

Conflict Corners

Conflict Competence in Groups



Goal(s): Find out about individual behavior within a group



Duration: 45 minutes



Age group: 14 years and above



Materials needed: Flipchart with graphic "conflict corners"



Description:

For the trainer(s) to understand the aim of the activity and the accompanying graphic below:

Within a group, people tend to adopt different attitudes/behaviors. The graphic classifies these into respectively two opposites.

Thus, a person who appreciates...

...*continuity* likes reliability, order/taking notes, familiar environments etc.

...*change* likes liveliness, leisure, going out etc.

and a person who appreciates...

...*proximity* likes coziness, communication, etc.

...*distance* likes individuality, spending time alone etc.

The trainer starts the activity as follows:

- 1) Write the attributions to each classification (continuity, proximity, change and distance) on four different sheets of paper and place the respectively opposites in corners across from each other. It is important, that the group does not know about the classifications!
- 2) Read out one by one the statements listed in the box in the middle of the graphic.
- 3) After having heard the statements, the participants should choose the corner they think best represents their character.
- 4) Reveal the classification of each corner at the end of the activity.



Discussion points:

Did the activity help me to clarify my own attitude when having a conflict within a group?

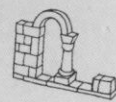
After the trainer revealed the denominations of the corners, does this reflect the way I perceive my own attitude?



Attentiveness:

The trainer(s) should be attentive to possible personal boundaries. No one should be obliged into making a statement s/he feels uncomfortable about. With this activity, the trainer(s) may just selectively ask participants.

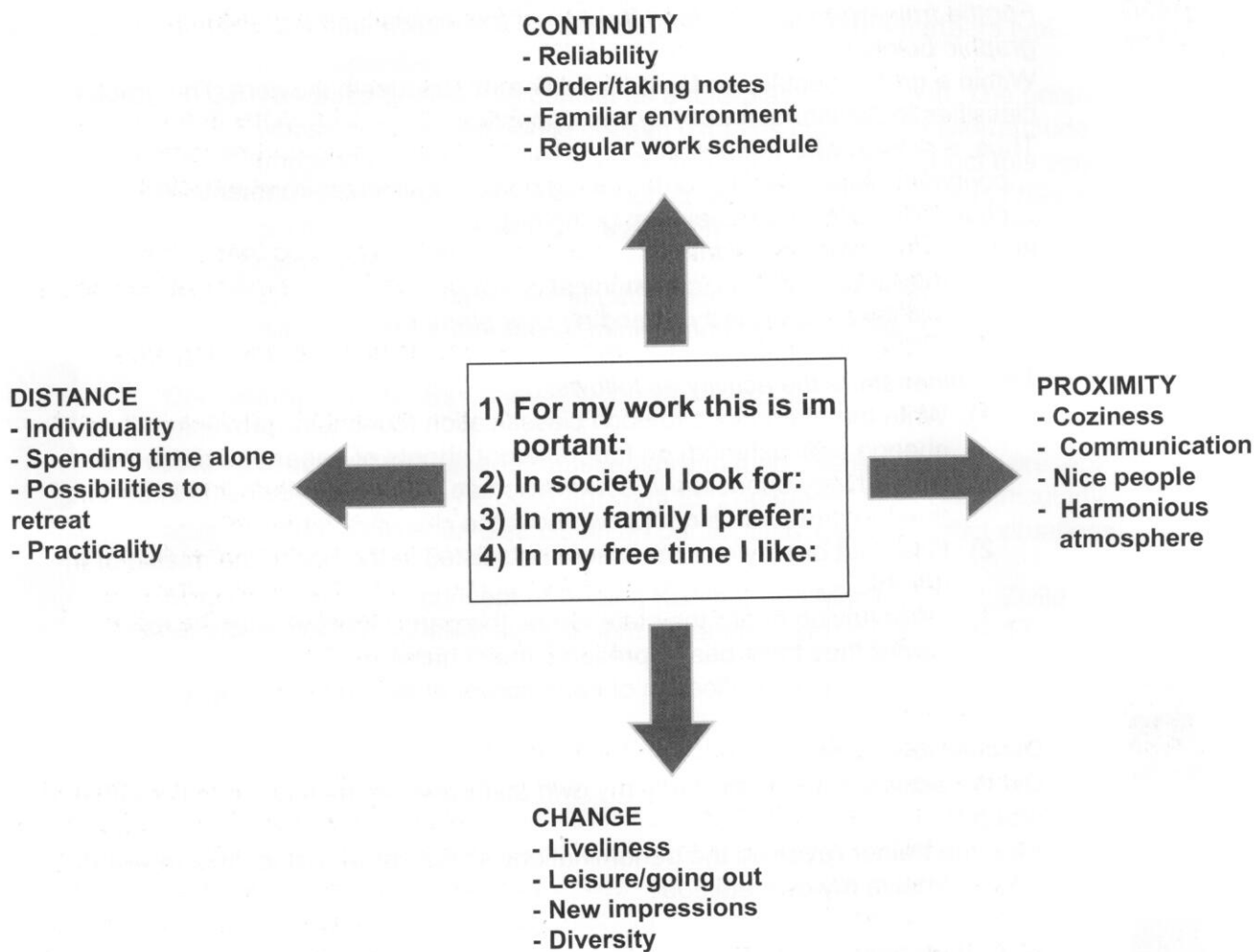
It is likely that someone will say that s/he has draws on traits from each list. This is may be true, but the aim here is to identify the strongest characteristics from the continuity, change, proximity and distance lists within oneself.





Source:

Adapted from Sabina Koerner and Monika Engel: Zivile Konfliktkultur und Konfliktmanagement. Boenen, Germany 2001. Page 135 and Barbara Langmaack, Michael Braune-Krickau: Wie die Gruppe laufen lernt. Anregungen zum Planen und Leiten von Gruppen. Weinheim 1985.



Johari-Window



Goals: Interdependence of self-awareness and communication approaches to resolving conflicts



Duration: 45 minutes



Age group: 14 and above



Materials needed: A4 paper, flipchart paper with model of Johari-Window



Description:

This activity is designed to introduce participants to the Johari-Window.*

- 1) Group the participants into pairs.
- 2) Hand out a sheet of white A4 paper to each pair.
- 3) The pairs should draw something together. This happens in a very special way, however: one person starts drawing a part of something (like part of a house, an animal, a plant, a person, an object etc.) on the top quarter of the A4 paper.
- 4) S/he then folds the paper in such way that only the bottom of his/her drawing shows. For the other only the bottom lines of the drawing should still be visible.
- 5) Starting from these lines, the partner begins drawing anything s/he wants.
- 6) The pairs continue until each partner has completed two drawings (each partner takes two turns).
- 7) The paper is unfolded and the pairs discuss what they have drawn.
- 8) The trainer uses this activity to explain the Johari-Window:
Open: Both know that they are working together on a drawing.
Blind: One person does not know what the other is drawing.
Hidden: Both are hiding what they are drawing from the other.
Unknown: Neither knows what the result will be.

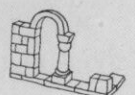


Variations:

Another activity to introduce the Johari-Window:

The trainer(s) ask(s) a member of the group to volunteer. The trainer(s) blindfold(s) the volunteer and asks her/him to draw something on the board/flipchart ("open" to all). However, the volunteer should not tell the group what s/he is drawing. Thus, s/he knows what s/he is doing, but the group does not ("hidden"). Yet, being blindfolded, s/he might not manage to draw very well ("blind"). Finally, all participants, including the volunteer do not really know what will be the result of the activity ("unknown"): the group does not know what the volunteer draws and s/he does not know how s/he will manage with the intended drawing as being blindfolded.

The decision of the "artist" to tell the group what s/he is drawing will enlarge the "open" quarter in favor of closing the "blind" pane. The group can now help the





volunteer with drawing, giving him/her the opportunity of “disclosure”!

Discussion points: It is important to explain the theory behind the model well.

Attentiveness:

The Johari-Window requires quite an amount of openness. It serves as a basis of cooperation and of solving conflicts constructively. Cooperation requires asking the other for help: I need to be clear about what I cannot do in order for the other to complement me. For people under a lot of pressure (for example students with a violent family background or poor educational performance at school), “admitting” what one cannot do might be difficult. The trainer may be able to help in this way by insisting on the benefits of cooperation, and by emphasizing that it is not shameful or reflective of weakness not to know everything, or to make mistakes.

Source: The model of the window was original developed by Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham.

Johari-Window

The Johari-Window is a model used to describe the process of human interaction. Its name derives from the first names of those who developed the model, Joseph Luft and Harry Ingham. They divide human awareness into four different types. Thus, their model is a four-paned window, with each pane representing a type of awareness: open, hidden, blind, and unknown.

- 1) The “Open” pane represents things that oneself and others both know. For example, a teacher receives a new class at the beginning of the school year. The first lesson passes with getting to know each other, where names become part of the “open” pane. During the course of the school year, they get to know each other more in terms of age, behavior, opinions, tendency to be tough or sensitive, feelings and so on thus opening gradually this pane further.
- 2) The “blind” quadrant represents things that someone does not know about oneself, but that others do. To continue with the above example: while developing students’ reading skills throughout the year, the teacher eventually realizes due to experience/knowledge that one student’s continuous reading difficulties are due to dyslexia and not to lack of practice, as the student and their parents believe. This ignorance on the student’s as well as on the parents’ part is a blind spot. If the teacher tells them about his suspicion of dyslexia, the blind spot on their side becomes smaller in favor of the “open” pane on both sides.
- 3) The “hidden” pane represents things that someone knows about themselves, but that unknown to others. This could be the result of a deliberate decision not to tell, to hide from, or simply not communicate with others, as it might not seem relevant. The teacher would not tell their students about his/her private life for example. The “hidden” pane

consequently remains large.

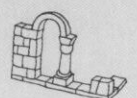
- 4) The "unknown" quadrant represents things that are unknown to oneself and to other. For example, one day a student decides to tell their teacher about a dream s/he had the night before, but which s/he did not understand. Working out its significance together may reveal a new level of awareness; something that was not known to both of them before. The unknown diminishes in favor of the "open" pane.

The lines between the panes are flexible. Just like curtains, they can move, opening one pane whilst closing off another. Enlarging the open pane involves self-disclosure. It is an interaction between two people, usually a process of giving and taking in which one person decides to reveal something about oneself, which encourages the other to do so too. The interaction between two parties can be modeled as two active Johari-windows. If the student approaches their teacher together with their parents to talk about how much s/he suffers from reading difficulties (enlarging the "open" pane on their side), the teacher may decide to address the issue of dyslexia (opening something of the "hidden" pane).

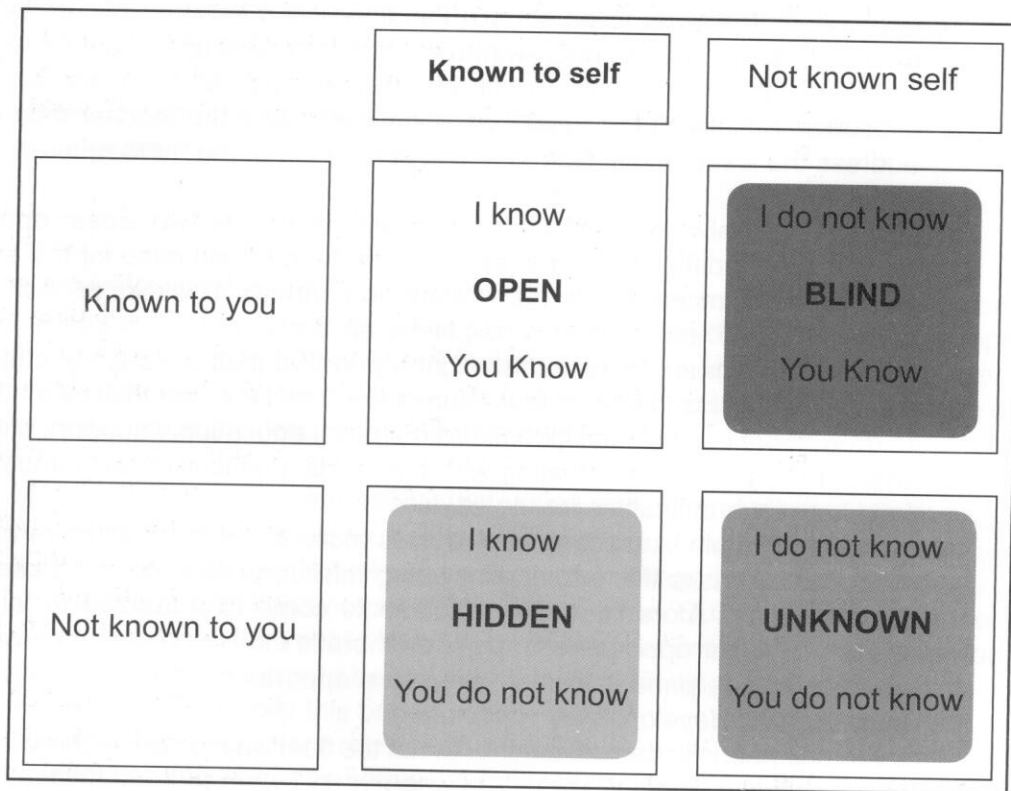
Disclosure is always ambivalent, and very often has two sides: opportunities and risks. The difficulty for the teacher with the dyslexia case for the example is how to communicate this to the student and parents. Dyslexia is often confused with stupidity. Thus, there is a risk of the students or parents being offended or become despaired. The parents might argue that their child is not stupid and/or fear that the fellow students make fun of him/her. However, dyslexia has nothing to do with the level of intelligence. With special educational support, children can overcome dyslexia. Not dealing with the reading difficulties will almost certainly lead to greater difficulties for the student.

Another example: A teacher who reveals more about him/herself (enlarging the "open" pane) risks this information being misinterpreted, or being used against them. Yet, it is more likely for a student to come to a teacher to talk about a dream, if his/her open pane is larger as there is more confidence between them. The bigger this pane becomes, the more opportunity there is for new, greater awareness to develop.

Everyone needs to decide for him/herself the best way to handle this window. How much should I reveal of myself; how much do I want to keep hidden? However, everyone should note that it is virtually impossible to work on the "blind" pane by oneself as it contains things that are not accessible to oneself, but which may be seen by others. Some disclosure is required in order for the others to see it. A teacher might ask his students for feedback to the way the lessons are taught in order to ensure that s/he is meeting students' needs. At the same time, the teacher might feel that it is not appropriate to ask students for feedback. In this case, working on the overall atmosphere and relationship between teacher and students by developing appreciation, acknowledgement, trust, good communication skills (active listening/constructive feedback) will certainly help in communicating more through the open panes and thus reaching a higher level of awareness.



Johari Window



Drama Triangle



Goal(s): Understand roles in conflict; raise awareness about dynamics in conflicts (relates to conflict transformation)



Duration: 60 minutes



Age group: 14 and above



Materials needed: Flipchart with model of drama triangle



Description:

- 1) Carefully read and understand the drama triangle. Prepare a flipchart with the model of the drama triangle, but do not hang it up yet.
- 2) Do not tell the group about the drama triangle beforehand. Ask three volunteers to perform a role-play (for instructions on role-plays, see the section on mediation).
- 3) Possible stories to act out:
(For counselors/teachers): You are a counselor and want to do a workshop in school of a couple days. You have already discussed the idea of constructive conflict transformation with a colleague who likes the idea and is very supportive of the idea. However, the director is not convinced. You have asked for a meeting with the director to discuss this. Your colleague joins you. How will the meeting go? The three roles are: counselor, teacher, and director.
(For students): It is break time and the yard is crowded with students. A teacher walks around, keeping an eye on the situation. You and a couple friends play with one of the only toys available in the yard. Others come and want to join. You refuse and ask them to go away but they do not leave you alone. What do you do? The roles are: a student representing the group playing, a student representing the group wanting to join, a teacher.
- 4) Experience from workshops has shown that "actors" almost certainly tend to fall into the drama triangle. After the role-play, give an analysis of the interaction according to this theory. If participants do not grasp the concept of the triangle, discuss further with them, taking into account the drama model and other behaviors that people tend to display.



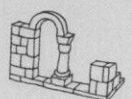
Discussion points: Discuss the dynamics of the drama triangle with the group. Ask them why it is not constructive and what other solutions are possible. How can one avoid getting into the triangle (explain the quadrant)?



Attentiveness: The activity may remind some participants of a strong personal conflict. The trainer should be aware of these sensibilities.



Source: The American psychologist, Stephen Karpman, originally developed the Drama Triangle in 1968.



The drama triangle

Violence and conflicts involve persecutors and victims. Certainly, no one likes to take on these roles. In conflicts, it seems much more appropriate to help. However, taking on the role of the savior very often means getting into the dynamic of the so-called drama triangle. Usually, these three stereotypical roles (persecutor, victim and savior) are not fixed. People tend to change the roles with the dynamic of an evolving conflict: victims become persecutors, persecutors become victims, saviors become persecutors etc.

For example: a group of students is playing a game in the yard (the victims). Others come (persecutors), create a disturbance and do not stop despite being asked so a number of times. One student (changes from victim to persecutor) from the group then decides to go to the counselor (savior) to resolve the situation. The counselor (changes from savior to persecutor) goes into the yard, has a stern talk with the other students (change from persecutors to victims) and orders them to write an essay about how to behave during the breaks. These students are very upset now.

The characteristics of the various roles are the following:

Persecutor:

Persecutors actively pursue the victim. It seems, they know exactly what is "right" and "wrong" and what they need. The solution appears very clear. They talk in a way characterized by orders, judgments, accusations and reproaches. They have a loud, firm voice, rejecting any kind of objection from the beginning. Persecutors usually achieve their immediate goal by "going up the hierarchy": They step on, push away or let down others in order to confirm that they are "right". Thus, this "going up the hierarchy" happens at the expense of the others disliking them. The basic assumption is that 'I am okay and you are not okay.'

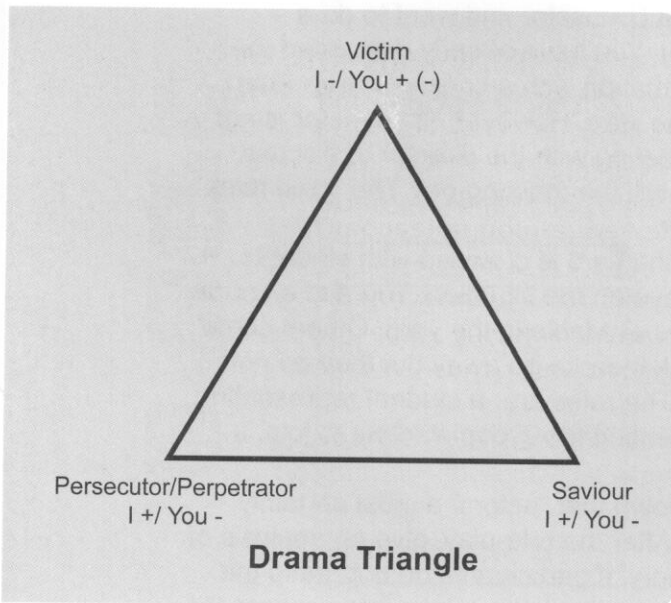
Victim:

Victims are people that are actively persecuted, made responsible for something, or have to tolerate a situation at their own expense. Their speech is

usually careful, filled with excuses and promises. Victims do not assume responsibility: others are responsible for their misery and suffering. For victims, that means they cannot change their situation and have to count on the support of others. The basic assumption is that 'I am not okay and you are okay' (in severe cases of nihilism: 'I am not okay and you are not okay').

Saviors:

Saviors are the "very good ones". They jump in and assume responsibility for the whole situation (conflict) and its solution. Their language avoids hard words, and is supportive towards the victim while trying to calm the persecutor, attempting to convince them both of the solution. Saviors can win respect when imposing their solution or end up in the middle if no one is convinced of it. The basic assumption is that 'I am okay and you are not okay'.



Staying out of the triangle: Consciousness and Attitude

	You are ok	You are not ok
I am ok	Constructive Attitude (winner)	Arrogant Attitude (savior/persecutor)
I am not ok	Depressive Attitude (victim)	Depressive Attitude (victim)

The dynamics of such a drama triangle are deeply unconstructive. Original issues of the conflict - the aims, tasks, functions, and rationality - tend to disappear in the course of this drama. Once caught in this triangle, it is hard to get out.

It is helpful to be aware of these roles and their dynamics in order to avoid getting into this triangle in the first place. Additionally, staying out of the triangle requires a certain attitude: 'I am okay and you are okay'. 'I am okay and you are' okay means that I do not have to persecute you nor help you, but can constructively act in a conflict as someone affected, or in the capacity as a third party (which means mending rather than helping).



Hadia and Hadi



Goal(s): Raise awareness of the relevance of gender in social relationships

Duration: 20 to 45 minutes (depending on discussion)

Age-group: 9 year and above

Materials needed: Flipchart papers

Description:

1) The participants (possibly in small study groups; in case the group is mixed gender, form mixed gender subgroups) talk about their own sexuality and then about that of the opposite sex.

a) What is the male sexuality about?

For youth: How are boys brought up? What toys do they have etc.?

For older youth/adults: What are men's roles in society? What is "typically" male?

b) What is the female sexuality about?

For youth: How are girls brought up?

For older youth/adults: What are women's roles in society? What is "typically" female?

The results of the sub groups are noted on flipcharts.

2) The trainer(s) use(s) a few examples from each flipchart for discussion. Relevant questions are:

- Why are certain things associated with male/female?

- Which of the statements are true and which are not true or only partly true?

- What are the differences between male and female about?

Variations: If boys and girls (men and women) are participating, it is possible to form a female-only and a male-only group

Discussion points: It is important not to reinforce prejudices about men and women during the discussion, but to think about why there are different roles associated with each gender.

Attentiveness: This activity can be done with just boys/men and girls/women. The trainer should be of the opposite sex however.

Source: Jamie Walker: Gewaltfreier Umgang mit Konflikten. Frankfurt 1995, p. 118



Accept the Other



Goal(s): Find ways to accept the differences of others



Duration: 45 minutes (depending on discussion)



Age group: 14 and above



Materials needed: Flipchart papers



Description of activity:

- 1) The participants group themselves into pairs
- 2) Each pair receives a statement (see below) and has to answer the following questions:
 - Which of the characters showed respect or disrespect in the following cases?
 - Which of the characters behaved properly and which of them did not?
- 3) The results of the discussion are presented in the plenum.



Variations: None



Discussion points: The trainer(s) should sum up the results and facilitate a discussion. The group discusses what is behind the various statements. What perspective are the people coming from in the various situations presented? What is their motivation? (see below)

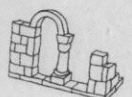


Attentiveness: The importance with this activity is NOT to find out if a certain behavior is right or wrong. It also does not mean agreeing with what is happening. The question is how do I deal with certain situations and accept the other? For counselors, this is especially important because very often they are confronted with situations and behavior that they find difficult or impossible to accept. Yet, there is a need to find ways of working on and dealing with the situation. For students, the discussion around the statements is very important to develop self-awareness and an awareness of the differences of other people.



Source: Rimonda Mansour, trainer for conflict transformation/Haifa Suggested statements (select the statements according to the age of the target group):

Two families met. The secular woman tried to shake hands with the religious man. The man took his hand away to avoid touching her hand.



A young man met a young woman carrying a heavy suitcase. He wanted to carry the bag to help her but she pulled it away because she is gender sensitive and believes in equity. "Are you crazy?" she said. "What happened to you? Don't you think I carry it myself?"

A student met with his/her professor. The student wanted to shake hands with him/her and ask him/her how s/he feels. The professor's reply was cold and short walking off right away.

The headmaster asks the teachers and students to dress properly inside the school.

A young man meets a young woman that he has never seen before and says: "You are beautiful."

A young man meets a young woman that he has never seen before and says: "You are beautiful."

A secular couple touring religious sites in Jerusalem insists on entering Muslim and Jewish sites without covering their head/hair.

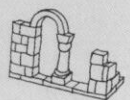
As the father was telling a story to his guest, the son interrupted and said: "Everything you said is untrue!"

A teacher asks his students to stand up every time s/he enters the classroom; some students refuse.

A guest of a Bedouin family refuses the 'mansaf' and only eats a plate of salad.

A young girl takes all her birthday presents in her room and does not open them in front of her friends.

3.3 Communication



3.3.1 Communication

Poor communication is one way to understand and define conflicts. Very often, simple misunderstandings can lead to conflict. In many cases, clear communication is an effective way of preventing, or of facilitating the constructive transformation of conflicts. If people appropriately communicate their needs as well as wishes and relationships between them is clear, it becomes much easier to work together on a solution acceptable to both sides. Yet, it is not always possible to attribute conflicts to miscommunication or insufficient communication. Certainly, there are cases in which the communication was good and but conflict could not be avoided.

On one side, efficient communication includes the ability to express opinions, thoughts, needs, emotions, feelings of discomfort etc. clearly. At this point, the issue of self-consciousness, dealt with in the previous chapter, becomes relevant. It is not just a matter of *how* to communicate, but *what* to communicate. In many cases, knowing and articulating what lies within us is no easy task.

On the other hand, the openness and ability to listen to others is just as important. Listening does not just mean keeping quiet, but involves truly understanding what the other person is saying, and what feelings they are trying to express. In many cases, we are inclined to immediately judge; to interpret what the other has said in our own way, or pre-prepare an answer that tends to be a kind of a 'counter strike'. Thus, attempted communication becomes a struggle about who is right and who is wrong before it is even clear what the other has said.

Good communication comes with practice. The following activities facilitate working on expressing oneself ("I messages" and "You messages"), and listening to others ("Active Listening") for example.

The process of communication does not only include a 'sender' and a 'receiver', but also the message that is sent. Depending on the context in which the conversation takes place, the message may have different meanings. Moreover, as the German communication expert, Friedemann Schulz von Thun, claims, each message has various aspects within it. His 'four-ear' model introduced in this section will help in understanding this.

The following excises will help to improve communication skills and to understand the process of communication. Essential activities include "Mouse-Face", "Active Listening," and "I-Messages". The "Four Ears" activity is optional as it is scientific and abstract. It should be done with older youth and adults only. Introducing the workshop with the "Sender-Recipient" helps participants to visualize how messages are sent and received. Equally, all the activities before "Active Listening" can be used as a general introduction.

Telephone Game



Goal(s): Understand challenges of communication; develop listening skills



Age group: All ages



Materials needed: None



Description of activity:

- 1) The group sits in a circle.
- 2) A person thinks about a sentence and whispers it into the ear of their neighbor.
- 3) The neighbor passes on what s/he has heard to the next person.
- 4) This continues until the last person. No callbacks are allowed.
- 5) The last person says what s/he has heard to the entire group out loud.



Discussion points:

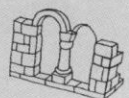
The message the first person sent is very likely to differ from what the last person heard and says aloud.

Ask the participants what would be helpful in understanding the message better (pronouncing the message more clearly, whispering the message directly into the ear, a quiet environment, and an uncomplicated message for example). Write down the points on the board.

Re-do the activity, paying attention to the suggestions that were made. After the activity has been performed another one or two times, the trainer might also allow callbacks (Question: "Did you ask...?" Answer: "Yes/no, I said..."). The activity should lead to a discussion on how to improve listening and communication skills.



Source: Original source unknown. Used widely in many places.



Rumors



Goal(s): Practice observation and re-telling; understand, how rumors develop



Duration: 30 minutes



Age group: All ages



Materials needed: A complex/detailed picture



Description:

- 1) One group member leaves the room.
- 2) The rest of the group is shown a complex or detailed picture. The picture then is taken away.
- 3) The person outside is called back in. The group has to describe the picture to her/him.



Variations:

Another version of the activity allows the group to experience how rumors develop:

- 1) Two people go outside while the others study the picture.
- 2) The group calls one person in and tells this person what they have observed.
- 3) The first person then calls the second person in and tells him/her what s/he has heard.
- 4) The trainer takes out the picture again and the group discusses how the information was passed on, and whether or what information was lost when the information was passed from the first to the second person. The loss or miscommunication of information can then lead to rumors.



Discussion points: The activity may initiate a discussion on the ability to observe. The trainer should discuss with the group how to observe, and how observation skills can be improved.



Source:

Adapted from Priscilla Prutzman, Lee Stern, M. Leonard Burger, Gretchen Bodenhamer: Das freundliche Klassenzimmer. Gewaltloskonfliktlösung im Schulalltag, Kassel 1996, p. 72.

Retell Story



Goal(s): Develop listening and concentration skills



Duration: 15 minutes



Age group: All ages



Materials needed: None



Description:

- 1) Divide the group into pairs.
- 2) In each of the pairs, one partner thinks of a short story.
- 3) One of the partners begins telling the story, which their partner must then summarize.
- 4) The other partner confirms whether the summary was accurate or not, and the roles are then reversed.



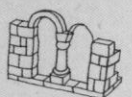
Variation: For children 5 -14, it is a good idea for the trainer to tell the story and give the group the responsibility of retelling it (in turns).



Attentiveness: Good preparation for "Active Listening"



Source: Priscilla Prutzman, Lee Stern, M. Leonard Burger, Gretchen Bodenhamer: Das freundliche Klassenzimmer. Gewaltlose Konfliktlösung im Schulalltag. Kassel/Germany 1996, p. 67.



Man from Mars



Goal(s): Understand the challenge of effective communication



Duration: 15 minutes



Age group: All ages



Materials needed: Cup, plate, cutlery, napkin, cookies



Description:

- 1) Arrange the cup, plate, cutlery, napkin and cookies on a table.
- 2) Explain to the group that you are a man from Mars, that you are very hungry but do not know how to get to the food and how to eat.
- 3) Ask the group to give you instructions on how to get food.

The participants will first tell you to go to the table and eat. You go off in a different direction and seem confused. The group will notice that they need to tell you the precise direction of where to go, when to stop, how to use the knife and fork, not to eat the napkin etc. You will only do what they have specifically told you to do. This will help them to understand the challenge of effective communication.



Discussion points: This activity is a good introduction to communication in general.



Source: Unknown

Pantomime



Goal(s): Understand the challenge of effective communication



Duration of activity: 45 minutes



Age group: 9 years and above



Materials needed: None



Description:

- 1) The trainer acts out (by pantomime: no words, no talking, only movements!) an activity to one member of the group while the rest wait outside (taking clothes out of the washing machine and hanging them up for example).
- 2) The first group member acts out what s/he has seen to the participant called in afterwards.
- 3) This continues until the last participant is in the room.
- 4) The last person has to explain what s/he has seen.



Discussion points:

The outcome is often completely different to what the first person has acted out. The group then discusses at what point things started to change. The pantomime reflects how easily the content of messages can change as they are passed along the line of communication. It shows how difficult it can be to communicate correctly.

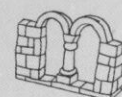


Attentiveness:

With large youth groups, it is not a good idea to stretch this activity out over a long time. The kids outside will get bored and will very likely begin to fool around. A second trainer should be with them. They could possibly hold a discussion with the trainer in another room on a topic that has been addressed in a recent training session.



Source: Training with Youth Education Centre Kaubstrasse, Berlin, Germany



Mouse-Face



Goal(s): The influence of experience, individual perception etc. on communication



Duration: 20 minutes



Age group: All ages



Materials needed: Three pictures: mouse, face and mouse-face



Description:

- 1) Initially the trainer does not tell the group the name of the activity!!
- 2) The participants divide into two groups. One group gets to see the "face" (picture 1 below), while the other gets to see the "mouse" (picture 2 below). Both groups are unaware of what the other has seen.
- 3) The trainer(s) divide(s) the participants into pairs consisting of one person from the first group, and one person from the second group.
- 4) The trainer(s) show(s) each group the "mouse-face" (picture 3 below).
- 5) Each group now has to draw together the picture that they have seen together. They are not allowed to speak to each other however.
- 6) The trainer(s) check(s) on each of the pairs to see how they manage with the painting.

Background explanations:

People are shaped differently: by their prior experience and observations, by their education, the surrounding culture, as well as their society etc. This individual background strongly influences how a person processes new experiences. Thus, two people who have experienced the same situation will tell different stories, sometimes even to such a point that the stories are contradictory. Prejudices for example strongly influence communication.



Variations: None



Discussion points: The trainer should encourage the participants to think about themselves: when did they experience a situation where a different underlying concept caused communication difficulties?



Attentiveness: None



Source: Dettel Beck: Auf dem Weg ins freundliche Klassenzimmer, Minden 1999, p. 89.