 7. Concern for changing, curing, or remedying the deficient individual | 7. Concern for growth and development of each of us in all of our relationships |
| 8. Being consistent with my theory of action, training, therapy or group growth | 8. Focus upon intuition, "gut feel" of what to do: following impulse |
| 9. Focus upon motives, interpretations, and other derivative, inferential, or role concepts | 9. Focus upon more available, direct, experienced and visible behavior |
| 10. Focus upon separate, autonomous individuals or entities, as entities | 10. Focus on relationships (on how it is now between or among us) |
| 11. Focus on abstraction, generality, or principle | 11. Focus on concrete, primitive and elemental feelings and perceptions |
| 12. Focus upon evaluative or moral judgments | 12. Focus on descriptive statements about feelings and perceptions |
| 13. Focus on and concern for then (other relationships in the past or future and on the past history of members) | 13. Focus on and concern for now (how each of us feels and sees things at this moment) |
| 14. Focus on and concern for there (data from other relationships and contexts) | 14. Focus on and concern for here (feelings and perceptions visible and available to all) |

| | |
|---|---|
| 15. Focus upon description of the passive self as a static being | 15. Focus upon description of the dynamic, in process, becoming organism/person |
| 16. Focus upon limitations of the person | 16. Focus upon strengths and growing edges of the person |
| 17. Focus upon punishment and rewards | 17. Focus upon flowing behaviors and feelings |
| 18. Focus upon legality, "contracts," norms, controls | 18. Focus upon flow, fluidity of temporary, self sustaining systems |
| 19. Focus upon the terminology of fear, risk, caution, and conservation | 19. Focus upon trust, venture, impulse, and liberation |
| 20. Focus upon words, semantics, and speech | 20. Focus upon non-verbal and body flow and organic integration |

Tools and how to use them with youngsters

In order to strengthen the group climate, there are many possible methodologies. Below you will find examples of methodologies you can use in your group.

Acquaintance

You can use these methodologies in a group whose members don't know each other yet or don't know each other well/long. By getting to know each other, not only by name, but also further, you discover similarities that make you view the other more positively. You also get to know each other's differences, which challenges you to broaden your outlook.

The methods are divided into 3 categories: presentation, identity and self-knowledge / self-confidence.

▪ Methodology presentation

The following methods are aimed at introducing oneself to the others, so that we get to know each other and in this way can build a first bond with each other.

Classic presentation

Start with a classic presentation in which everyone introduces themselves, this is especially useful for you as a teacher/youth worker, but also for the youngsters themselves if they do not know each other yet. Ask these things that are useful to know:

- Name
- Age
- School/Hobby
- ...

Optionally, you can add a fun or lighter question:

- You can spend a week with 1 person on an uninhabited island. Who would you like to be there with and why? (Or the COVID-19 version: you have to be quarantined, with 1 'hug buddy', who would that be and why?)
- What is your favourite cookie?
- In a group that already knows each other a bit: tell a fact about yourself that the others don't know yet.
- See the Internet for other fun questions.

Alternative presentation

Instead of, or on top of, a classic presentation, you can choose a more creative one. These specific examples are slightly more difficult, therefore more challenging, and above all, provide more empathy and recognisability towards each other, which ensures more connection with each other. You can find a lot of examples on the internet. A few suggestions:

- Divide the group into pairs. Have each pair get to know each other for 5 min. Then they introduce each other to the full group.
- All participants are given paper and pencil. They are given 10 minutes, in the form of a rebus or a drawing, to introduce themselves. Afterwards all drawings are hung on the wall. The participants now look at all the rebuses and try to write down as many solutions as possible.
- Have the youth bring an object that has specific meaning to them. One by one, have them explain which object it is, and why it is so important. Another option is to have the others guess who owns which object, or have them guess what it is and what it means.

These specific examples are slightly more difficult, therefore more challenging.

▪ **Methodologies identity**

The following methods go a step further and focus on the identity of persons. These methods aim at more empathy and understanding for each other, by becoming aware of similarities, what will lead to more sense of belonging in the group and thus a stronger sense of social cohesion.

I am...

Give each youngster a handout with 20 lines, providing space to insert 20 'I am ...' statements (see attachment). Without providing too many examples, ask each participant to individually complete the 20 statements using words that relate to their own selves. Allow participants roughly six minutes to complete the sheet by themselves, silently.

If they find it difficult to think of statements, give them a maximum of two examples (e.g., I am a woman, I am a sister), and tell them that anything is acceptable as long as they feel the terms describe them.

They can write sentences that include physical, social, psychological, or holistic self-descriptions. Physical self-descriptions would include 'I am 16', and 'I am tall'; social self-descriptions refers to groups, social roles or relationships (e.g., 'I am a member of a football team'). Psychological self-descriptors refer to personality traits such as 'I am kind'; whereas holistic descriptors may be vague characteristics, for example 'I am a person'.

When all youngsters are ready, read the following text aloud:

Now that you have written down 20 statements that you feel describe who you are, it is time to examine these statements further. The descriptions you have written down will generally fall into three categories: social roles, personality characteristics, and physical characteristics. Social roles are roles that are defined by your participation in a certain group or social context. For example, you have a different role when you participate in a quiz with your friends (team member, the music expert) than at school (homework supervisor, animator).

Depending on the group to whom you give this training, you can add more examples of social identities/ roles to make the task easier. The aim of this exercise is to make other social categorizations surface, not to strengthen the existing divisions; therefore, you should not explicitly mention ethnic and religious attributes because these will most certainly be brought up by the participants themselves.

Read on:

Even within different groups of friends you can have different roles. Personality characteristics are attributes that describe who you are and usually define how you behave, think and feel. Lastly, there is the category of physical characteristics, which is defined by one's outer appearance. Now that you know what these categories are, try to divide your statements into these categories. After each statement, write down 'social role', 'personality', or 'physical appearance'. Some statements may belong to more than one category. Do not put your name onto your sheet; instead, draw something on it, e.g., an abbreviation or a symbol, that will allow you to identify your sheet after handing it in.

A brief discussion follows. Discussion questions:

- Which category did most of your 'I am ...' statements fall into?
- Do you have one or more roles? How many roles did you find?
- Where there any 'I am ...' statements that were difficult to assign?
- What did you learn about yourself (about your identity) from this exercise?

If the exercise went well, ideally, the conclusion should be as follows: We have many social roles, and they form a large part of our identity. As a professional working with youngsters you often have a specific role that others expect from you.

In preparation for one of the following exercises, collect the sheets of the 20 participants' statements from the exercise "I am ..." and quickly select from them the statements that are both social roles and are likely to be shared by multiple participants; and are not ethnic and / or religious categories that divide and polarize society. To create and reinforce this sense of community, it is important to choose statements that engage multiple participants. The statements selected are not intended to reinforce feelings of diversity in the group.

The help of an assistant can be very helpful here. As you complete the previous exercise, the assistant can collect the sheets of twenty statements and quickly make a selection of the statements.

Similarities

Ask the participants to stand in a circle with their eyes closed. Then, the trainer in charge reads out selected statements, one at a time (see exercise "I am ..."). Inform the participants that when the statement applies to a member of the group, s/he should take two steps forward into the circle, forming a smaller inner circle. The participants in the inner circle are then given five seconds to open their eyes and silently greet and observe each other. All participants in the outer circle will have their eyes closed all the time. You should stress that eyes should be kept shut in order to allow for an environment that is as safe as possible, in which participants do not feel pressured when sharing personal experiences, beliefs, or opinions. After greeting their fellow participants, they return to the outer ring and close their eyes again. This entire process is repeated with the other statements.

The exercise can begin with simple statements about common physical attributes (e.g., gender or hair colour) and quickly proceed to social groups and roles (e.g., 'I am a youth worker) and possibly to more personally relevant details (e.g., 'I am from a divorced family'). Before concluding the exercise, ensure that all participants have at least one shared identity/ role with others so that everybody has stepped in the middle.

After the exercise, a discussion follows with the questions below.

Get the chair

The group sits in a circle on a chair, with one participant standing in the centre. The trainer reads out a trait from the list you selected after the exercise "I am ...". Everyone who has the same quality must now change places. The player standing in the centre tries to sit on a chair. The person who cannot sit in a chair should now stand in the centre after which a trait is read out again.

You can do this a number of times, preferably until everyone has been addressed in the shared characteristics.

Sit on your lap

This exercise works in the same way as the previous one, including physical contact. This is certainly not possible with every group, so think carefully whether your youngsters are open to this. This exercise can only be done if there are no social distancing rules for Covid-19.

Have all participants sit on a chair in the circle. Read 1 of the characteristics that you selected from the exercise "I am ...". If a participant has the trait, he / she gets up and sits on the chair to his right. If someone is sitting there, he will sit on their lap. If a participant meets the following characteristic and someone is sitting on their lap, they will move with them. Does that lap sitter also have that quality? Then it pushes an extra chair.

Discussion

Discuss the following questions together:

- How did it feel?
- What did you learn about the other participants?
- What did you learn about yourself (about your identity) from this exercise (s)?
- Were there any surprises?

If the exercise (s) went well, the participants should feel that they have a lot in common with their peers. The sense of belonging in the group should be strengthened.

▪ Methodologies self-knowledge/self-confidence

Have you ever done something stupid?

To most of us it happens from time to time that we do something stupid that we may regret afterwards. When we look back at these actions we often think that we 'should have known better' and that it was obviously wrong or stupid to have done it in the first place.

Give the youngsters the next assignment:

Try to think of one (or three) situation(s) in which you or one of your friends did something like that. For example, posting something on social media, trying to show off and failing badly, doing something irresponsible, shouting at someone, throwing something at one's brother/sister, telling a small lie that backfired, being stubborn even if you were completely wrong, hurting a friend in the heat of the moment, being mean to someone, etc. If you cannot think of any situations about yourself, try to come up with a situation about someone you know, such as your friends, your family, but not a member of this group.

Individually, they write down situations in which they did something stupid. If time allows, they can be asked to share some instances of their behaviors with the group (however, this is also part of the discussion that follows).

Alternative ways in which you can conduct the activity:

- Depending on the age of the youngsters, adjust the examples of the 'stupid things'. For older participants, examples may include drinking too much alcohol or not revising for an exam. For younger participants, examples could refer to saying something mean about a person or taking something from someone.
- To model and increase trust, provide them with some personal disclosure. For instance, when I was a teenager one of my class mates was throwing a party – and as I was the youngest in class, I was the only one who was supposed to be home at midnight. Obviously, I didn't leave on time. My friend and I were having fun, drinking our very first beers; in a nutshell: I was having the time of my life – but when I entered the house my mother welcomed me with the words: I am not angry but I am very disappointed. I was worried mindlessly – why didn't you call? - ... and I truly didn't know what to say.

Discussion of the exercise

Guide the discussion by posing the questions below; use non-verbal communication to stimulate answers and avoid lengthy or off-topic speeches. At the end, you can summarise the results by paraphrasing the points that participants have raised in correspondence with the goals of this exercise.

Discussion questions for the activity

- Did you manage to come up with situations?
- What kind of 'stupid' actions could you come up with?
- In what kind of circumstances did 'something stupid' happen?
- Did you/the other person consider your behavior or reaction before acting?
- Were you or the person involved experiencing strong emotions at the time?
- Were you alone or with other people?
- If you were with other people, were you pressured by them? If so, could you have said 'no'?
- Did you realize that back then?
- Did you optimistically hope that 'everything would be fine in the end'?
- In hindsight, do you think that you were pushing your luck?

The ideal result of the discussion would be that participants realize that it is common to do something regrettable. It happens more often when one is drunk, under time pressure, driven by strong emotions or in the company of other people; in a nutshell: if one is not mindful. If this lack of mindfulness occurs in the company of others, this may also be due to the fact that one takes on a different role; regarding the party example: I was at the party in my role as a friend as class mate who did not want to be left out, in my role as a teenager, who was having the time of her life; however, when my mother told be 'I am not angry but disappointed', I honestly did not know how to think of an answer as I was standing there in my role as a daughter who truly did not want to make my mother suffer.

Elevator pitch (15')

Put the youngsters in pairs, and tell them that they need to find out as much as possible about each other's dream job: what precisely is it that you are studying, what do you think is the added value of your study, what would you like to do as a job, give an example to each other about a situation in which you achieved your goal, or a situation of which you afterwards felt you really did something in line of your dream job. If necessary, have them write down some things about each other.

Afterwards you give a brief explanation of what an elevator pitch is:

Elevator pitch

The term "elevator pitch" comes from America and originated because in the big cities you often step in the elevator together with a stranger. In a short, powerful presentation you present yourself, to convince your audience that you are the right person for the job, or that your idea is the best, that it is interesting to know you, or ...

The content of an elevator pitch can therefore vary enormously per function and situation, but the structure remains the same:

- *Who you are: study, training ...*
- *What do you do: work experience, way of working*
- *What do you have to offer: successful projects, way of working*
- *What benefits do you bring: special qualities or skills, unique characteristics*
- *What you are looking for: what you want to achieve, what is important to you*

End with a question to make contact or to start the conversation.

Also look for a catchy opening line that immediately draws the attention.

Usually 1 minute is used as a guideline, but this often depends on the situation, you can also make it shorter or longer, but 2 minutes is seen as the absolute maximum.

The intention is that the participants briefly prepare an elevator pitch about their partner, who this person is and why this person is good at what he does.

This exercise allows us to reflect on our own work and fulfilment, and as the other person makes the pitch, how that other person sees us. Through this approach (elevator pitch, sales pitch), this brings out the positive qualities seen by others, which boosts self-confidence. It also gives the participants information about a technique that they can use in other situations (job application...).

Powerful hand-drawing

Have the participants draw a picture of their hands (outline). Then ask to write or draw something that they are good at with each finger, for example an activity (playing football, babysitting little children, gaming...) or a quality (caring, helpful, listening ear, creative...).

Have them give a concrete example for each activity / trait.

Then discuss the result together, at least 1 activity / characteristic of each person.

Group evaluation

You can use the methods below to evaluate and foster the group atmosphere at the same time. You will learn how the youngsters feel in the group and / or how they see their own place and / or that of others in the group. In this way you gain insight into what they see and feel, whether there are any problems and you can apply other methodologies in a targeted manner.

Blob tree

This exercise can be used in several ways:

- Individually if you see that someone is not feeling well, to start a conversation
- As a team building in a group, to see what we are like as a group, how everyone feels within the group, who takes which role ...
- In case of problems in the group, such as conflicts, exclusion,...

Give each youngster the drawing of the Blob tree (see appendix). This tree represents our group and all group members. There are then two options:

- Have the youngsters colour the Blob they most identify with (and ask to reflect on why they choose this one)
- Give each youngster the name of another one (your left neighbour, draw names, alphabetically the next one...) and let them choose and colour a Blob for him/her: how do you see that person in the group?

Do a debriefing in the group:

- Which Blob did you choose?
- Why do you choose this Blob for yourself / the other?
- What does this Blob look like? What does it feel? Where is it and why? What other blobs does it come with?

You can repeat this exercise regularly, to see how the group is developing, whether people feel different in the group after a certain period of time, or whether this may depend on the type of activity you are undertaking with the group.

Car mechanic

Give each participant a large drawing of a car with the different parts clearly visible. Each participant fills in the name of another participant (and himself!) for each part.

Elements that can be used: brake, engine, gear, heating, lights, seat belt, wheels, fuel, ...

Discuss afterwards by looking at who entered which name where:

- Who is the engine of the group?
- Who's on the brakes now and then?
- Who brings enlightenment and new insights?
- Who provides the atmosphere (eg indoor lighting, heating ...)
- ...

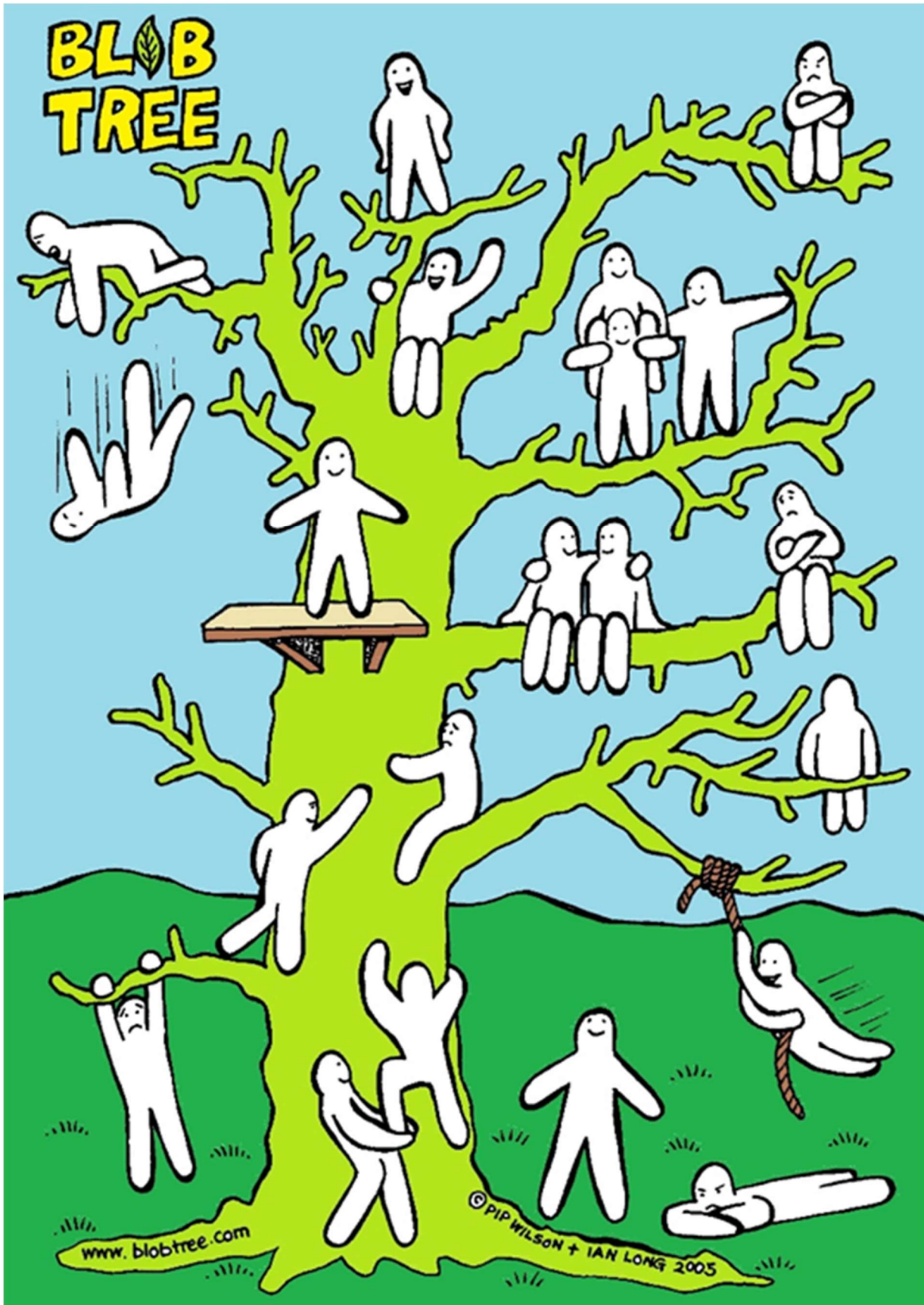
Attachments

I am... - statements

Complete the "I am ..." statements in terms that describe you. All wording is good if you think it describes you.

1. I am
2. I am
3. I am
4. I am
5. I am
6. I am
7. I am
8. I am
9. I am
10. I am
11. I am
12. I am
13. I am
14. I am
15. I am
16. I am
17. I am
18. I am
19. I am
20. I am

Blob tree



(www.blobtree.com,2005)

The Tree: this is a place, a group or an organisation. It could be your family, a club, a group of friends, a church, a school, an office, a football team, a group that travel by bus, a set of friends on msn, the latest panellists on 'Britain's Got Talent', or even just yourself. By being a tree it doesn't restrict itself to a single place so it can be used in any context. There is a platform and a rope to swing on. What do they symbolise? They might represent safety, leadership, separation, fun or wastefulness? It depends upon how you feel as you look at them, and how you feel that day! Sometimes there is more than one tree, because the way other groups interact with us affects how our group feels.

The Blobs: these are a variety of characters expressing a variety of feelings. It's very important to use the name Blobs, rather than he or she, as they are not white males or females, but genderless and colourless. Ask questions such as, "How do you think this Blob feels?" or "Which Blob do you think is the saddest and why?" This neutral term includes everyone and keeps the Blob tool as open as possible. Members of your group may continue to ascribe gender to the Blobs, but as long as you set the lead, most of the group will adopt your expressions. The Blobs in the Tree are interacting too, as all groups do. They are also interacting with the Tree. They have placed themselves on the Tree, or are trying to get on the Tree. Their places are important to consider. Some people only feel able to select from the Blobs at the bottom of the Tree, whilst others tend to fly straight to the top! The selection of a Blob is a snap-shot of how that person is feeling at that very moment. Some people record a date next to the image to retain that for their work. In talking at a conference of educational psychologists, Ian discovered that many use the Blob Tree sheet as a visual assessment tool, recording their client's responses straight onto the sheet.

The Grass: under the Tree, and away from it, is the grass. It conveys being outside the Tree, a place where you might go after climbing out of the Tree. This isn't necessarily a negative place. After a youth group, a day at work or an evening out with one's family it is nice to retreat and relax away from the group dynamic. So the grass might simply be that – a place of respite. It can also be a place of opposition to what is going on in the Tree. As such, it is worth exploring what people mean when they say, "I want to be on the grass". The proximity to the Tree is worth noting as again it gives clues as to how people are feeling at that moment in time.



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