




6. ACTIVE LISTENING

 Target group: Young people aged 16-30 Youth workers aged 18+	 Group size: 10-30 participants
 Duration: 90 minutes	 Type of activities: Drama exercises Personal sharing Active involvement
 Resources: Standard	 Atmosphere needed: Safe space for sharing Active listening space

Aim



To get an understanding of active listening and raise awareness of how active listening can help scale down tension or help solve conflicts.

Learning outcomes

- To understand that good communication is co-operation.
- To realise the importance of precise communication and asking good questions.
- To learn about different types of questions, facts and feelings.

Introduction

Give a brief introduction, mainly to welcome the group to the workshop. Highlight that we are going to do an exercise that is harmless, that we are in a safe setting, and that no one will be put on the spot, but that you contribute as much as you want, and we do the whole of the exercise together.

THE PENCIL (15 MIN)

Pair up, give out one pen or pencil to each pair. Ask each pair to hold the pen between them, touching it only with the tip of their index finger. Everyone then closes their eyes and starts moving around the room. Continue for a few minutes.

Ask a couple of reflective questions about this exercise:

1. Describe how you experienced this activity (focus on observations).
2. What can we learn from this activity?

Summarise that the point of the exercise is to become more aware of communication as teamwork. Feel free to use the analogy of the pencil as understanding; that it will only float well between you if your movements are coordinated and in unison.

THE STATUE (20 MIN)

1. Move on to the next activity. Ask participants to form groups of three. The three members of each group have the following roles:
 - a. original statue,
 - b. link between original and new statue,
 - c. new statue.
2. Participants stand in a line. The original statue stands at the front of a line. The link will stand behind the original statue looking in the same direction (the link is not allowed to look back). The new statue will stand behind the link, but facing the opposite direction, thus unable to see the other two of the group.
3. The original statue will strike a pose without speaking and hold it like a statue. The link will try to describe to the new statue how the original statue looks, and the new statue will try to form the same pose.

4. For the first round, only the link is allowed to speak, with no follow up questions allowed from the new statue. When the link thinks he or she has described it well enough, and given the new statue sufficient time to form the pose of the original statue, he or she will step out of the line to assess and compare the two statues.
5. Pause the exercise, and ask a few reflective questions, such as:
 - a. How did you solve the task?
 - b. Did the new statue feel confident they had the same pose as the original statue?
 - c. How sure did the link feel that the new statue, who they could not see, had struck the same pose as the original statue, who they could see?
6. The groups rotate roles and form the same kind of line again. They do the activity one more time, only this round the new statue is allowed to ask follow-up questions to the link.
7. Wrap up the activity by conducting a short debrief:
 - a. Did anything change from the first round now that they were allowed to ask follow-up questions?
 - b. Did they feel more confident about recreating the statue?
 - c. What can we learn from this?
 - d. What could have happened if the communication had not been precise?

Points to try to draw out:

- communication can be challenging and can provide several misunderstandings;
- things can be perceived differently from what was the intention;
- understanding depends on the listener's point of reference;
- good questions are an important part of listening and understanding.

GETTING THE STORY ACROSS (45 MIN)

Introduce that we are going to be telling stories to each other and practise active listening through asking follow-up questions. We continue to work in teams of three. The members of each team will have the following roles:

1. storyteller;
2. listener who gathers the facts;
3. listener who searches for the feelings and emotions of the story.

The roles will rotate and it is a good idea to divide the time so that all three get a chance to hold all the roles.



Instruction

1. Each participant is asked to think of a scenario, ideally something that has happened to him or her personally. To help them get started you can suggest that they think of their first day of something, such as school, sports team, or other, or their first time trying something new, such as speaking a foreign language, going to a new place, or other. Inform them that they will be asked to share their story with the other two members of their team, so it may be easier if they choose a memorable, happy moment, instead of something that could be more difficult to talk about to others.
2. To help the participants get in the right mind-set, and prepare their stories, consider the following preparatory questions:
 - a. Where were you before the situation?
 - b. How did you feel before going into the situation/event?
 - c. How did it feel afterwards?
3. The storyteller tells their story until they feel it is finished. The listener who gathers facts then starts asking follow-up questions to the storyteller to try to ensure that all facts are established, and they have understood the story in full. Lastly, the listener who looks for feelings and emotions ask follow-up questions to uncover

any remaining aspects of why this particular story has stuck in the storyteller's mind, why it was a happy, sad, or other moment for the storyteller.

4. As far as time allows for it, try to give all three of each team the chance to hold all the different roles, to give them a chance to practise asking questions and getting the full picture of the story.

Debriefing



Gather all teams for a joint debrief. Consider the following debriefing questions:

1. How did it feel to tell your story in this way, having others listening actively to you, and helping you share all aspects of it, as well as give you feedback on their understanding of it?
2. How did the listeners experience the exercise?
3. Did this structured exercise help you discover something new about sharing a story and communication?
4. What is listening to you? What does it entail?

Do a short summary of "powerful questions" that come up as particularly useful from the participants. Write them on a flipchart if time allows.

Tips for the facilitator

- Give instructions about time before the start of each exercise.
- Consider an alternative form of self-reflection, such as walking around in silence for a bit to gather one's thoughts. This can be followed up by a few questions. Another option is to let the participants walk around for a while and ask each other what they have learned, what they can take away from this workshop, and so on.
- It can be helpful if you can summarise the topic a little bit, either after each activity, or after the workshop as a whole.

Examples of points it could be valuable to pinpoint include:

- links to real-life situations in which it could be useful to be a better listener;
- active and good listening improves relations between people, and can take the edge off potential conflicts, even stops them in their tracks;
- fewer misunderstandings, clarifying communication;
- respect for the one who is sharing, being present in the conversation;
- a feeling of heightened value of listening to others, as you get a deeper understanding of them through listening more actively.