



THEATRE TOGETHER

Thinking, dreaming and laughing through theatre

Exercises for children and youth

1. Acknowledgements

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3. Facilitating sessions



3.1. Introduction

This manual is composed of drama games that are designed for children and youth. Drama games are essentially activities that are built in the theater, but when you step beyond the acting space, these games can help participants develop a myriad of skills that come in handy as they learn their ABCs and 123s. Here's just a taste of what participants will get out of a few drama games:

- Ability to project their voice
- Confidence
- Coordination
- Concentration
- Teamwork abilities
- Focus
- Ability to think quickly
- Vocabulary development

Some of the games included in the manual invite participants to explore oppression through the theatre of the oppressed methodology. However most of the exercises invite participants to have fun while developing these skills.

3.2. Target

The main target population for the training is children, adolescents and youth aged 9 to 22. However, some of the topics can also be used in sessions with adults. An indication on the appropriate age for participants will be proposed for each exercise. The manual will start with those adapted to all and end with those only adapted to youth.

3.3. General rules for participants

At the beginning of the session, explain the following ground rules:

- Please inform us if someone has any problem in being touched and explain how you are ready to interact in terms of physical contact.

- If you think something is funny, it is OK to laugh. If you like something a lot, applaud. This will let the performers know you are enjoying the show.
 - Do not judge fellow participants. Everyone has the right to try acting!
 - Do not talk, whisper, sing, or hum during the performance. That will distract both other audience members and the actors. Overtures are part of performances.
 - Do not eat during exercises.
 - Do not litter. Whatever you bring into the room, please bring it out with you.
 - Do not leave in the middle of a scene/exercise. Even more than arriving late, this distracts other participants and actors.
 - At the end of the show/exercise, applaud if you had a good time. Applause is how you say thank you to the performer. The actors will bow as you applaud. That is how they say thank you for coming.
 - Please avoid taking pictures/videos during sessions as we are trying to focus on human exchange. If this is done exceptionnally, make sure participants are ok with it.
- If necessary, remind participants of the rules throughout the sessions.

3.4. Inclusion of people with disability

People with disability may be included as part of the workshop. If so, at the introduction, make sure to tell participants that it is every group member's role to be inclusive. You may as well ask the person with disability how others can best practically include him/her. There is a large variety of exercises in this manual, which allows to select those that can include everyone.

If a participant is visually impaired, make sure to keep exercises that can include him. Some of those which are visual, can be adapted, by other participants describing what they see, which can be a good exercise itself.

Youth with partial visual or hearing impairment in class may be given the possibility to sit in the front.

For people with hearing impairment:

- Make sure your face is visible and in the light.
- Speak clearly and don't shout.
- Try to reduce background noise.
- Try writing your message down or texting on your phone if you're struggling.
- Use gestures and facial expressions and don't give up!

The building should be accessible for people with physical impairment.

3.5. Facilitator

Ideally, the facilitator(s) should already have active listening skills. To use the manual, the facilitator should as well have an effective comprehension of DO NO HARM principles. This is particularly important when using Forum theatre techniques, as if not used properly, they could lead to unnecessary psychological distress of participants when addressing sensitive topics.

The facilitator(s) should have attended a workshop to introduce the manual, as to understand the exercises well. In this case, he/she might not need to be a theatre professional.

The sessions may be conducted by 2 facilitators as to make it dynamic.

3.6. General practice

The facilitator should:

- Prepare exercises in advance.
- Be non-judgmental, inclusive and gender-sensitive.
- Be able to encourage participants to respect each other.
- Allow participants to feel comfortable.
- Be dynamic so as to keep the interest of the children/youth.
- Apply principles of active listening

When addressing sensitive topics, you may encounter situations when a participant expresses something difficult he/she might have gone through. Use your judgement to find out if the person needs to elaborate. You may ask him/her to tell you what he/she is trying to express alone or with the rest of the group present in the room. In this context, apply active listening:

- Re-state what has been said to show you understand
- Nod or use facial expression or gestures to encourage the person to say more or to let them know you understand
- Value the person's strengths
- Find the real feelings behind the story and body language
- Avoid interruptions or distractions
- Be patient. Give time to the person
- Be a trustworthy person who keeps secrets
- Do not blame
- If a person is expressing a problem, do not give advice or solutions, instead, listen to the solution of the person



Most importantly, if you are not a qualified counsellor, keep in mind that you are not in position to act as a therapist. You are not supposed to tell a child/youth to act traumatic events that happened to him/her, such as war events, physical or sexual violence. But if he/she starts talking about it or using art to express a situation, you may be an active listener and show empathy. In other words, don't push a person to talk about a traumatic event, but if someone does, be a good listener. If you feel the person needs to see a counsellor, refer to the relevant professional. If protection matters that put the child/youth's current situation at risk are raised, follow your organization's safeguarding procedures.

4. Drama exercises for children/youth aged 7 to 22 years old



Introduction and applause

This exercise is a great way for participants to introduce themselves, get a non-frightening taste of being on stage. Either using a real door or an imaginary door, tell the group each participant will come up one by one, walk through the door to “enter” the stage, introduce themselves saying “Hi, my name is _____” and say one interesting thing about themselves such as “my favorite colour is blue” (you can add on more to the speech but don’t make it too long or complicated – the point is to give an incredibly easy task).

After each introduction, the audience will enthusiastically applaud as the student stays up on stage and takes in the applause.

Do NO coaching here – the point again is to let each student perform their introduction, with no criticism whatsoever. The only thing you CAN coach them on is waiting for the applause – don’t let them run off the stage before they take it in.

Yes, Let’s!

Initiate an action by saying something like, “Let’s bake a cake.” Pupils reply with, “Yes, let’s!” and then pretend to bake a cake.

Invite participants to shout out ideas too. For example, someone might shout, “Let’s wash a lion!”. Again, everyone replies “Yes, let’s!” and mimes washing a lion.

Continue the game like this, with no idea being too silly.

Guess emotions

Write a series of emotions on separate strips of paper. e.g. joy, confusion, sadness, anger, frustration, jealousy, hatred, love. Ask a volunteer to come to the front of the group and choose (without looking) one of the strips of paper. Ask them to act out the emotion they have chosen without using any words.

The remainder of the group have one minute to try to guess what emotion is being acted out.

Keep asking for volunteers until all the strips of paper have been used.

(If someone is visually impaired in the audience, the acting of the emotions may be replaced by a noise representing the emotion, with the volunteer turning his back to the audience to avoid facial expressions.)

Mirror Mirror

Participants break into pairs.

Allocate, or let participants decide who will be A, and who will be B.

On the facilitator's signal, participant A begins to move very slowly.

Participant B has to copy the movement exactly as if they are the reflection Participant A sees in a mirror.

Continue for some time, and then swap, having Participant B lead Participant A.

Encourage participants to move slowly, with the aim being that anyone watching the pair wouldn't be able to tell who is leading the movement and who is following.

Human Knot

Working collaboratively is a foundational skill for life and drama participants too. This fun game helps participants to build awareness and understanding of group work and is a great way to introduce the concept of 'ensemble' (a group that works together to create).

Break participants into small groups (4-6 participants per group is a good start).

Participants form a circle in their group.

Walking to the centre with hands outstretched, participants each grab two hands (however, it cannot be the person next to them, nor can they grab both hands from the same person).

Participants 'untie' their human knot, without ever letting go of any hands.

When a group has finished untying their knot, the whole group sits down.

Encourage participants to work slowly and carefully, with an awareness of how their movements affect others in the knot. Some knots are easy to untie, and others take a lot of communication and negotiation!

Increase the complexity of this ensemble-building game by asking participants to complete it in silence, by making the number of participants in each group larger, or by trying to untie a whole class knot!

The Clown of Amsterdam

By pair. One person walks in front of the other. The one behind can make all the faces he/she wants as long as he/she is not "pinched" when the first turns around. If he/she is caught red-handed, then the roles are exchanged. And so on for a while!

Grandma's footsteps

Someone is the grandma (or grandpa) who stands at the far end of the room, with their back turned to the rest of the group. The rest of the group stands at the opposite end of the room in a line. The idea is that they have to sneak up on grandma/grandpa. But at any point, the grandma/grandpa can turn around. When they do, everyone has to freeze! Whoever is the grandma/grandpa says 1,2,3 then says anything such as "a cat" or "a dead man" or "a bicycle". And turns around! Those who advance must take the statue of the proposed word! The first to arrive takes the place of the grandma/grandpa.

Memberships

Walk briskly, using all available space, relaxed, without going in circles. At the signal (clap hands), regroup according to the announced criteria. Start with simple and obvious, even harmless criteria:

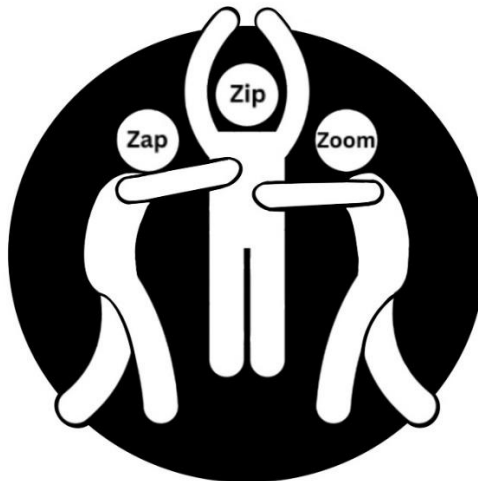
- Form groups of 2/3/5
- Form 1 square and 1 triangle/ 1 circle and 1 rectangle...
- Group by colour of pants/shoes/sweater
- By eye colour

It is also possible to ask to form a continuous series: length of hair, alphabetical order of first names, etc.

Then continue with more complex notions:

- By place of residence/place of birth
- According to your religion
- Or focus on a specific theme.

5. Drama exercises for children/youth aged 11 to 22 years old



Balls and names

In a circle. Pass the ball to the neighbour on the right (without throwing it) by saying my name. When the ball is back at the facilitator, pass a ball around by throwing it to anyone in the circle: look the recipient in the eyes, then throw the ball to them, saying the recipient's name. If I forgot it, ask him before throwing the ball and saying the name.

Can I take your place?

In a circle, the facilitator is the only one in the middle. He approaches a person and addresses them by their first name: "Hello X, can I take your place?". And X replies: "Of course Y!". Y takes the place of X, which goes in the middle. X then approaches another person and makes the same request. So it goes until the group has memorized all the names.

Zip, Zap, Zoom

Speaking of zaps, "Zip, Zap, Zoom" is another great collaborative game that teaches focus. Participants "pass the energy" around a circle, using action and a variety of vocal commands. In the traditional game, participants stand in a circle and send the energy around the circle saying either Zip, Zap, or Zoom.

"Zip" sends the energy in a clockwise direction

"Zap" sends the energy in an anti-clockwise direction

"Zoom" sends the energy to someone across the circle

Every command is done with an action, the easiest being to clap and point to the person the energy is being sent to. You can choose to eliminate those who fail or not.

Twenty-One

“Twenty-one” is one of those drama games that get even the most fidgety of participants concentrating with laser focus.

Sitting in a circle, participants attempt to count to 21 in a random order, without two or more people speaking at the same time. One person begins by saying “one”, then another person says “two.”

Continue the group count until you reach twenty-one. If more than one person says a number at the same time, the count begins again.

Miss Mamboleo

Ask the group to form a circle.

Explain to the group that we are all looking for Miss Mamboleo.

Start yourself by asking your neighbour: ‘I am looking for Miss Mamboleo. Have you seen her?’ But while talking, you cannot show your teeth! So, while speaking, everybody has to hide their teeth (by putting their lips over their teeth)

Instruct that neighbour to answer: ‘No I haven’t seen her. But let me ask my neighbour’ (check if the neighbour is not showing teeth!)

She or he will then turn to his/her neighbour to ask for Miss Mamboleo using the same lines. The neighbour will answer with the same lines, etc. Until the message has gone around and has come back to you.

Tell the participants that most of the time, people speak to each other with a certain emotion. We will now try this with different emotions. Now, repeat the exercise while imagining that everyone is desperate to find Miss Mamboleo. That despair is to be seen and heard in the way you ask where Miss Mamboleo is. It should start slowly with the first participant showing a slight sign of the emotion, and it should grow from neighbours to neighbours. When it reaches to the last child, the emotion has to be as strong as possible!

Again, now in a happy way (e.g. because there is great news for Miss Mamboleo). Try some emotions.

Pass the Sound

In a standing circle, pass a “whoosh” around the circle. This is done by saying “whoosh!” and throwing your hands toward the person next to you.

After it goes around a couple times stop the “Whoosh!” and send a “Bing!” going the opposite way, using a different hand gesture.

Now tell the kids they need to put their focus caps on, because you’re going to send a “Whoosh!” going one direction, then a “Bing!” going the opposite direction.

At some point they of course will overlap over one student so that student needs to be prepared.

Try this out a few times. If they’re up for it, try adding in a 3rd layer, “Ooga!”.

Greetings

This is a fun, simple ice breaker to play with a new group. Helps to get the kids interacting, make choices, and act a little silly in front of each other. Appropriate for young and older kids.

1. Ask the students to walk around greeting each other.
2. At first allow them to do this however they feel comfortable (probably with a handshake or a waive).
3. Then, ask the players to greet each other in a specific way. Encourage them to continue walking around the room, greeting different people each time. Here are some options:
 - Greet someone like you don't really trust them.
 - Greet someone like they are a long-lost friend.
 - Greet someone like they have really bad breath.
 - Greet someone like you have a crush on them.
 - Greet each other with a random, made-up language (gibberish). The person receiving the greeting should respond in the same fashion.
 - Greet someone like you are a soldier.
 - Greet someone like you are a businessperson very late to a meeting.
 - Greet someone like an elderly person who desperately wants someone to talk to.

Body Sculpture Olympics

Also known as "10 Second Object", this activity gets participants to use their bodies to create freeze frames (like a real-life frozen image) that depict an object or a situation. Use this activity to talk about how we can communicate meaning through movement.

Break participants into small groups.

Call out an object or scenario (such as the market, on a boat, football game, etc.)

Count down from ten to zero.

While you are counting down, participants have to create the object, character, or situation using their bodies.

When you reach zero, shout "Freeze!"

Give each group a thumbs up or thumbs down depending on if they have represented the stimulus in a way that makes sense.

Continue, keeping the pace up to ensure participants are engaged and thinking on their feet!

You can decide on a "scoring" method that feels right for you (such as giving scores out of ten or choosing one winner per round), or you may prefer not to "score" at all, and just use the activity as a confidence and group awareness building exercise.

The rhythm machine or Tinguely machine

A person starts. She puts herself in the centre of the space and offers a rhythm and a sound that she makes repetitively. Then, gradually, one after the other, the other people come to fit into this proposal like complementary parts of this machine that is taking shape. The facilitator can then suggest that the machine speed up, for example, until it explodes or, on the contrary, slow down until it falls asleep completely.

The balloon

Each player chooses a number from 1 to 10 discretely. They walk around the room. When the animator calls the number, the player falls down as if he/she is an empty balloon, and others have to rescue him so that he/she doesn't fall.

Yes with the eyes

In a circle, player A and B cross eyes. A obtains approval from B just through their eyes in silence to take his/her place. Then A goes to B. Right at this moment, B tries to cross another person's eyes to obtain his/her approval and take his/her place before A reaches him/her. When he/she gets approval from C then he/she moves to C before A reaches him/her and so on.

Hypnosis

By pair. One person puts their hand, palm open, about ten centimetres from the other person's face. The latter fixes a point inside this hand and must follow it wherever it goes while keeping the same distance between its face and the hand of the hypnotist. The person leading must symbolise oppression. After a first experiment, the roles are reversed. At the end of the exercise ask them how it felt for the oppressor and the oppressed? Was there some resistance from the oppressed? Did the oppressor adapt?

The glued paper

Collective variant of hypnosis. A person in the centre. Each in turn aims for a point on the person in the centre or on another already "stuck" to that person. The instruction is to stay in constant contact with this point and to keep the same distance between your face and this point (as in the exercise of hypnosis) whatever happens.

The bomb and the shield

In a group, in a room clear of any obstacle. Walk around in the space without going around in circles, while the facilitator gives the instructions: everyone secretly (it is important not to tell) chooses one person to be their bomb and another to be their shield. At the clap, but not before, everyone will protect themselves from their bomb and position themselves so that their shield is always between themselves and their bomb.

The blind sculptures

By pair. A person closes their eyes. The other sculpts itself and remains motionless. The person with his eyes closed comes to touch this sculpture and with his/her hands tries to see how it is carved. When he/she thinks he/she knows, he/she reproduces herself, always with her eyes closed, this sculpture. When he/she is finished, he/she opens his/her eyes and compares with the "real" sculpture.

Self-sculptures for three

Form groups of three or four depending on the number. In each group, each person takes a number: 1, 2, 3 or 4. The number 1 comes into the space to sculpt itself. He remains frozen until number 2 has reacted to his proposal by coming to sculpt himself too. When number 2 is frozen, number 1 can go. Number 3 then reacts to number 2's proposal, and so on without stopping for a while. Once the principle is understood, we can propose a theme: for example, moving towards more power, or more happiness.

The sculpture garden

This exercise is non-verbal and participants shouldn't talk.

By pair. One person is the sculpture, the other the sculptor. The sculptor sculpts the body of the other on a given theme. Every detail is important: facial expression, look, etc. Since we can't speak, while modelling, the sculptor can sculpt himself to show what he wants. When the sculptor has finished his work, he moves away from it. When all the sculptors have finished their work, they then can visit the "sculpture garden".

Then, the sculptors seek to create a collective sculpture with all these individual sculptures. Each sculptor only moves his sculpture, takes a step back, modifies again if necessary.

The facilitator then asks each sculpture to think, in its position, of a word, a sound, or a sentence as well as a gesture that it wishes to say/do. When the facilitator touches the sculpture, it expresses itself with gesture and sound, twice to follow. Then, at the very end, to the clap of the facilitator, all the sculptures say and act at the same time.

For the second stage of the work, the roles are reversed: the sculptor becomes sculpture, the sculpture becomes sculptor, and on another theme.

Dissociation

This exercise can be done by 2 or more people. Each person after the other has to say a word that has nothing to do with the one before. If there is a connection, the person has to go out of the group. For example: cat, medicine, house, green, grass-STOP (here green is associated with grass, so the game stops). You can do several rounds for a while.

Comment: Association is a normal process. The opposite is more difficult.

6. Drama exercises for children/youth aged 15 to 22 years old



6.1. Introduction to improvisation

We are going to have improvisation games now. Improvisation means people invent the story while on stage! Before doing the exercises, here are some important principles:

Accept!

The first principle of improvisation is to accept what others are proposing. Saying no would stop the action or slows it down. It is like saying to your partner: "your proposition is not interesting"... Yet improvisation goes fast and there is no time to lose.

So instead of a No, you may build on the others proposition...

Listen and watch!

Improvisation needs to keep attention on what is happening. If you are not listening or watching well, the scene is not likely to make sense!

Be a team player!

Be a team player! If you act with other people, you are not alone to have the responsibility of the play! You constantly need to keep in mind that it is as a team that you will find an interesting story to tell!

Don't anticipate

Anyone who tries to control the future of the story can only succeed in ruining it. The magic of improvisation is that it is created in the moment and together, too much anticipation will ruin group work or spontaneity.

Enjoy!

If there is no pleasure for the actor, it will be the same for the audience. There should be a good spirit between actors. If there is no enjoyment, you may not need to continue.

6.2. Improvisation Games

The scholars

Players are in one circle. One player may go to another and ask him a question. It may be a serious question or a fantasy one. Avoid personal questions. Focus on factual questions.

The other player has to respond seriously and pretend to know if he/she doesn't know. The answers have to be concise and straight to the point.

For example: Who scored the most goals in world cup 1954? Steven Owen, he scored 14 goals

Why do flies only lay eggs at night? Because the temperature is an average between the lower and the higher temperature of the day.

Oooh-Aaah

Players are in a circle. One player goes to another player, makes a sound and a movement. The other player has to repeat the same sound and movement. Then he/she goes to another player and makes another sound and movement... and so on.

The goaler

One person is placed in front of the group. Each group member will interact with him while they imagine him as what they want. That person will have to react accordingly. Once everyone has passed, we change the person in front. Each interaction should be fast as not to spend too much time on the exercise.

For example: Gentleman I'd like a cup of tea please? Then the player in front has to come and give the tea: Here is your tea sir...

What are you doing?

Players are in a circle. The first person mimes an action. For example he/she drives a car. The next person asks: "What are you doing?". He replies: "I am planting tomatoes". The action has to be different than the mime.

The imaginary ball

Players are in a circle. The facilitator calls a player: "Peter! I am sending you the yellow ball!" The other player replies: "Thank you for the yellow ball" and sends it to someone else, and so on. The facilitator may send balls of other colours, or anything else like objects for example "Mary I am sending you a cow!".

Note: this exercise requires observation and concentration.

Yes, plus!

A player is in front of the group. The group asks him to act an emotion. The player has to act it. After that, the group says: “more, more, more”, and the player has to intensify the emotion to the maximum. After the player is done, another one plays.

Seller

The player has to convince the rest of the group to buy his product, with any technique that he/she may find. After he’s done, he explains what he/she tried to do.

Anthology

Each participant has to improvise in front of the others for 30 seconds about a word/theme proposed by the facilitator. In general, simplicity and body language are more efficient than text.

The expert

The group proposes a topic. The player has 2 minutes to give a monologue on the topic and demonstrate his/her level of expertise on it. If he/she hesitates, he/she’s replaced!

Gibberish

Two players are given a situation and they have to act it in a language invented in the moment.

Note: this technique is particularly useful as it pushes actors to learn how to tell stories and express their meaning by thinking and physically expressing it. The facilitator may encourage participants not to mime everything they say.

The translator

A player is telling a story using an imaginary language. Another person is translating to the rest of the group.

Gibberish couch party

Players write down a joke in their invented language (gibberish) on a piece of paper. Participants will sit on a couch for an evening with friends. One after the other, each one says his/her joke in gibberish which release a big laughter within the group.

Political gibberish

Alone, in front of others, one player makes a political statement in his/her invented language (gibberish). The group reacts as one.

The interpreter

An expert gives a conference in gibberish (invented language), illustrated by translations from an interpreter. As he/she speaks, the interpreter listens. When he/she stops, the interpreter translates with words straight away, without thinking. The expert doesn't have to mime what he/she says, as the purpose is not to guess, but to be creative.

Motionless

Two actors take 30 seconds to decide the theme of their scene (Who, where, what). As the scene evolves, their gestures and movements rarefy until they become motionless while continuing to talk.

Note: Motionless doesn't mean being completely fixed. Rarefaction of movements and stopping the agitation creates a tension that makes the scene more interesting. Also, the absence of movement pushes actors to emphasize on their communication.

Back from holidays

Two players sit face to face: a leader and a storyteller. The leader conducts the discussion, and the storyteller talks about what interesting things happened during the holidays. The leader has to make sure to fade away and do anything to make sure that the attention is on his/her partner by making him/her speak.

Parallel stories

Two players talk at the same time and tell each other stories. After a few minutes, each player tells the story of the other (or what he/she remembers).

Listening arguments

Two players decide on a subject of controversy. They debate in the manner of a tennis game.

Note: Don't talk louder than your partner, think about the rhythm.

Where game

The player enters the stage and moves around acting without sound that he/she's in a specific location. Whenever another player understands where the first player is pretending to be, he/she enters the stage and acts accordingly. Both don't use words and should manipulate objects specific to the location.

Yes and

After the first statement between two players, the next one has to continue with another statement starting with "Yes and": For example:

-Night is clear!

- Yes and upon our heads we see the stars
- Yes and below our feet stones squeak
- Yes and our feet are like glowy warms
- Yes and the door of the cemetery just closed...

It is important not to say statement that contradict the previous ones, so that we build on what the person before said.

Note: This is a very good exercise to introduce improvisation. It trains listening and building on the others' proposition.

Happy birthday

Player A gives an imaginary present wrapped in a box to player B. Player B opens it and manipulates it. Then he/she thanks player A. B proposes a new present to player C.

It's Tuesday

This exercise is about exaggeration and is played between two persons. One player proposes a banality such as "It is Tuesday". Then the next player will have to elaborate a story on this with exaggeration, for example: "Wonderful! It is the first Tuesday of the second half of the century. My whole life, I dreamed about this Tuesday. It is ...'s birthday..." and then it has to end again with a statement that is on a lower statement, such as "I don't find my hat", The other person has to be overly reacting to this fact, such as "How wonderful is this? It will make your spirit free..." and then ends with a lower statement such as "and the alarm clock rings", on which the next player has to react overwhelmingly and so on...

One sentence each

Players have to improvise a scene. They are allowed to only say one sentence before anyone else speaks.

Dubbing

Each player is dubbed by someone else sitting by the stage. The persons that do the dubbing have to adapt the text to the movements and actions of the players on the stage. The players try to stick the movement of their lips to what is being said. 4 people participate.

The painting

A first player positions himself/herself as a statue on the stage, trying to represent something. One after the other, other players join him, trying to represent something as if it was a picture or a painting, according to what they perceive is the theme represented by the other(s).

Emotion jump

During an improvisation, players have to change their mood/emotion according to indication of the animator. Changes are fast and the players have to keep the coherence of the story. The animator may first indicate a situation (at school, at the supermarket, at the bank,...), then the mood to start with, which will change: joy, anger, fear, admiration, adoration, aggressiveness, bitterness, alcoholism, altruism, love, ambition, anxiety, arrogance, authoritarianism, sorrow, anger, condescension, courage, fear, cruelty, curiosity, cynicism, disdain, depression, distraction, heartbreak, despair, devotion, discretion, elegance, self-centeredness, enthusiasm, envy, cheerfulness, weakness, fatigue, flattery, embarrassment, generosity, hatred, hesitation, shame, humility, hypocrisy, patience, intolerance, jealousy, lying, laughter, sensuality, pity, tenderness, timidity, susceptibility, passion, submission... When improvisation gets stuck, change the emotion!

Moment of crisis

Two actors are in a crisis situation. Improvisation starts before the conflict. Example: car collision, finding husband with another woman, announcing a grave decision,... Give the participants one minute to discuss their story before they present it to the group.

Silent tension

Before the exercise, players decide on the location, characters and reasons of the conflict. Tension is so strong that players are unable to talk a single word. There must be no dialogue.

Examples: At the restaurant, two lovers breaking up; in the hospital room, son and daughter in law waiting for the death of the father...

One word at a time

Participants form a circle. The animator proposes a theme, and the group creates a story, each participant saying one word at a time.

Continuing story

The animator proposes a theme and designates a first player to start the narration. When the animator designates another person, that person has to continue the story exactly where the previous player left it, even if it was at the middle of a sentence. If the sequencing was not perfect, meaning that the new person is not continuing the story or is just repeating what was said, the exercise restarts with a new theme.

In bulk

Participants are sitting in a circle, with eyes closed. On a proposed theme, they make, in one minute, a list of sensations, images, memories evoked by the theme. They appeal to their imagination and sensory memory. For example if the facilitator says “*fire*”, participants, one person at a time, may say: “*smoke, barbecue, red, yellow, burn, camping with my friends, hot, warm, beautiful, dangerous, charcoal...*”

Slow motion commentary

One player makes a move, while another one is commenting it. The person improvising (moving), is very slow, while the animator is very fast. The contrast between the speed of the commentor and the slowness of the player should be visible. Whatever the role, the exercise is difficult. As for a sport commentary or royal wedding commentary, the commentator should not hesitate to give much information on the context, to play on breaks and speed variations.

Slide show

Three players have a theme to explore. One of them is the speaker. The two others have to adopt a pose illustrating the slide of the speaker.

Songmaker

The animator proposes a title of a song. The group acts as a choir and creates a background rhythm. The singer composes his/her song with the choir.

Animal evolution

It is a social gathering. People enter one after the other. During the gathering everyone transforms first himself/herself in an animal and then slowly become again human. The players take their time during the two transformations without getting out of the improvisation.

Tribes

The animator asks improvisers to recreate a day in the jungle, from sunrise to sunset. Players can be human or animals. The animator announces times of the day. The exercise can take 10 minutes as it can take 2 hours.

Opera

The players improvise a situation where everything is sang.

Honey walk

Players move around the room, while keeping some distance from each other. The animator takes them in different experiences that appeal to their imagination. He/she conducts them to walk in water, on the ice. He/she makes them feel the cold wind of night, the humid hit of jungle. He/she makes them hear the wolfs or some guitar played from a café (always imaginary). It appeals to sensory imagination.

Statue

Players in the room move around. The animator will tell images that they have to represent straight away as they freeze as a statue. It can be something conceptual as something very concrete (peace, anger, a gardener, a giraffe...)

Letter of the alphabet

By two, players have to represent a letter of the alphabet in less than 5 seconds.

No "I" neither a question

Players have a conversation on a specific topic. They avoid saying "I" or asking questions. The "I" interrupts the flow of the conversation and does not build on a common experience. By avoiding the question, we are encouraging players to propose and be confident in their ideas, rather than slowing the story by asking the other the next step.

The unusual voice

The animator or other group members give a situation/a topic and ask the players to use an unusual voice, such as talk like a car, a river, an electric guitar, a flute, a national anthem, a demonstration, a bird, a little cat, with an echo, a language or an accent.

Let's go to the bank

Participants are on the stage. One of the players announces his/her location: "Let's go to the bank!". The other players illustrate the proposed location: counter, the line, the cash machine, the security hall, the surveillance camera,... The location takes life and improvisors start acting.

Because circle

One player is in the middle of the circle. Other participants tell him/her affirmations. He/she has to justify these affirmations by "yes... because...".

- "You are tired!" / "Yes... because I travelled the whole night in a full bus".

- "You have a hole in your shirt" / "Yes because I fell in a bush full of thones".

This exercise helps someone work on affirming himself/herself, train someone's ability to justify oneself without being destabilized, responding in a specific manner.

Psychotic rant

One player proposes a trite statement. His/her partner reacts crescendo until complete paranoia. Example: "There are no more oranges." Then, the other could respond "Why didn't you think about it earlier? If we don't have oranges, our meal will be boring. We will not have a nice dessert. We shall remain with a bad taste in our mouth. We shall lose taste for life and remain depressed our whole life, or even loose taste for food and starve!"

7. Forum Theatre



7.1. What is Forum Theatre?

As part of the sessions developed, facilitators have the possibility to use forum theatre with youth. It can be used on every topic addressed in the manual, before or after the exercises. It can be tailored according to the context in which it is used.

Forum theatre is an interactive technique part of the Theatre of the oppressed, developed by Augusto Boal in Brasil. Forum Theatre performances present short plays which show a situation that needs to be changed. After it is played a first time, audience members are invited to replace an actor on stage and try to change the situation, while the performance is played again. Other actors respond by adapting their character, maintaining or adjusting their oppressive or exploitative power in relation to what has been changed. Forum Theatre provides a means for testing solutions in action. The audience makes and evaluates all choices.

The below steps are an adaptation of Forum theatre proposed to explore it with youth. The steps can be adapted according to the audience and the context in which it is used. For instance, using it with youth in detention with limited time may need to use a simplified version, which can still be useful and relevant.

7.2. Main steps

Quick scene creation

1-- **Sharing stories:** The participants in pairs, for 5 minutes each, tell an anecdote to their neighbour related to a situation of oppression they have experienced, witnessed or heard of. The neighbour should then tell the story to the rest of the group as if he/she had experienced it himself/herself. The facilitator writes on the board the sub-themes described.

2-- **Creation of groups:** The facilitator invites the group members to choose the sub-theme that interests them and on which they will work, and groups are formed.

3-- **Discussion:** Each group discusses the topic and decides on a more specific situation that they would like to talk about. The situation should end badly.

4-- **Create an image:** Participants are invited to create an image that should represent their situation topic, without any movement or noise, and show it to the other participants, who will be asked to identify what they see.

5-- **Create a short scene:** The participants create a scenario lasting a maximum of 5 minutes that addresses the theme. It can be inspired by experiences, but must be a new story (to prevent a situation involving students in the class from being acted out and creating discomfort). The scenes should be developed in a way to have most of the characters playing altogether, so as to create leverage for replacement. The scenario must end badly, so as to have room for improvement through experimenting solutions by acting.

6-- **Distribute and define the characters:** each participant, possibly with the help of the other members of the group and the facilitator, further refines the motivations of his character (needs, values), the issues, the strategies, the tactics used... This is an important step as when the scene will be played a second/third time, the characters will have to adapt realistically. It is not a must that everyone acts: people who do not take on roles help others clarify scenes by offering an outside perspective and ideas. The role of the facilitator will be key in helping participants to approach the different facets of their character so that they are able to bounce back during the presentation of their scene, as this exercise can be difficult for teenagers.

7-- **Rehearse:** Act out the scenario, within the group, rehearse and refine.

Presentation of the scene to the rest of the group

1-- Presentation of the scene to the rest of the group.

2-- The facilitator asks the public members what they saw and if they think any of the characters (other than the oppressor) could have reacted differently. Respondents from the public should not explain how they could have reacted differently, but they should play it directly. Students who volunteer join the scene by replacing a character or adding a new character.

3-- Second presentation of the whole scene.

4-- Feedback on the impressions of each on the course of the scene, how they felt and what they perceived of the situation. The facilitator, by reformulating, helps them express what they wanted to do through their intervention.

The facilitator asks the public if they think any of the actors (other than the oppressor) could have reacted differently. If so, they do not explain it by words, but they are invited to act it on stage, again by replacing or adding a new character.

5-- Third presentation of the whole scene.

6-- Feedback on the impressions of each on the course of the scene, how they felt and what they perceived of the situation. The facilitator, by reformulating, helps them to express what they wanted to do.

7-- All audience members are invited to express themselves on what happened, what they understood and what they retain.

7.3. Role of the facilitator

- The facilitator (who can also be called joker) must favour democratic debate and remain neutral (he/she should not give his own opinion): It is the public who evaluates each intervention (does it work? Do you agree with this proposition?), while questioning the relevance of propositions.
- The facilitator dynamizes the debate by avoiding discussions that are too long, by inviting the public to directly intervene in the scene.
- The facilitator always keeps in mind the central idea/topic.

7.4. Traps to avoid

- In order for forum theatre to function, there must be a clear link between the topic and the spectators who need to be able to identify to the actors.
- The scenario must end badly: we show mistakes committed in situations in order to stimulate research of good practice.

- Don't only use verbal language: also use visual actions that are symbolic and favour the clarity of the scene.
- The oppressor prevents the oppressed from obtaining what he/she want and has his own reasons for it. The play must show why he/she acts the way he/she does. This has to be well prepared while creating the scene, as the character will need to evolve in a realistic manner when the scene is replayed. It is important for the oppressor not to “crush” the spectator that comes to give a solution, but to allow him/her, to some extent, to gradually develop his/her idea.

8. Monitoring and evaluation questionnaires

8.1. Indication on questionnaires

Below are some questionnaires that can help monitor the impact of the activities on the psychosocial wellbeing of participants. The facilitator should make sure participants who might not be able to read/write are helped to fill the questionnaires. Ideally, they should be filled before (chapter 8.2) and after the activities (chapter 8.3), if minimum 5 sessions are to be given, as otherwise it would not be worth measuring the impact. But in some contexts where access is limited (such as detention facilities), the facilitator may only use the post-test designed for such circumstances (chapter 8.4). For children below 12, we recommend qualitative questions (chapter 8.5).

8.2. Pre-tests for children/youth above 12 years old to be filled before activities

1. Do you notice that you feel stressed, insecure?

	Always
	A lot
	Somehow/Sometimes
	Never

2. Do you have a good quality of sleep?

	Always
	A lot
	Somehow/Sometimes
	Never

3. Do you notice that you interact with your friends?

	Always
	A lot
	Somehow/Sometimes
	Never

4. Are you optimistic about your future?

	Always
	A lot
	Somehow/Sometimes
	Never

8.3. Post-test questionnaire for children/youth above 12 years old to be filled after completing the activities

1. Do you notice that you feel stressed, insecure?

	Always
	A lot
	Somehow/Sometimes
	Never

2. Do you have a good quality of sleep?

	Always
	A lot
	Somehow/Sometimes
	Never

3. Do you notice that you interact with your friends?

	Always
	A lot
	Somehow/Sometimes
	Never

4. Are you optimistic about your future?

	Always
	A lot
	Somehow/Sometimes
	Never

5. Have the exercises helped you feel better about yourself?

	A lot
	Somehow
	No

Comment :

6. Have you developed a better ability to deal with stress through practising theatre exercises?

	A lot
	Somehow
	No

Comment

7. Did you feel comfortable participating in the exercises?

	A lot
	Somehow
	No

Comment

8. Will you practise more theatre in the future if you have the opportunity?

	A lot
	Somehow
	No

Comment

9. Do you have suggestions on what kind of art activities you would be interested in participating in the future?

8.4. Post-test questionnaire for children/youth above 12 years old when it is possible to be filled only after the activities

When access is limited, it might be more relevant to have a questionnaire filled only after the activities. The questionnaire below is designed for this purpose.

1. Do you notice that you feel stressed, insecure?

	Always
	A lot
	Somehow/Sometimes
	Never

2. Have you developed a better ability to deal with stress through practising theatre exercises?

	A lot
	Somehow
	No

Comment

3. Are you optimistic about your future?

	Always
	A lot
	Somehow/Sometimes
	Never

4. Have the exercises helped you being more optimistic about your future?

	A lot
	Somehow
	No

5. Have the exercises helped you build your self-confidence?

	A lot
	Somehow
	No

6. Did you feel comfortable participating in the exercises?

	A lot
	Somehow
	No

Comment

7. Will you practise more theatre in the future if given the opportunity?

	A lot
	Somehow
	No

Comment

8. Do you have suggestions on what kind of art activities you would be interested in participating in the future?

Comment

8.5. Qualitative questions for children below 12 years old

Most questions below can be used for general follow-up of children below 12 years and are useful elements on the different levels of psychosocial well-being. Their answers can be complemented by caregivers and other relations of the child.

Emotional Well-being:

1. *How do you usually feel when you wake up in the morning? (Happy, sad, nervous, excited?)*
2. *What do you do when you feel upset or sad?*
3. *Are there things that make you feel scared or worried?*
4. *How do you feel when you make mistakes? Is it okay to make mistakes?*

Social Well-being:

5. *Do you have friends that you enjoy playing with?*
6. *Do you feel like you belong when you're with your classmates?*
7. *What do you do when someone treats you unfairly or is unkind to you?*
8. *Who do you talk to when you're having a tough time?*

Psychological Well-being

9. *Do you have any dreams or hopes for the future? What are they?*
10. *Do you think you are good at learning new things?*

Support and Environment

- 11. Do you feel safe at home/school? Why or why not?*
- 12. Do you feel that your teachers, parents, or care takers listen to you when you have something important to say?*
- 13. Who do you feel most comfortable talking to about things that worry you?*

Family Relationship

- 14. How do you get along with your siblings or other family members?*
- 15. What happens when someone in your family is upset or angry?*

Self-esteem and Confidence

- 16. What are you really good at? What makes you feel proud of yourself?*

Feedback on activities

- 17. How did this activity help you?*
- 18. What did you like in this activity?*
- 19. What other activities would you recommend for children of your age?*

9. Sources

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