







10. TOO MANY COOKS SPOIL THE... TALK WORKSHOP ON TALKING ABOUT TALKING

 Target group: Young people aged 16-30 Youth workers aged 18+	 Group size: 6 - 24 participants
 Duration: 90 minutes	 Type of activities: Drama exercises Discussion based activity
 Resources: various preparation needed (check below)	 Atmosphere needed: Fun and creative

Aim



To learn the benefits of understanding and planning the structure of a conversation.

Learning Outcomes

- To understand the elements that build every conversation and learn about the benefits of having agendas for conversation.
- To recognise the importance of saving time and energy in conversations by setting and reaching clear goals.
- To learn how to maintain better relationships by understanding the goals of partners in conversations.
- To practise the process of creating a complex conversation such as group discussion.
- To learn how to set agendas for conversations.

EXERCISE 1. FROM COOKING TO CREATING A CONVERSATION (45 MIN)

This task will allow participants to experience a group conversation and to identify different elements that are important to lead any type of conversation.



Preparation

You need cards with printed pictures/names representing different aspects of cooking.



Instruction

Welcome participants. Ask them to sit in groups of 4-6 people around tables that have been prepared in advance. On the tables put small pieces of paper, each representing different aspects of cooking.

Prepare as many different cards as possible (at least 30, 40) and be as creative as possible. Some ideas are on the extra sheet after the workshop. The cards should allow participants to “cook” different meals and, at the same time, inspire discussion about what to do and how to do it. Many things can happen in the kitchen and the perfect cook would consider all of them.

Tell the participants in each group that they are running a kitchen in a youth centre and on the cards they will find different things that are usually used or can be found in the kitchen. Ask each group to prepare a menu and a cooking plan for the day, considering all the information on the cards: meaning they might have limited resources, different customers and accidents may happen. Each group has 10 min to complete the task.



Debriefing

Ask participants about the emotions and the process: was it difficult? Did they manage to accomplish the task? Are they satisfied with the results?

Keep participants in the “culinary” mood by asking if they liked the exercise, if they like to cook in real life etc. Is cooking a difficult activity for them? Does it require a lot of thinking, planning and considering? Is real life cooking normally easier than it was in the exercise? What makes it easier in real life?

Ask participants to imagine that they need to bake a tasty cake. Ask them what they would need to do that. Write on a flipchart participants’ ideas and group them if needed in these three categories: ingredients, time and recipe. You can also symbolise these different categories with drawings or by sticking up printed pictures.

Discuss with participants the idea that conversation is a bit like baking a cake. You have:

- **ingredients** - topics and issues that you plan to cover in the conversation can influence the final result of the conversation. It is important to decide and choose them consciously - just like with ingredients for a cake;
- **time** - time is important in both cases and it is good to set it before the process. Imagine what would happen to a cake if you did not set the right time!
- **recipe** - you can improvise, but in difficult/important conversations a recipe is needed, which means the structure, plan of topics and issues. It creates a safe atmosphere and helps you to focus on the important issues.

You can also mention baking (technique) and experience (quality):

- **baking** - conversation is a creative process just like baking, so you never know the results at the beginning, and you need to be open and patient during the process;
- **experience** - to be a good cook you need to practise - with conversations too! When you practise, you learn what works better and what does not work at all.

Summing up: Congratulate participants on their knowledge of baking and cooking, and their knowledge of the construction of a conversation and its important ingredients.

EXERCISE 2. FROM CHAOS TO STRUCTURE (45 MIN)

This task will allow participants to experience the situation when they need to meet different interests and opinions in order to realise a common goal. They will experience the importance of the elements of conversation mentioned in the previous exercise and they will reflect on the idea of improving the conversation by implementing the agenda for conversation.



Preparation

Print out cards with the various roles on them (see the extra sheet after this workshop with the list of different roles).



Instruction

Invite participants to practise the knowledge that they identified and expressed in the previous exercise through an active task - role-play. Divide participants into groups with ideally 6 people in each group as each set contains 6 different roles. A group can be formed with a minimum of 4 participants. If you have more than 6 participants in the group, you can have more than one person in some roles.

Distribute the roles randomly among the participants. Introduce them with description of the situation and ask them to improvise a group discussion (in case of more than 1 group - parallel discussions). Participants will have 10 minutes for the discussion.

Description of the situation

You are a group of classmates. Your teacher asked you to plan a school trip. You did not have time to meet before and today you are meeting for the first and last time to make final arrangements. You have 10 minutes to come up with the complete plan and submit it to your teacher otherwise the trip will be cancelled.

Debriefing



After 10 minutes ask everyone to come back to the circle. Ask them:

- about feelings (how do they feel after this exercise?);
- about the process (what were their tasks and interests, what happened, who started, who talked the most, what made the discussion difficult, what techniques did they use to make it easier to achieve their goal?);
- about an alternative version of the process (what could you do to make it better, which elements would you add or remove?).

Write down all the ideas from the participants on a flipchart. What can be improved in the conversation and how? Bring their attention to the idea of creating an agenda that helps improve conversations. Discuss with participants and introduce, if needed, the following elements to the conversation agendas:

1. planning the process;
2. choosing the topics to talk about;
3. deciding what you are NOT going to talk about;
4. prioritising;
5. going from general to specific;
6. giving order;
7. keeping time;
8. choosing a manager of the process;
9. planning next steps.

After a short discussion, ask participants one by one to come up with one example of the benefits of using agendas for conversations. If needed, complete their reflection by mentioning the following:

- saving time and energy;
- having clear goals and reaching them easily;
- maintaining relationships;
- better understanding of goals of other partners in the conversation.

Congratulate participants for their engagement and intensive work.

Food and kitchen lists (Exercise 1)

Here is a list of possible ideas for the food and kitchen activity. Of course, you can add your own ideas too - more ideas mean there will be more variety!

Utensils:

- frying pan
- 1 big pot
- two big spoons
- fork
- etc.

Food:

- flour
- 6 eggs
- 1l of milk
- 4 tomatoes
- 1 rotten tomato
- nuts
- etc.

Safety in the kitchen:

- cut finger
- allergic reaction
- burnt dish
- emergency phone call
- etc.

Equipment:

- cooker
- microwave
- one oven
- etc.

Dietary requirements/ customers:

- vegan
- lactose intolerant
- very hungry
- gluten-intolerant
- elegant lady
- travel food
- etc.

Style of cooking:

- traditional
- picnic
- TV dinner
- snacks
- formal dinner
- etc.

Roles (Exercise 2)

1. Your role is very important. You are responsible for the visual identification of your trip, which is compulsory for your sponsor. You have several project ideas, including t-shirts, cups, pens,

stickers, and notebooks. You want to discuss these in detail with your colleagues. Ask questions, consult people about the ideas you have with everyone and make the final decision together. You have only 10 minutes. Make sure that you speak your mind.

2. Your role is very important. You are responsible for food supplies: sandwiches, milk, snacks, food packets, fruit, etc., and dietary requirements of other people. Propose the menu for the next 3 days. Make sure that everyone is ok with it. Ask questions, consult people about the ideas you have with everyone and make the final decision together. You have only 10 minutes. Make sure that you speak your mind.
3. Your role is very important. You are responsible for accommodation during the trip. You found three different guest houses and you want to present them to your colleagues. Every venue has different options related to location, price, double or multi bedrooms and other services. Make sure that everyone is ok with your offer. Ask your colleagues questions, consult people about the ideas you have and make the final decision together. You have only 10 minutes. Make sure that you speak your mind.
4. Your role is very important. You are responsible for entertainment during the trip. You have checked the cultural offer of the town: concerts, cinemas, dancing events, museums. You have collected different board games, card games, chess and ideas for sport activities. You are very passionate about your role and you would like to present all your ideas to your colleagues. Ask them questions, consult on the ideas you have and make the final decision together. You have only 10 minutes. Make sure that you speak your mind.
5. Your role is very important. You are responsible for the money that you have received from your sponsor. You have to keep a check on all the money for the trip. Verify costs in details. Collect all the bills. You also need to prepare a participants list with all personal data: name, surname, date of birth, place of birth, sex, ID number,

phone number, address, e-mail. You have only 10 minutes. Make sure that you speak your mind.

6. Your role is very important. You are responsible for transport during the trip. You have checked buses, trains and other options. You are also responsible for local transport – bicycles, walking routes etc. Present all your ideas to your colleagues. Ask them questions, consult with them about the ideas you have and make the final decision together. You have only 10 minutes. Make sure that you speak your mind.