



SOCIAL SKILLS TRAINING MANUAL
ART - EDUCATION - THERAPY

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A manual for those who work with vulnerable people.
New ideas to develop social skills for promoting social inclusion.



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Bielsko-Biała, 2012

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Pictures: ARTERY workshops and meetings, works created by workshops' participants. Special thanks to Krzysztof Tusiewicz, Patrik Krebs, Koffi M. Dossou and Adrian Pérez for taking photos.

Author of the cover picture: Patrik Krebs. Name of the picture: Divadlo bez domova - Kuca Paca.

Note: users of this manual are invited to share their experience, ideas, comments and opinions using the platform www.arteryproject.eu - a special tool designed to inspire you.

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ART - EDUCATION - THERAPY

A manual for those who work with vulnerable people.
New ideas to develop social skills for promoting social inclusion.



EDINTRAS
Intras Editions

ZAMORA, 2012

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WHAT THIS MANUAL IS ABOUT?

The Social Skills Training Manual you are reading is based on the experiences of trainers working with groups of disadvantaged people from five countries - Poland, Slovakia, Italy, Finland and Spain. We combined our know-how and resources in order to develop the project ARTERY together, funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme (2007 - 2013) of the European Commission. We, as authors of this book, strongly believe in the benefits of lifelong learning for social competence development of vulnerable adults and this is what we aim to demonstrate through the following chapters. Lifelong Learning and its connection with adults' education and vulnerability is reflected in Chapter 1 'The importance of lifelong learning for socially vulnerable adults' of this manual. Chapter 2 'Artery: Art - Education - Therapy describes in detail the ARTERY project. In Chapter 3 'The main partners' we introduce ourselves and provide profiles of the partner organizations involved in ARTERY project, summarize their activities and projects, as well as make their contact details available.

As a manual which aims to reflect on social skills and implications of the educational effects, Chapter 4 'Adult vulnerability and social skills - Conceptual framework' includes a review of social skill definitions and leads to a list of seven skills that appear to be weak in the target groups addressed by the ARTERY organizations. The importance of social skills and their training is discussed, not only for people with disabilities but for everyone interested in personal growth.

The disadvantaged target groups the ARTERY partners work with are introduced in the Chapter 5 'Social skills relevant to the target groups - Tools & activities'. This part of the Manual is the most important and the most comprehensive. Here we describe the practical methods we use to train social skills and the motivation behind it. This will help you to learn from our grass root practices.

To make this book helpful with a practical purpose, Chapter 6 ‘Top recommended exercises’, includes a selection of ready-to-use activities to train social skills, which can be adapted to any group you are working with. This section is followed by Chapter 7 ‘Example of best practice’, taken from Occupational Therapy Workshops for people with physical, cognitive and relational-emotional disabilities, which took place in the Grodzki Theatre from January to April 2011. We hope it will provide inspiration for your own activities.

In Chapter 8 ‘Recommendations for teachers and educators’ you will find a summary of practical knowledge and experiences gained by our trainers during the ARTERY project implementation stage. Practical tips are included for you to reflect on how to work with vulnerable people and how to offer suggestions and advice to the people you are working with.

Finally, to summarise the information included in this Manual, we include a Conclusions section.

As each of the ARTERY partners work with different groups of socially disadvantaged people, in different conditions and by using different methods, this Manual offers a unique summary of the various views and experiences which ultimately reflect the same message: that each person is unique no matter what ‘degree of disability’ he or she suffers from (please note that no stigmatisation is intended by the use of the term ‘degree of disability’). And that the never-ending challenge for trainers and carers is to keep looking for ways to help these people fulfill lives to the utmost degree possible.

How to use this Manual

Through our different views and training practices you will find in this manual a number of different experiences and approaches towards the topic of developing social competences to achieve social inclusion. We strongly recommend you to take from this whatever fits into your reality and needs. You can read this as any other book starting from the beginning and reading to the end. Or you can look only for practical tools and activities and choose to skip the rest. You know better than we do what you are looking for. We tried to give this book a structure and layout that enables you to easily find what you are looking for.

Enjoy your reading and please visit the artery website:

www.arteryproject.eu

THE IMPORTANCE OF LIFE LONG LEARNING

FOR SOCIALLY VULNERABLE ADULTS



adults

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CHAPTER 1



“When people don’t go out from where they live, when they never leave their block or their estate, a wall develops. They don’t see anything outside their estate or their country. That’s dangerous. Getting out and about means seeing other people. It gives you the impression of changing the world. The wall which stops us going out and seeing other people must be blown up.”

European White Paper on Youth Policy:
A contribution from the Poorest Young People,
International Movement ATD Fourth World, 2001.

What is Lifelong Learning?

Lifelong learning is mainly understood by people involved in it as the process of keeping your mind and body engaged by actively pursuing knowledge and experience throughout the lifetime. Nikolaj Frederik Severin Grundtvig (September 8, 1783 - September 2, 1872) is considered the ideological father of the folk high schools or schools for adult education; his personal aim and dream was to create a new concept of education which promotes creativity and freedom in all life stages. He conceived the public education divided in school for life (high school) and the school for passion (university). In 1929 Basil Yeaxlee formulated the idea of lifelong education, understanding education as a continuing aspect of everyday life.

Now, education is life and the whole life is learning, not just preparation for an unknown kind of future living. Instead, in adult education, the curriculum is built around the student's needs and interests in order to retain aspirations and make more informed choices in this interconnected and globalized world. The Lifelong Learning Programme, funded by the European Commission, aims to increase the number of people involved in the adult education sector by improving the quality of education for both learners and educators, as well as extending the access for marginalized and disadvantaged adult learners.

Socially vulnerable adults include all the groups dealing with certain social disability (physical, cognitive or other) which puts them in the weakest position in society. This includes people with mental health problems, migrants, homeless, etc. who by receiving support can return to fulfilling their social roles, acquiring social competences, skills and knowledge indispensable for social inclusion. This leads to individuals satisfying their own needs and requirements and those of their social environment.

In the analysis of the current situation of adult education, the European Commission reports that the worse the social situation is for people, the less likely they are to take part in adult education. Moreover, participation is lower in rural than in urban areas and socially vulnerable people take a considerably lesser part in adult learning than the rest of the population. As a result, a substantial number of people experience social exclusion. This situation poses a challenge that we are willing to address with our project. The ARTERY project plays an important role by inspiring professionals to help, in an innovative way, allowing vulnerable people to bring down the walls which stop them.





artery



About ARTERY project: Wind Making Machine and Haiku...

Let's inspire and be inspired

If you are a trainer or teacher who deals with art, education and/or therapy every day, you know how important it is to get new, fresh inspiration. It is useful, if not essential, to constantly learn efficient, attractive methods for working with various target groups. This is why trainers and teachers from Grodzki Theatre Association, based in Bielsko-Biała, and EST Lifelong Learning Centre, Wadowice, Poland, created the ARTERY project, which is designed to make the intra-European exchange of artistic and educational methods possible. We hope that ideas will flow and circulate from one country to another to inspire and support our educational work, with special emphasis on socially vulnerable people and their integration into society.

All of us in the ARTERY partnership work with socially disadvantaged groups such as people with disabilities and mental illness, homeless people, migrants, and all those in need of support. We come from five European countries and there are six of us: Grodzki Theatre Association and EST Lifelong Learning Centre (Poland), Divadlo bez Domova (Slovakia), Key & Key Communications (Italy), Kirkkopalvelut ry - Agricola (Finland) and Fundación INTRAS (Spain).

Internet platform with Japanese Haiku www.arteryproject.eu

The main product of the ARTERY project, apart from this book which you are reading now, and the DVD we hope you will watch, is the e-learning platform www.arteryproject.eu. It is an educational portal where people from across Europe, as well as other countries, can watch and place films, photos and texts presenting their work in English. If you are one of the people who shrink at the sight of an internet portal with social networking, and run away, please stop! The ARTERY portal does not force you to interact with other users, if you don't wish to. You can choose to be an observer and simply log in to watch films and read texts from other trainers and teachers. It is a database which anyone can access for free, joining in a European exchange of ideas and good practices. If you would like to learn how to construct a magical wind-making machine - a masterpiece of carpentry art produced by a group of people with disabilities, please visit the Visual Art category. The idea of building it came from the Polish tradition of folk toys. Thanks to recycling, something came out of nothing.

If you want to be more engaged with www.arteryproject.eu, it is possible to place comments and give feedback on particular didactic materials. Undoubtedly, the most active form of involvement includes presenting your own materials (photos/films and texts) which would explain your work on some artistic/educational tasks with your group/s. This requires you to be a registered user and have an account in order to be able to edit, delete or add your materials. It is very simple to open such an account, do not worry!

What kind of materials can you find on our portal?

As part of the ARTERY project the best artistic, educational and communicative methods of work with socially vulnerable people are presented by partners from Poland, Slovakia, Italy, Finland and Spain. Other organizations and individuals from any other country are also invited to place their own films and photos on this educational portal.

How to move around the platform?

Materials are organized in two forms - learning paths (which show a process of working on a given task) and learning steps (individual tasks). One learning path (for example Masks in Theatre category) consists of different learning steps (Making a theatre mask, Decorating the mask, Playing in the mask and with the mask). If you want to find activities which can be implemented within your group, there are many individual exercises you could use. If you happen to have more time on your hands and would like to watch the whole process of, for example, learning a Haiku poem by heart and performing it, look at Learning Paths - the Actor's Craft category. Divadlo bez Domova (Theatre With No Home) presents the best-known Japanese haiku - Bashō's "old pond" and their methods of memorizing it:

furuike ya
kawazu tobikomu
mizu no oto

which can be translated as:

old pond . . .

a frog leaps in

water's sound

The technique presented on the platform can be useful for learning any foreign text by heart, not only Japanese poems!

There are many categories to choose from in Learning Paths: Theatre (Script, Stage design, costumes, stage props, Actor's craft), Visual Art, Music and Communication skills (Verbal communication, Non-verbal communication, Paraverbal communication, Visual communication). Many of our beneficiaries experience discrimination and exclusion through the language they hear. Key & Key Communications (Italy), who specialises in working with migrants, shares with us some of its empowering ways of solving communication problems. For example, participants transform a word or formulation which they consider offensive into a more positive word or formulation (Verbal Messages: Our Words in Intercultural Communication). Instead of calling people from different ethnic group as "you, others" (in Italian: "voi altri"), one can refer to them as "la vostra comunità" (your community).

How did we collect the materials for the ARTERY platform

In 2011, 5 partners organizations, 1 in each country, ran a one-year course (90 hours) for socially disadvantaged groups to gather and document the best practices of artistic and communication work. Grodzki Theatre Association, Poland, ran artistic activities for people with disabilities. Divadlo bez Domova, Slovakia, conducted theatre workshops for homeless people, people with disabilities or a psychiatric diagnosis, as well as people who had been arrested or who came from different minorities. Key & Key Communications, Italy, implemented communication workshops for adults in mobility - migrants - as well as adults in contact with mobility - civil servants -, helping both groups to achieve better communication. Kirkkopalvelut ry (Agricola), Finland, ran visual arts and theatre workshops for people with disabilities, including learning difficulties. If you would like to see how to represent who you are through everyday objects, have a look at their learning paths (photo stories). Last but not least, Fundación INTRAS, Spain, implemented theatre workshops for mentally ill people, showing on the platform how one can express negative feelings in a constructive and safe way. All this, and much more, is available on www.arteryproject.eu in English. The language of films and photos is often universal, so have a look!

Welcome!

Zapraszamy!

Vitajte!

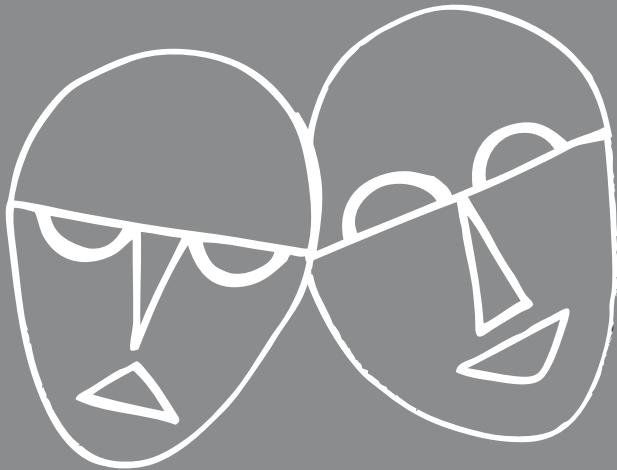
Benvenuti!

Tervetuloa!

Bienvenido!



THE MAIN PARTNERS



CHAPTER 3

partners



ARTERY project is the result of the cooperation between six partners from five different European countries (Poland, Slovakia, Italy, Finland and Spain). All of them have the know-how and the experience in education, using art to foster creativity, social skills and social inclusion.

Grodzki Theatre Association



Bielsko Artistic Grodzki Theatre Association (Bielskie Stowarzyszenie Artystyczne Teatr Grodzki) is located in Bielsko-Biała, southern part of Poland, 30 km from the Czech border. Since 1999 it has run educational and artistic programmes for vulnerable social groups, including people with disabilities as well as children and youths at risk, improving their educational and vocational opportunities. It employs 62 people with disabilities by running two occupational therapy units: Printing House in Bielsko-Biała and the Hotel, Conference and Rehabilitation Centre in the beautiful village of Laliki, Beskidy Mountains. It also runs Occupational Therapy Workshops (arts and life-skills day centre) for 30 people with disabilities in Bielsko-Biała. Grodzki Theatre Association is actively involved in European co-operation. In the last five years the Association has contracted and managed 15 projects financed by EU programmes.

The main activities of the Association include:

- ◇ Theatre, arts, communication and vocational workshops for socially vulnerable groups
- ◇ Vocational programmes for people with disabilities
- ◇ Editing projects (newspapers, books, documentaries, including different language editions)
- ◇ Training sessions for instructors, teachers, therapists, social workers and NGOs
- ◇ Volunteering programmes
- ◇ Local and regional integrative events (The Beskidy Festival of the Small and the Big, open-air performances, presentations, Christmas events)

Grodzki Theatre Association has been able to work with people disconnected from the mainstream of social life thanks to many grants and awards from Polish and international institutions. Our programme of computer animation for marginalized groups received an award in the Minerva (Socrates) Competition as the best Polish ICT project in 2005. “Cultural vehicles in education” initiative (2008-2010), funded with the support of European Commission, was selected for the European Thematic Network “Inclusion” as good practice. “Open the world” (2009-2010), funded by the European Social Fund, was chosen as one of four most interesting cultural projects from the region of Silesia by Toolquiz experts (programme for European partner regions of Silesia).

You are welcome to get in touch. We always need new contacts, support and inspiration.

Contact details:

The Bielsko Artistic Association Grodzki Theatre, Poland

Bielskie Stowarzyszenie Artystyczne Teatr Grodzki

Project Coordinator: Maria Schejbal

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Tel.: +48 33 497 56 55 / +48 33 496 52 19

www.teatrgrodzki.pl

<http://www.teatrgrodzki.pl>

Click on “O nas” (About us) and then “Nasze publikacje” (Our publications)

We recommend “Cultural vehicles in education” (published with support of European Commission) (150 pages. EN, FR, DE, PL, LT, CS) gathering artistic methods in education of socially vulnerable groups in 4 countries

www.potens.com.pl

Website of “Psychodrama on educational stage project” (funded with support of European Commission) with its publication (EN, PL, PT, RO, EL) on using psychodrama in adult education.

Theatre With No Home



Theatre With No Home (Divadlo bez domova) is a non-profit organisation whose main mission is to work with marginalised communities using unconventional artistic forms in the areas of theatre, performing arts, dancing and singing. We provide a platform for presenting various social topics and issues which are overlooked in the commercial sphere of the arts. We combine the artistic with the social in order to help break stereotypes that marginalised communities face in our society.

The members of our organisation are people who have been engaged in social, pedagogic and artistic practices for a long period of time and we also have members involved in economics, management and advertising. Our target community of actors and actresses are homeless, physically or disabled from a relational-emotional point of view, people from socially or racially marginalised communities, social workers, theatre artists and basically anyone who has an interest in our theatre. Our actors and actresses receive payment for performing in our theatrical plays.

Theatre With No Home was founded in 2006. Up until 2011 we have produced eight theatrical plays with our actors, and every year we organise the ERROR Festival which is the only international festival of homeless theatres in Central Europe. Several times a year we also travel and perform in different cities in Slovakia and abroad. We rehearse and create new performances during our rehearsals on a regular basis, using different methods of art therapy. We also work closely with other non-profit and government organisations. The organisers are working mainly as volunteers, however, for the day-to-day running costs of the theatre we have been quite successful in obtaining grants from the ministries and state resources, funding from various foundations and also private sponsors. In 2011 we won the prestigious Erste Foundation Award for Social Integration.

Contact details:

Divadlo bez domova

Štefánikova 16

81104 Bratislava, Slovakia

Tel.: +421252498508

www.divadlobezdomova.sk

patrikk@mac.com

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Divadlo-bez-domova>

For more art-related activities and educational material visit:

<http://www.divadlobezdomova.sk/divadlobezdomova/PROJEKTY.html>

Website with information and photographs from our projects.

<http://www.studio12.sk/program-mesiac.html>

The studio where we are delivering our performances.

<http://www.apothecaryfilms.com/home/2011/2/9/haiku-documentary-feature-film-teaser.html>

Film Haiku.



Key & Key Communications, founded in 1994, is a cultural and scientific non-profit association concerned with all communicative processes people and organisations have to deal with on an interpersonal and organisational level including also the intercultural perspective. The main purpose of its work lies in researching and training about verbal, paraverbal, non-verbal, visual, multimedia, digital, and organisational communication. Key & Key Communications' experts offer tailor-made research and training courses elaborating innovative methods and didactic materials in interpersonal and intercultural communication, and provide the visual management in EU funded projects (design of website, information material, publications, etc.).

Key & Key members are from different countries; they may be specialised in one of the many fields of communication or just be interested in this area. Since many years, communication trainers from Key & Key have been holding seminars for public employees from hospitals, local councils or other public authorities, focusing on institutional and intercultural communication. Therefore since the late nineties, public officers and civil servants especially in their role of being 'adults-in-contact-with-mobility' (i.e. with 'migrants') as well as migrants as 'adults-in-mobility' became its main target groups, tackling especially the complex interaction between members of these two groups in public service interactions.

This practical experience led to the participation in EU co-funded projects SPICES (2005-2007), e-SPICES (2008-2010) and recently, apart from ARTERY, BRIDGE-IT (2010-2012) in which Key & Key is also a partner.

Contact details:

Key & Key Communications

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Fax: +39 075 974275

www.keyandkey.it

keyandkey@keyandkey.it

For more art-related activities and educational material visit:

www.trainingspices.net

Website of "SPICES - Social Promotion of Intercultural Communication Expertise and Skills" 224945-CP-1-2005-1-IT-GRUNDTVIG-G11 (funded with the support of the European Commission). The training course project SPICES, targeting intercultural communication trainers and facilitators, has designed a Guidelines (cf. Klein ed. 2007) in seven languages (EN, BG, ES, DE, IT, MT, SL) with specific tools for creating training material in intercultural communication especially between migrants as 'adults-in-mobility' and public officers as 'adults-in-contact-

with-mobility’.

www.e-spices.net

e-SPICES - electronic Social Promotion of Intercultural Communication Expertise and Skills 2008-1-IT2-GRU06-00547 1 (funded with the support of the European Commission). The Grundtvig Learning Partnership e-SPICES, in which Key & Key was an associated partner, has reflected on the possibilities to create online learning material based on the experience gathered in SPICES.

<http://bridge-it.communicationproject.eu>

Be Relevant to Intercultural Diversity Generation in Europe - Integration Team 510101-LLP-1-2010-1-IT-GRUNDTVIG-GMP (funded with the support of the European Commission). The Grundtvig Multilateral Project BRIDGE-IT, targeting directly migrants and civil servants, designs online learning events to facilitate intercultural communication between these two target groups with particular emphasis on first-impact situations.

Agricola Centre for Education and Training



Kirkkopalvelut ry is a Finnish association managed by the Church Resources Agency. Its unit Agricola Centre for Education and Training, which takes part in the ARTERY project, forms of a vocational school and a folk high school offering a wide range of preparatory and rehabilitation training for students with special needs. The programme offers artistic elements: visual arts, music, drama, puppetry, handicraft, photography and writing. The courses are integrative - people with no disabilities meet students with learning difficulties, fostering self-development of both groups. Agricola Centre for Education and Training also offers vocational training for those working with intoxicant abusers, with people recovering from mental health problems and with the elderly.

Agricola Centre for Education and Training is a multi-skilled provider of various educational services. Agricola Centre for Education and Training offers vocational education for the young and the adults, as well as preparatory and rehabilitative training for students needing special support. Short courses offered at the Agricola Centre for Education and Training give an opportunity for both personal and professional development. The Agricola Centre for Education and Training offers vocational education in three fields of education:

- ◇ Humanities and education (children’s instructor)
- ◇ Social services, health and sports (practical nurse)
- ◇ Tourism, catering and domestic services (domestic operative)

For adults, the Agricola Centre for Education and Training has a vast variety of both further and specialised qualifications to choose from, for example, Further Qualification in Substance Abuse Welfare Work, Further Qualification for Special Needs Assistants in Educational Institutions, Further Qualification for Sacrists, Specialised Qualification in Psychiatric Care and Further Qualification in Theatre, Puppetry.

Agricola Centre for Education and Training has a long tradition in applying arts, theatre, music and puppetry into the education of all kinds of learners. There was a national theatre project at the Agricola Centre in 2009-2011, supervised by professional directors, where students from different groups worked together and carried out their own versions of William Shakespeare's plays The Tempest, Romeo and Juliet and A Midsummer Night's Dream. The Agricola Centre for Education and Training co-operates with Vaalijala Rehabilitation Centre as well as with numerous foster homes and supported housing units.

Contact details:

Kirkkopalvelut ry

Koulutuskeskus Agricola (Agricola Centre for Education and Training)

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www.kkagricola.fi

www.kirkkopalvelut.fi

toimisto@kkagricola.fi

For more art-related activities and educational material visit:

<http://kaskasper2011.blogspot.com/>

This is a blog from the group "Kasvua käsillä". The learners are making art and handicrafts.

INTRAS Foundation



INTRAS, standing for Research and Treatment in Mental Health, is a non-profit organisation aimed to improve quality of life of people with mental disorders, mainly through design and development of educational and training programmes, psychosocial rehabilitation, intervention psychotherapies and professional guidance counselling. INTRAS is composed of 8 centres and 80 professionals from psychological, educational and social fields, who combine healthcare, training and research. Different facilities are managed by the Foundation: Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre, Labour Rehabilitation Centre, Residential Home, Day Care Centres, Educational Centres and therapeutic flats, which offer supporting resources to our target groups.

With regards to lifelong learning, INTRAS offers an opportunity for adults with mental illnesses to study. Those who gave up their studies and/or want to increase their knowledge level or gain access to higher education are not only given basic skills, but are provided with an appropriate base of knowledge and social skills to facilitate their integration to the labour market.

Since 2007 INTRAS Foundation holds a European Seal of Business Excellence given by EFQM - European Foundation for Quality Management. Years of professional work have brought INTRAS solid experience and excellent referential background both in the field of European projects and in development of programmes for psychosocial rehabilitation, intervention and mental health treatment. In the last five years the Foundation has contracted and managed 25 projects financed by EU programmes. Moreover, INTRAS is an active member of the network Mental Health Europe (MHE), the European Platform for Rehabilitation (EPR) and the Humanitarian and Social Committee in Europe (HUSCIE). INTRAS is permanently looking for partners to exchange experiences, share the knowledge and the new practice and develop innovative initiatives in the field of lifelong learning, social inclusion and labour integration. We strongly believe that cooperation between every different actor involved in the field and above all between countries will give a European added value to the local activities.

Should you be working in the field and are interested in cooperating with us in the development of new ideas, please contact us!

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www.intras.es

<http://www.isabelproject.eu>

Innovative practices for empowerment of communities, strengthening inter-personal and intercultural links, getting communities talking to each other, promoting personal and collective growth, empowering people to ensure that their voices are heard.

“Interactive social media for integration skills bartering empowerment informal learning” (ISABEL) is a project developed in the frame of Lifelong Learning Programme (2007 - 2013), ITC KA3, funded by the European Commission.

For more art-related activities and educational material visit:

<http://mirope.intras.es>

New ideas and additional materials and resources which might help you to improve your techniques and experiences using art in the educational field.

“Mirroring Europe” (MIROPE) is a project developed in the framework of “Europe for Citizens” Programme, funded by the European Commission.

<http://suvot.intras.es>

Innovative methodology combining psychodrama and cooking, especially addressed for people with mental illness.

“Spicing Up Vocational Training” (SUVOT) is a project developed in the frame of Lifelong Learning Programme (2007 - 2013), Leonardo da Vinci Multilateral Project for Development of Innovation, funded by the European Commission.

EST Lifelong Learning Centre

EST is an adult education provider founded in 1994 offering the following range of courses: foreign language courses, ICT workshops and communication skills courses. This is a comprehensive programme teaching key competences to adult students, including disadvantaged learners. Since 2008 we have been running an open Social and Vocational Integration Centre PRACOWNIA offering training in basic skills combined with vocational and psychological guidance to young people on the outskirts of society because of poverty, unemployment or low level of qualifications.

EST has been in charge of the evaluation of four multilateral projects in the fields related to the ARTERY domain - three of them employed artistic/dramatic techniques in education (sociodrama, bibliodrama, visual arts and theatre workshops for disadvantaged groups) while the fourth focused on improving communication skills of socially vulnerable adults. This experience has direct relevance for our current role in the ARTERY project as an internal evaluator.

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est@est.edu.pl

For more art-related activities and educational material visit our website, in particular the projects section.



ADULT, VULNERABILITY AND

SOCIAL SKILLS CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK



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CHAPTER 4

skills



The idea that theatre fosters social skills has long been supported by drama therapists and some psychologists and special educators. A number of studies show the educational benefits of theatre performance, especially for people in vulnerable situations as they learn and practice new social skills and behaviours. Slade (1998), a pioneer of drama as a tool for change, highlighted the contribution that dramatic and theatre forms can make to the development of the social self.

A consensus has emerged regarding the positive contributions that the theatre provides to socio-educational fields. According to the findings of the V International Theatre and Education, Mental Health Barcelona (2009), drama professionals believe that mental health and educational fields would have to look more frequently to the advantages that performing theatre could bring to certain groups. Drama practitioners and academics have looked at various ways in which theatre can be used as a useful and effective tool to improving a range of aspects of individuals' social development. Theatre techniques have been used, for a number of years, in community settings to promote the social skills development of people socially disadvantaged or/and at risk of social exclusion. Drama specialists have attributed their effectiveness to story-telling, acting-out, play, group process, etc.

Clarifying what is meant by social skills which make us socially competent shall be the starting point for reflection on how theatre techniques can be applied to foster social competence development. But there is no (or very little) consensus on one single definition for social skills. Dodge (1985) suggested that the number of definitions is similar to the number of investigators in this field.

In fact, several definitions of social skills have been elaborated in the last years. These include the social validity definition, the peer acceptance definition and the behavioural definition.

According to the social validity definition, social skills are the behaviours shown in different situations which help to fulfilling important social outcomes (Gresham & Eliot, 1987). These social outcomes include having friends, being popular or liked by other people and engaging in effective social interaction with peers. The social validity of social skills incorporates differentiation of competence and skill. According to McFall's (1982) definition of social competence, it is an evaluation of a persons' performance on a social task, and social skill is the actual ability to perform a social task competently. This is important in assessing vulnerable people's social skills because a person may not have a skill required to successfully negotiate a social situation, and intervention can help improve this skill. In a similar way, Schlundt and McFall (1985) defined social competence as the effectiveness of an individual's performance on a given task and social skills as the component processes that allow the individual to behave in a competent manner on a task, assuming that different tasks requires different skills. Twenty years later, the European Parliament (Recommendation 2006/962/EC) proposed a definition for social competence referring to personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence and all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life. It is linked to personal and social well-being.

The peer acceptance definition is based in the assumption that people are socially skilled if they are accepted by their peers, co-workers, friends, etc. A major disadvantage of this definition is that the specific behaviours that lead to a persons' acceptance or rejection by peers cannot be identified. Thus, although this definition can provide a useful criterion for screening and for outcome assessment, it is of little use in designing training strategies and programmes for social skills development.

In the behavioural definition of social skills, socially skilled behaviours are characterized as behaviours exhibited in specific situations in which there is maximum probability of reinforcement on one's social behaviour. Based on this definition, Michelson, Sugai, Wood and Kazdin (1983) identified seven assumptions fundamental to any conceptualisation of social skills and for the development of strategies, programmes and activities addressed to people with social skills deficits. Moreover, these points involve the idea that the concept of social skills is more situation specific and learning based than is that of personality or genetically related. These are these seven assumptions:

1. Social skills are primarily acquired through learning (e.g. observation, modelling, rehearsal and feedback).
2. Social skills comprise verbal and nonverbal behaviours.
3. Social skills entail both effective and appropriate initiations and responses.
4. Social skills maximize social reinforcement.
5. Social skills are interactive by nature and entail effective and appropriate responsiveness.
6. Social skill performance is influenced by the characteristics of an environment.
7. Deficits and excesses in social performance can be specified and targeted for intervention.

Though we think sometimes it is difficult to encapsulate a social skills training program and methodology in only one of these three approaches, ARTERY partners agree on putting the emphasis on the behavioural side rather than on peer acceptance or social validity aspects. Nevertheless, the numerous definitions that different experts have contributed under the behavioural approach delimit the contents, consequences or sometimes both aspects of socially skilled behaviour. Some of these definitions are:

Rimm (1974): "Interpersonal behaviour that implies the honest and relatively direct expression of feelings".

Alberti and Emmons (1978): "Behaviour which allows a person to act according to his most important interests, to defend himself without inappropriate anxiety, to comfortably express honest feelings or exercise the personal rights without denying other's their rights".

Kelly (1982): "Mixture of identifiable and learned behaviour which individuals use in interpersonal situations to obtain or maintain the reinforcement of their environment".

Experience demonstrates that socially skilled behaviour should be defined through objectives or aims we want to achieve. Everyday life situations show that it is important to achieve our objectives, maintaining a good atmosphere with our social relationships. Therefore, a good definition of social skills would be one that contemplates both aspects. The following authors try to capture this when they define socially skilled behaviour including both the behaviour exhibited, in terms of contents of social skills, and the outcomes achieved by those reactions:

Phillips (1978): “Degree in which a person can communicate with others in a way that satisfies their own rights, needs, pleasures and obligations with a reasonable degree without damaging the rights, needs, pleasures or similar obligations of another person and in which they share with others a free and open interchange”.

Caballo (1986): “Mixed behaviour emitted by an individual in an interpersonal context that expresses feelings, attitudes, desires, opinions or rights of this individual in an adequate way to the situation, respecting other people’s behaviour, and who generally resolves problems immediately, whilst they minimize the probability of future problems”.

In community life, appropriate social behaviour may be even more important than academic or job skills in determining whether one is perceived as a competent individual (Black & Langone, 1997). For example, Holmes and Fillary (2000) investigated the ability of adults with mild cognitive disabilities to appropriately engage in the “small talk” that is part of any workplace. They noted that workers with cognitive disabilities who demonstrate competence in social skills are generally perceived more positively than those who lack such skills, regardless of task-related skill level. The notion that competence in using social skills will lead to positive perceptions of persons with disabilities can be extended to other vulnerable target groups such as the homeless, migrants, students with special needs, people suffering from mental illness, youths from families at risk, young offenders, victims of alcohol and drug addictions, senior citizens, and all those alienated from mainstream social and cultural life.

Anyone who has tried to improve another person’s social skills knows that there are significant challenges to such an endeavour. Why would you want to improve social skills of vulnerable persons? Most likely, you seek to (1) avoid the negative consequences of inadequate social skills, including loneliness, job loss, or embarrassment at community social interactions; and (2) enjoy the benefits of having good social skills, such as friendship, acceptance from others, and good relationships at the community. Nonetheless, people must see the need for the skills being taught. In a training setting, instructors may help learners to identify the social skills necessary for achieving goals important to them.

Having experienced that the lack of social skills is a barrier to succeed in many areas of life (especially for the most vulnerable groups), teachers, educators, therapists and artists who have participated in ARTERY project, particularly in the pilot phase (developing theatre workshops - see joint CD-rom), agree to identify certain social skills that are lacking in the target groups they are working with in their institutions (people with disabilities, mental illness, homeless and immigrants).

The development of self-esteem, communication, problem solving, enthusiasm and hope to face the future, recognizing and managing feelings, identify and understand each other are some of these abilities. Its development influences the decision-making and implementation of these skills, the ability to cope with problems and ultimately to increase control over their lives in society, in other words, to participate effectively and constructively in different areas of life.

Based on the experiences within ARTERY project, we have identified seven social skills that appear to be missing in the target groups addressed by the ARTERY organizations. They are the following:

1. Self-esteem and confidence, including a positive life-view

Self-esteem is related with a positive way of perceiving yourself and having confidence in the future, which is somehow linked to motivation, but also to important factors such as the energy level to face challenges, the capacity to cope with changes and new situations, the ability to make own decisions, etc. This perception may fit or not what other people perceive about you. Self-esteem is linked to other social skills and has an influence on them and on our ability to interact with society.

2. Recognize and manage feelings

This ability is very important for social development and involves not only recognition of what we feel and why we feel like this, but also management of emotion that is triggered and the capacity to discuss what we feel. We all have feelings; however, we are not always able to recognize and talk about them although they have influence on our behaviour and our ability to solve problems and face new challenges. This ability is both related to the ability to read non-verbal messages sent during communication (postures, gestures, eye contact, etc.) and paraverbal signals (intonation, volume, tone of voice) from others and our-self, what is directly related to empathy.

3. Empathy and assertiveness, including understanding diversity

Identifying what others feel and understanding their feelings is to empathize, but to do that we must be aware of our own feelings. The ability to read the feelings of others and respect the diversity and what others feel as we do ourselves is essential if we do not want to fall into stereotypes such as racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. This ability helps us to form relationships based on respect and growth of all members of the group, where the differences are valued and supported by all members.

4. Communication skills

All interactions between people include communication; hence many of the conflicts arise from its absence. The ability to interpret messages, facial expressions, and feelings is very important. The relationship with others depends largely on the successful communication of intentions without causing negative feelings in the person receiving the message. This group of skills could be formed, among others, by the following sub-skills: verbal communication, giving and receiving feedback, correct expression of feelings, ask questions and answer appropriately, proper handling of verbal messages (when involving words), paraverbal messages (when involving voice, such as intonation, etc.) and non-verbal messages (gestures, posture, eye contact, etc), and visual messages.

5. Interpersonal skills, co-operation with others

These skills allow us to interact with people from different backgrounds, to receive and give support, to develop relationships with others, trust and availability, to strengthen and receive positive reinforcement while accepting constructive criticism. This group of skills is largely linked to the other skills, self esteem, empathy, communication, etc.

6. Problem solving ability, negotiation and planning

The ability to solve problems is related to their identification and the adequacy of the answer. When problem solving is achieved within a group, it is related to the capability to negotiate, to identify what we want to solve, how we want to solve it and understanding what the rest of the group is looking for. Learning from other points of view and the ability to manage our own emotions, are some of the skills needed in addition to those mentioned before. Planning is also inter-related with the ability to solve problems and make decisions and includes identifying one's own desires and goals, exploring possible ways to achieve them, selecting the most appropriate steps to follow short term objectives, and evaluating results at the end of the process.

7. Creativity

Creativity can be found in each of the skills mentioned before and is an essential component in the activities to be developed in the following chapter. For example, it is necessary for conflict resolution, reflection, assessment of options, negotiation, decision making, communication, etc. and of course it is formed by other skills. Creativity comes with knowledge, practice, self-esteem, etc. Therefore, if you develop other skills, you will develop the ability to create and simultaneously to enrich your life both emotionally and intellectually.

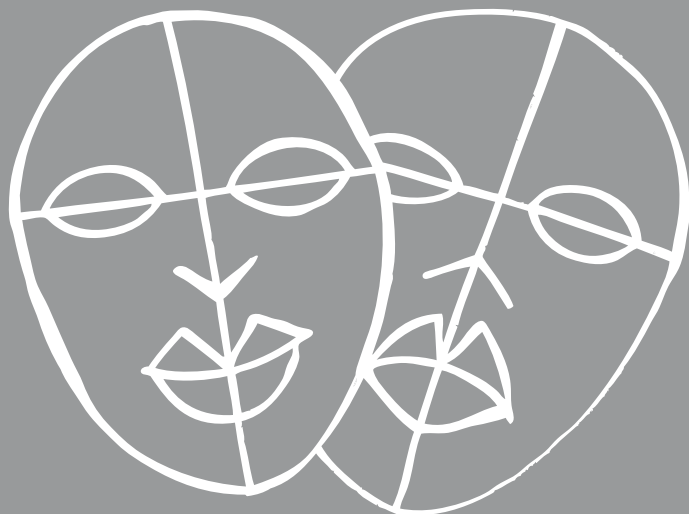
Furthermore, you will notice that many activities developed in this manual work on values which facilitate the social integration of vulnerable people, including codes of conduct, lack of commitment to conventional values, etc. We refer to values that have influence on the lifestyle of vulnerable people, such as sensibility to the rights of other people, admiration for the activities which are carried out by others, attempt to get a good education and understanding the importance of it, refusal to be involve in drugs abuse, respect, etc. Having a moral values system and a positive attitude to life is essential to face challenges and have satisfactory relations with the rest of the community.

The next chapter describes the grass-roots experiences of ARTERY organizations and offers a number of activities and practical hints to develop and/or reinforce the above skills by using art and theatre.



SOCIAL SKILLS RELEVANT TO THE

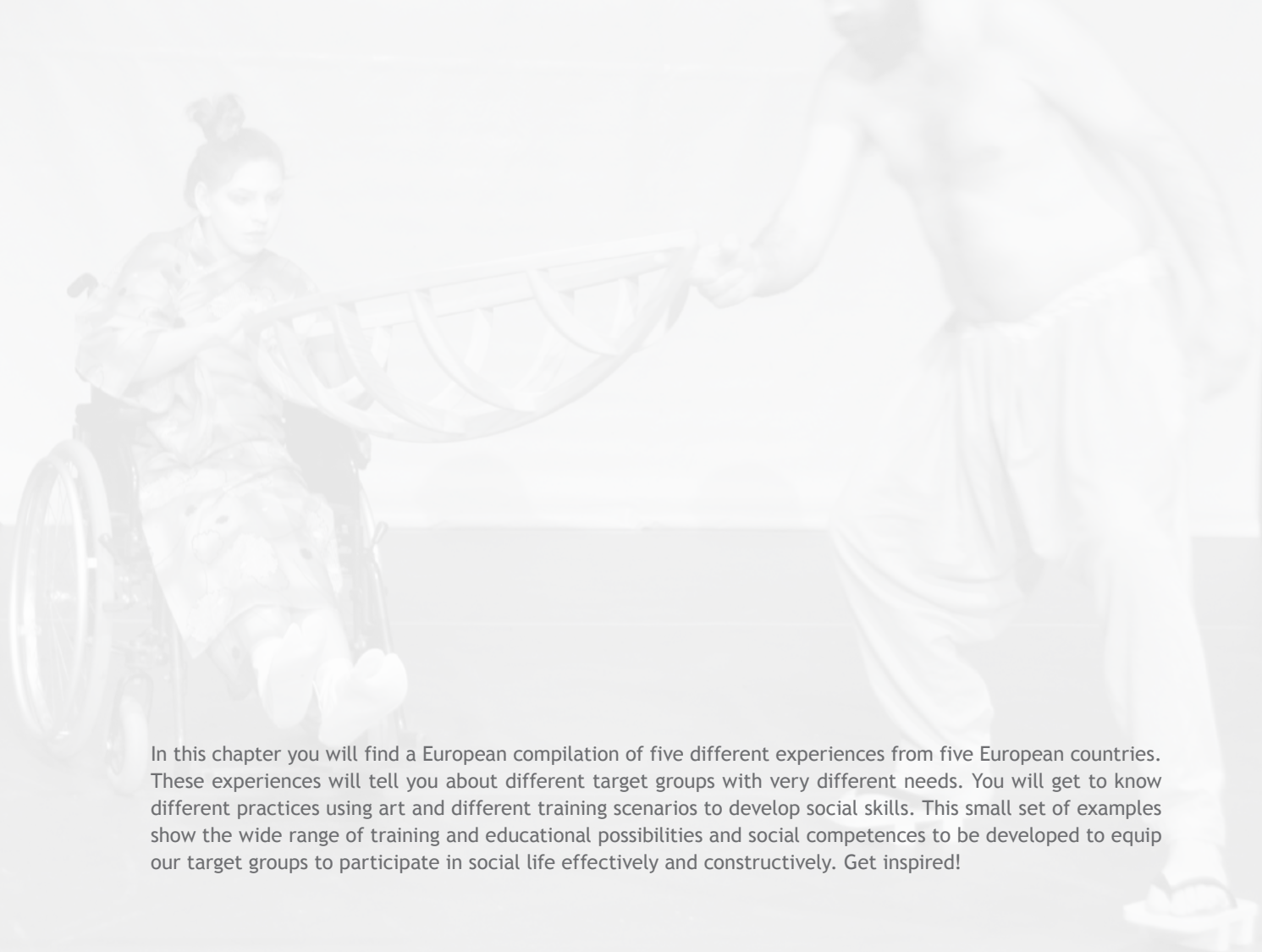
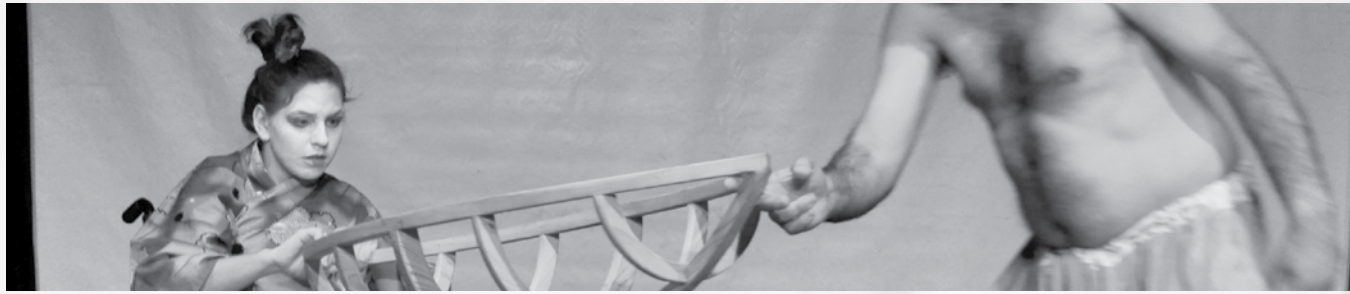
TARGET GROUPS TOOLS & ACTIVITIES



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CHAPTER 5

tools



In this chapter you will find a European compilation of five different experiences from five European countries. These experiences will tell you about different target groups with very different needs. You will get to know different practices using art and different training scenarios to develop social skills. This small set of examples show the wide range of training and educational possibilities and social competences to be developed to equip our target groups to participate in social life effectively and constructively. Get inspired!

DISABLED PERSONS, CHILDREN AND YOUTHS FROM FAMILIES AT RISK, YOUNG OFFENDERS, VICTIMS OF ALCOHOL AND DRUG ADDICTIONS, SENIOR CITIZENS, AND ALL THOSE ALIENATED FROM THE MAINSTREAM OF SOCIAL AND CULTURAL LIFE.

By GRODZKI THEATRE ASSOCIATION

During the ARTERY workshops we ran two theatre groups: one for people with disabilities and another one for young people who need support and adults with disabilities. This integrative group called Grodzki Theatre Junior prepared a performance “The Magic Mountain”, based on the novel of Thomas Mann. It was presented at the PAT Festival organized by the Polish Police. In this book we focused on the theatre group for people with physical, cognitive and relational-emotional disabilities, run at our Occupational Therapy Workshops in arts and life-skills day centre, attended by 30 participants. Theatre workshops in our Occupational Therapy Centre are run three times a week for two hours for those participants who have decided to take part in preparing a given performance.

The beneficiaries want and need to succeed and the task of a theatre instructor is to enable them to achieve success on stage. “It is necessary to give them a feeling of a job well done” - emphasizes Barbara Rau, who has been running theatre groups at Grodzki Theatre Association since 1999, mainly working at the Occupational Therapy Workshops.

FINDING THEIR OWN WAY

The main task of the Occupational Therapy Workshops run by Grodzki Theatre Association is the social and vocational rehabilitation of each participant, aiming at self-development, increased physical skills, assertiveness, coping with everyday tasks and independent living in society. Qualified workshop instructors are employed, as well as a psychologist and a rehabilitation specialist. When beneficiaries have been accepted for 3 years of occupational therapy, they are interviewed in terms of their social skills. Afterwards, personal timetables are prepared for both individual and group activities, according to their needs. The first six weeks of Occupational Therapy Workshops are devoted to getting to know all six units: Journalism and Photography Workshop, Art Therapy Workshop, Design Workshop, Fashion Workshop, Carpentry Workshop, Household Workshop. Afterwards, a participant chooses two workshops which he or she will attend during the next 3 years.

THE POWER OF ART

The motto of Grodzki Theatre Association is that everyone has the right to express himself or herself artistically. Arts and creativity help to break down barriers and motivate people to change their lives - to take up new educational or vocational challenges. The belief that group involvement in creative, artistic activities leads to the self-development of participants lies at the foundation of Grodzki Theatre Association. Its founders, Jan Chmiel and Tomasz Zieliński, both professionally involved in the arts, had run theatre and music workshops for different groups of socially vulnerable children, teenagers and adults, and could see their effects on participants.

“The theatre is magic. Suddenly a group of ten people of various ages, with various ailments and life problems, gets together, and wants to practise. If you accosted somebody in the street and asked them to act in a performance, they would say: ‘Get lost!’ And here, in a group, on stage, an extraordinary thing is happening: a unity of action.”

[Jan Chmiel; founder and director of Grodzki Theatre Association]

Theatre is a social art - it happens for people and with people. It has been the main component of the arts-based therapy used by Grodzki Theatre Association for the last 11 years with various vulnerable groups. One of the aims is to develop social skills - co-operating with others, working in a team, improving communication skills and taking on new tasks and challenges. Theatre activities are also focused on the self-development of each participant - becoming more confident, open and learning to believe in one’s own abilities and talents. Another important focus of theatre work at the Association is artistic form and expression, stimulating creativity and artistic passion.

“Theatre workshops are associated with handing out texts, memorizing them and acting the situation out on stage. We begin from getting to know group members and their getting to know themselves and their potential. Activities of that kind allow one to look at the theatre from a different perspective and focus on the dormant skills everyone possesses” [Jan Chmiel; founder and director of Grodzki Theatre Association]

“I like acting. We move forward with every play.” [Marlena]

“For me this is a continuation of the process of opening up, changing through cooperation with people.” [Alina]

The most characteristic art form used at Grodzki Theatre Association is visual theatre (puppets, masks, large materials). Operating a puppet is not necessarily an additional difficulty for people with disabilities, but makes for better expression and communication. Having an object in one’s hand through which one can speak to the audience makes acting easier and often achieves better results with vulnerable social groups. The attention of

the actor is focused on the puppet/material and not so much on the audience, reducing stage fright. It makes participants less self-conscious and less focused on their disabilities. Theatre workshops run by the Association also involve making puppets - a task delegated to specialists at professional theatres. This activity, together with animating puppets, develops manual skills, improving physical condition and balance.

When arts-for-social-skills are discussed, a question arises: what forms suit best the needs of people with learning difficulties and cognitive or relational-emotional disabilities? Some theatre directors, trainers and NGO workers believe that participants should, most importantly, enjoy what they are doing and that the level of difficulty should be adjusted to their abilities, i.e. lowered. This often leads to dressing people up as frogs, mushrooms, little red-riding hoods or gnomes. This is supposed to be closer to their cognitive understanding of the world than refined puppetry plays. It is, indeed, a greater effort, and sometimes even a struggle to prepare a sophisticated play, with a complex plot, than to engage in nursery school performances. Yet, childish productions draw attention to the fact that actors are disabled. The participants are put into stereotypical roles, their limitations emphasized on stage.

At Grodzki Theatre Association we believe that adults with disabilities should not be dressed up as children, as it can have a humiliating and pitiful effect. They are not nursery school pupils and the task of a trainer is to teach them to live as independently as possible in the adult world. "It is vital to find such theatrical means which will enable a people to become more than they are, to go beyond their limitations" - says Barbara Rau, one of the most experienced trainers of Grodzki Theatre Association. She adds: "Sometimes an actor with a learning disability can't perform a task like a professional actor, but we make sure that he or she knows exactly how it should be done, and this knowledge is a motivation for constant self-improvement. The viewers appreciate the efforts of our participants who succeed at many complex tasks even if they occasionally fail. We often re-stage performances and refine the acting until our productions achieve a professional level."

The groups run by Grodzki Theatre Association prepare many plays for children and perform for them, but the plots are always constructed around educational issues. For example, when a play based on the Moomintroll stories by Tove Janson was produced, chosen by participants, it showed what it is like to be one of the Moomintrolls - amiable creatures, sometimes awkward, who live in their own world. Also, the group discussed how to present death to children. In the end, it was decided to choose an episode from "Moomintrolls in Midwinter" in which a squirrel meets a Lady of the Cold. "It is very important to introduce real-life issues into the plays" - sums up Barbara Rau.

DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS

PARTICIPATING IN GROUPS, TAKING DIFFERENT ROLES (LEADER, MEMBER, OBSERVER)

We need to be able to interact with people in group situations - something that most of us take for granted. Yet, for people with disabilities such situations are often stressful, unpredictable, awkward. Being a member of a group and taking on different roles prepare them for taking up new educational or vocational challenges where they will find themselves in groups (for example, at training courses or in a job).

The area of communication and co-operation with others is certainly difficult for many people with cognitive disabilities and relational-emotional problems who come to the Occupational Therapy Workshops run by Grodzki Theatre Association. Some beneficiaries never talk about themselves and their skills, or are not assertive about their needs, especially in a group situation. Developing social skills in this area is essential to opening educational and vocational opportunities to them.

“I come here because I like talking to people from our group.” [Halinka]

Get inspired!

Theatre activities always take place in a group situation, where participants take on different roles (leader, member, observer). During every workshop process at Grodzki Theatre Association, attention is paid to team-building and integration to create a friendly group environment (see: the Training methods section of this book). This encourages participants to try out different roles, not only on stage, but also in the group. Trainers, who direct the play, always appoint some assistants: a person responsible for reminding others of their text, someone who will look after the costumes and decorations, and a person who will keep an eye on stage movements (remind others where and when they are supposed to move or come out).

One of the participants of the ARTERY workshops, a shy and taciturn person, was given the role of the trainer’s assistant during rehearsals. She was responsible for the stage movements during the play. If she noticed someone wasn’t following the agreed movements (for example, positioning themselves wrongly on stage), she had to correct them. This was a difficult task for someone who was not used to giving instructions to others and speaking out. It boosted her confidence and allowed her to express her opinions in a safe environment. As a result, she became more communicative and assertive.

Another person, of rebellious character, had real difficulties with becoming a group member and taking into account the needs of others. He had his mobile switched on all the time, even though the trainer asked him to switch it off. During one of the rehearsals he started answering the calls, going out of the room. After having been told that the ringtone of his phone was disturbing and made it difficult to go back into the roles, he answered: “But I am not playing any more, I have finished my text.”

The trainer, Barbara Rau, started explaining to him the rules of team work: “We are all responsible for everything. In theatre there is always a live performance, so everyone needs to be vigilant. We need to be open towards others, so that we can help them if necessary, for example, remind them what to do. One shouldn’t ignore fellow actors. They can help you if something goes wrong with your role and give you feedback on your acting: what is good and what can be improved. “The participant finally agreed to have his phone switched off during the rehearsals and he became more integrated with the group.

UNDERSTANDING OF CODES OF CONDUCT AND CUSTOMS IN DIFFERENT ENVIRONMENTS

People with cognitive disabilities and mental illness often find it difficult to understand and follow codes of conduct and customs in different environments. As a result, public situations and interactions with other people, especially strangers, can be very stressful and undermine their self-confidence. Some people with disabilities choose to stay at home to avoid such situations, which is a safer option for them, but inevitably leads to their alienation and exclusion. Teaching various forms of social behaviour enables vulnerable people to participate in an effective and constructive way in society. It is essential for preparing them for working life.

Get inspired!

The theatre activities can help in difficult public situations, e.g. in dealing with issues in offices, shops or with neighbours. People become more self-confident and learn self-presentation: how to put oneself across in the best possible way, how to talk about oneself. People with disabilities who attended the ARTERY theatre group at the Occupational Therapy Workshops faced a variety of public situations. One of them was the ARTERY kick-off meeting when they performed in front of guests from five countries. They achieved both artistic and personal success - after the performance they interacted with the audience by coming up to them and showing their puppets. Some other performances and meetings were also arranged, for example, the premiere of the play “A Gift of River” was attended by staff from the Vocational Rehabilitation Unit and Projects Department at Grodzki Theatre Association. There was an open discussion afterwards as well as informal talks with the actors.

“People with disabilities come across many different situations through theatre. Some of them may never happen in their lives, but others will. They can practice their reactions in a safe environment” - comments the ARTERY workshops trainer, Barbara Rau. “They become more flexible, curious and eager to understand other people’s behaviour. I often hear from the participants of theatre workshops that they are less scared to go out to the town centre or do shopping. I can see that they are more assertive and resistant.”

WILLINGNESS TO IMPROVE ONE’S LIFE AND FULFIL ONE’S POTENTIAL

Personal motivation is one of the key areas which need to be worked on amongst socially vulnerable people. Questionnaires and interviews conducted by people with disabilities who come to the Occupational Therapy Workshops show that they are not really motivated to achieve what they want. This often results from lack of belief in oneself and one’s judgements, which makes it harder, if not impossible, to follow one’s ideas. There is a need for developing self-confidence and self-belief amongst people with disabilities, who have the right to lead a fulfilled lives as valuable individuals.

Get inspired!

The focus of theatre activities at Grodzki Theatre Association is on developing the inherent potentialities of our beneficiaries, so that they become more creative, courageous and open to new experiences. The most important thing is that they awaken or strengthen their curiosity about the world and, consequently, their willingness to get to know it, i.e. to learn and to change.

While running our theatre workshops for vulnerable people we noticed that both the workshop process and its product, a performance, are important. Self-development of participants is an ongoing process, but measurable achievements (plays) are a powerful motivation mechanism. Acting in front of 100 people in one’s own town is not only an achievement, it can be a transformational experience! Including elements of artistic expression and public performances into our theatre workshops means we create visible ‘products’, something our participants are proud of and identify with. We try to prepare performances which are as close to professional theatre productions as possible. In this book you can see some photos from the play “A Gift of River” created during the ARTERY workshops, which was staged at the Beskidy Festival of Small and Big in Bielsko-Biata in front of 200 people.

Public performances bring double fulfilment - the actors feel a sense of personal success and they also experience the appreciation of the audience and other members of the team. "It is very important to provide them with this opportunity to succeed publicly, as it makes them want to experience happiness and fulfilment again in their personal lives" - explains the trainer Barbara Rau. "It prompts them to take their lives into their own hands and look for a job or become a volunteer." One of the participants with learning difficulties, who had attended Barbara's theatre workshops for a few years at the Occupational Therapy Workshops, started playing the main role in her own life. Encouraged by her trainer, she took up a job as a volunteer in a nursery school and turned out to be an indispensable teacher's assistant there. She still attends theatre workshops at Grodzki Theatre Association, where she has moved to a different, integrative group. She often emphasizes how acting helps her to develop and grow. The trainer, Barbara Rau, underlines that preparing a new play is like taking up a new task in life. "At the beginning there is chaos in one's head, but it slowly gets organized into a performance. Arranging and preparing a play is like arranging one's life."

There is always the pressure of time in theatre - actors need to do their actions without delay and with the right timing for the play to gain momentum and achieve the suspense and tension necessary for the viewer to get involved. Also, the music often dictates when to come in and out, becoming a kind of clock on stage. Acting under the pressure of time prepares participants of theatre workshops for situations in real life when one needs to be punctual and efficient.

HOMELESS AND PHYSICALLY DISABLED OR PEOPLE WITH A CERTAIN PSYCHIATRIC DIAGNOSIS

By THEATRE WITH NO HOME

"The different members of our socially excluded group, which consists mostly of homeless and physically disabled or people with a certain psychiatric diagnosis, have different needs and problems."

The most common needs of homeless people: a desire to belong somewhere, to have safe and affordable housing, an opportunity for regular hygienic practices (taking a shower), to find a job, be accepted by society, educate themselves further, develop plans for the future, cease living on the street, establish social relationships with the actively working population, and to help others.

The most common needs of disabled people and people with a psychiatric diagnosis: to be accepted by others despite their disability, find and develop new social contacts, to find a life partner, to have wheelchair access, to become independent, to find employment, to create, to further their education, to develop plans for the future, and to help others.

As you can see, most of the needs of socially excluded people are almost the same. From our point of view the biggest problem for homeless people is that they experience life by living on the street, which means they have a high level of social isolation. This leads to depression, neurosis, alcohol or other drug abuse, and, in some cases, suicide. The second major concern for homeless people is the winter period during which they face a real threat of freezing to death and they need to exert much more effort to find somewhere warm to sleep. During winter they tend to use more alcohol than in summer and miss the rehearsals more often as well. The biggest problem for disabled people is also social isolation. Many have been living in disabled care facilities for a long time, there is a lack of wheelchair access in Slovakia, and there are very few workshops and leisure activities available for people with disabilities.

The call for action: Bringing homeless and disabled people together through some joint activity (like theatre) is an innovative approach that enables the members of both groups to meet some of their specific needs. Homeless people have the opportunity to assist the disabled, which requires them to be more responsible. Therefore there is less alcohol abuse and finally they are not so socially isolated. On the other hand, disabled people through working with the homeless have better contact with the “real world”, are also less socially isolated and can learn new survival strategies. They provide (and feel empowered by providing) to the homeless a clear example of the ability to overcome limitations, be they physical or mental.

FINDING THEIR OWN WAY

We recognise and evaluate the needs of our social group through:

- ◇ consultation
- ◇ diagnostic interview
- ◇ questionnaire
- ◇ drama-therapy techniques
- ◇ creative/art-therapy techniques
- ◇ observation
- ◇ feedback from clients and members in the team

As our social group is very diverse (even amongst the homeless there are people with disabilities, for example dyslexia or physical disabilities which work against them in finding regular employment), our analytical methods to ascertain their social skills and developmental needs are very open, free and flexible. Usually during rehearsals, various situations appear and by evaluating them we find out which social skills we need to develop or

strengthen in the client. We use an individual approach, based on the possibilities and capabilities of each individual client in specific situations. For example we teach an actor suffering from dyslexia his text by reading it out aloud to him, accompanied by certain movements, providing a form of kinetic and auditory learning for better retention. We avoid using very long and complicated diagnostic methods because it discourages our clients and makes them feel uncomfortable or lose confidence.

THE POWER OF ART

We believe that the theatre provides a very friendly, non-confrontational, entertaining and attractive way to teach and reinforce social skills for our clients. When we perform we are not only showing the actual theatrical performance but also what our actors have learnt during the drama-therapy rehearsal sessions.

The art and drama therapy achieves the following with our clients: teaches them to communicate in an assertive, yet non-violent way, makes them feel that they belong somewhere, teaches them to accept different opinions and points of view, enables them to create and be creative, fosters a safe haven with friendly human relationships, helps them acquire new social contacts, gives them the opportunity to help others and feel useful by being able to give and improves their financial situation. They can try new roles and live vicariously through their character, through theatre they experience various emotions and talk about them. Thanks to the theatre they are able to travel and get to know other cultures and even languages. Art and drama therapy teach them to be responsible and punctual, and it allows them to focus on their bodies. During theatrical performances our clients (actors) experience catharsis and success. The applause after a performance means a lot to them- it shows that they are being accepted by and belong to this society. They are acquiring a new social status, which helps to increase their self-confidence. Greater self-confidence also nurtures success in other areas of their lives, for example health, finding a job and finding a life partner. Some activities and techniques used by the Theatre With No Home are:

- ◊ Physical activity (work with the body): concentration on physical sensations, treatment of negative experiences or trauma, development of motor skills, creativity and self-expression, improvement of health, sensibility, increasing self-confidence.
- ◊ Voice exercises: concentration and memory exercises, learning new words, improving pronunciation and expanding vocabulary, improving breathing and vocal range, increase formal or more polite communication skills, increasing self-confidence.
- ◊ Analysis of theatrical texts: concentration, memory and logic exercises, learning to take time to think, finding connections, formulating opinions and points of view, understanding other people's fortunes, becoming more sensible, improving reading out loud and learning by heart, increasing self-confidence.
- ◊ Painting (art techniques): concentration, creativity, expressing feelings, self-presentation, aesthetic experience, increasing self-confidence.

- ◇ Theatre rehearsals: a long-term process where we learn to become one team, improve our teamwork, cooperation, assertiveness, confidence, persistence, punctuality, creative thinking, enhance sense of achievement and belonging, develop the ability to handle stress better (such as stage fright), conflict resolution in a friendly manner, rewards and financial remuneration, reinforcing good hygiene practices, complying with the rules in the theatre.
- ◇ Theatre performances (associated with travel to other cities and countries): discovering new cultures, customs and languages, visiting various cultural events, museums and galleries, staying in a nice environment (hotel, guest house), gaining new social contacts, learning to present yourself, team cooperation, assistance, stress management, increasing confidence, financial reward and respecting the rules.

DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS

SELF-CONFIDENCE

Self-confidence is essential to success and satisfaction at work, within social contacts, partnership, and generally in everything that we do in life. It is the key to motivation and it fuels the desire to embark on new or unknown projects. It is necessary for learning new things and dealing with unusual situations, and for finding a job. Disabled and homeless people typically have low self-confidence. They consider themselves unattractive, incompetent, inferior, and what is more, they have often failed before. These negative self-perceptions prevent them from meeting and getting to know new people, finding a job, being sociable, fulfilling their dreams and so on. Their low confidence creates a big barrier that does not allow them to express themselves fully. If we increase their self-confidence we will enable them to develop their talents, help remove social isolation and increase their chances for success in all areas. Self-confidence comprises also the ability to accept our own failures so that we can learn from them for next time. Increasing one's self-confidence requires positive thinking.

Get inspired!

- ◇ Defining clear and realistic goals (for example: learning up to three sentences of the desired text)
- ◇ Highlighting and verbalising the positive qualities and abilities of the clients
- ◇ Establishing a clear and convenient structure for theatre rehearsals (time, location, number of exercises, breaks)
- ◇ Encouraging and rewarding members of our theatre group
- ◇ Positive approach

- ◇ Adapting the objectives and methodology to the disability of clients
- ◇ Individual approach to clients
- ◇ Ongoing reminding of previous small successes
- ◇ Creation of situations in which clients will certainly succeed
- ◇ Performing exercises in which the client wins
- ◇ Applause after theatre performances
- ◇ Financial reward for performances
- ◇ Travelling
- ◇ Analysing failures, without negative emotions and self-recrimination
- ◇ Practising other skills (e.g. painting, dancing, foreign language, negotiation, etc.)
- ◇ Successful coping with stage fright
- ◇ Learning to accept themselves and others

COMPLIANCE WITH THE RULES

Create a safe environment and safe relationships. It is important to create and set the rules together with the clients and make sure they agree with them. Homeless people tend to have problems complying with rules in general. On the street it is normal that social rules get broken or violated, often the “stronger” person wins. If we ask and require that the clients comply with the rules, we are actually helping them to get rid of the uncertainty of how they can or cannot act. Setting the rules also prevents violent conflict resolutions and allows the therapist (teacher or coach) to help. The rules should be adopted at the beginning of the working process with clients.

Some examples of the rules in our theatre are:

- ◇ coming to the theatre rehearsals and performances on time
- ◇ avoiding the use of alcohol or any other drugs before and during the rehearsals and performances
- ◇ accepting each other
- ◇ resolving conflicts in a friendly manner (no swearing, physical violence)
- ◇ no slandering one another or talking behind each other’s backs
- ◇ no heckling
- ◇ turning off mobile phones during the rehearsals and performances

It is very important to verify with each client that they understand every word from the set of rules, e.g. explain what the word “to accept” means. After adopting the rules it is also necessary to set penalties for non-com-

pliance and clients should agree with the penalties as well. For example, whoever comes to the rehearsal under the influence of alcohol or any other drug cannot rehearse or perform. Whoever starts to be aggressive against other members of the theatre receives a temporary ban which means he or she cannot rehearse or perform for a certain period of time.

Get inspired!

In the Theatre With No Home we develop this skill by:

- ◇ Writing the rules down on a paper
- ◇ Reminding everyone of the rules now and then and adapting the rules if needed as we go
- ◇ Reminding and explaining again why the rules and complying with them is important
- ◇ Planning the activities so that clients would be able to do them
- ◇ Creating a convenient structure and length of the theatre rehearsals
- ◇ Developing new skills and addressing conflicts in an assertive manner
- ◇ Praising clients when they comply with the rules
- ◇ Issuing appropriate and clear penalties
- ◇ Not creating negative precedents
- ◇ Being a therapist, teacher or coach, by setting good examples and not breaking the rules ourselves creating a positive climate in the team

Key & Key Communications' workshops focus on interpersonal and intercultural communication targeting especially migrants. As 'adults-in-mobility' they often have to face different ways of communication, styles of communication they are not used to, which may lead to misinterpretation, frustration, even discrimination, stereotyping and racism.

Communication is not only what we intend (consciously) to convey, it is also what the other (our interlocutor) receives, i.e. perceives and understands; in other words: the effect of our communication on the other, produced by our words (verbal messages), visual elements such as colours, shapes, symbols (visual messages), our body (non-verbal messages) and our voice (paraverbal messages).

Working in the field of intercultural communication not simply on a theoretical basis but on a very empirical basis, Key & Key Communication typically has to face two different target groups:

- ◇ Long-term migrants, i.e. adults-in-mobility living and working or studying for years in Italy.
- ◇ Refugees and asylum seekers.

The first group usually has a good knowledge of Italian. The second group, being usually newcomers, know little or even no Italian at all. With participants from this group the communication has to take place through special strategies making use of visual and non-verbal messages and - when possible - various languages: languages the trainer knows as well as through translation by other participants in languages they know and the trainer does not.

FINDING THEIR OWN WAY

First of all, we know by theory and by empirical work (field work as well as training work) that communication is filtered by our imagination, our perception, our feelings and our mental representations (cf. Gumperz 1982). The more these factors are distant between one interlocutor and another the more the communication is at risk to fail. Related to this we know that the more communication skills one possesses the more social and therefore also professional opportunities he or she usually gets.

Intercultural communication is first of all interpersonal communication. Therefore, in our courses we always start with the basics of interpersonal communication, i.e. with awareness raising of what communication means and which are its tools and the different effects one can obtain constructively or destructively. Such awareness can be reached through specific exercises: listening exercises, dialogue exercises, colour exercises and body language exercises. Such exercises show us the awareness in communication a person/group possesses and, related to this, the specific social skills one is able to perform. This determines how much a trainer insists on a specific type of exercise. For instance: whether a participant is able to listen, to ask questions before answering in order to assure common understanding with his/her interlocutor. While it is relatively easy to understand how communication works (knowledge), it is not so easy to use it effectively (skills) and the most difficult is to acquire a special disposition for constructive communication being able to avoid or overcome conflict situations. All these implications may be amplified when two (or more) interlocutors meet referring to different background knowledge: indeed, the less we share the background knowledge with our interlocutor(s) the more is communication at risk of failing.

THE POWER OF COMMUNICATION

Acquiring these basic communication skills enable individuals to face specific everyday situations such as:

- ◇ work situations
- ◇ doctor-patient interactions
- ◇ bureaucratic-institutional settings.

These three main fields correspond to basic needs:

- ◇ work to survive and reach satisfaction
- ◇ physical and mental health
- ◇ physical and social security

In these three basic fields it is important to develop social skills which can be defined as follows:

- ◇ how to present oneself generally and specifically for a job
- ◇ how to ask for help and express one's health problems
- ◇ how to fill out forms and get respected one's rights and needs

These social skills are necessarily based on interpersonal communication skills. They cannot be performed without communicating. Adults-in-mobility can learn to understand that communication might be managed in various and different ways and that one mustn't judge immediately one's interlocutor because he or she communicates in a way one is not used to. This helps to:

- ◇ overcome frustration
- ◇ learn to ask in order to clarify and negotiate the meaning of one's interlocutor's message
- ◇ learn to observe before judging
- ◇ learn to learn about differences between oneself and another individual

Adults-in-mobility can learn to get what they need and want through a constructive and convincing communication. They learn to present themselves in a convincing way acquiring thus more self-esteem and security.

The training activities we use focus on one side on the communication difficulties and challenges and on the other side on how to overcome such difficulties and how to use the communication tools constructively, where constructively means to reach one's objectives respecting our interlocutor's face and self-esteem.

Obviously, this is easy to define but not at all easy to apply. Therefore, first of all, it is important to make our participants aware of such difficulties through concrete exercises which make them emerge.

Such exercises regard all four communication planes:

- ◇ verbal communication, which is achieved through words (whether spoken or written)
- ◇ paraverbal communication, which is achieved through one's voice while speaking (i.e. while producing words our voice conveys meaning that is not made explicit; like in body language the meaning conveyed by our voice can substitute words, discourses, integrate them or even contradict them)
- ◇ non-verbal communication (also called body language), which is achieved through our body regard less of whether one is speaking or not (it can even substitute words, discourses, also integrate or contradict them)
- ◇ visual communication, which is achieved by various visual means (colours, shapes, images, symbols) one does not produce through one's body but through objects we wear or which are around us and influence our communication.

In an encounter where the interlocutors refer to different experience and cultural background (expectations, mental representations, behaviour models and values) communication difficulties can easily happen even without interlocutors being aware of it.

For each communication plane exercises, the difficulties in communicating are pointed out: only through experiencing such difficulties one becomes aware of them for oneself and for the others, can acquire skills to prevent them and, eventually, to overcome these difficulties when they happen.

DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS

ENSURING MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING

Communication is all about understanding each other. Mutual understanding therefore implies several skills:

- ◇ listening carefully
- ◇ repeating and/or rephrasing what our interlocutor has said
- ◇ negotiating meaning
- ◇ meta-communicating

Get inspired!

There are two exercises to start to acquire these skills: the first exercise is useful to reach an awareness of what can happen if we do not listen carefully; the second exercise offers a concrete tool which makes active listening easier. The discussion of what is happening during these exercises offer participants opportunity to talk about their personal meanings, negotiate their meanings and thus initiate a practice of meta-communication.

Exercise 1 “Listening to a story: what is true, what is false, is there enough information”

The trainer reads a story with many implicit meanings; the participants get a sheet with a number of statements. After having listened to the story, they have to decide for each statement whether it is true, false or whether the story did not offer enough information to decide whether it is true or false.

The story contains many traps; the traps are due to the implications certain words may have for someone, but not for someone else. The purpose of the exercise consists in making emerge that when speaking, our words can never be completely explicit with the meaning we intend to convey and that there is often a gap between what one intends to say and what our interlocutor understands instead. The more the cultural and experiential backgrounds differ, the bigger this gap can be. This shows that active listening is important but that it does not guarantee mutual understanding and that we have to learn to negotiate our meaning and talk about our own communication (meta-communicating).

Exercise 2 “Controlled dialogue”

This exercise consists of carrying out a dialogue on a controversial issue: one of the interlocutors is in favour while the other is against. Each has to convince the other, but in doing so, each interlocutor has to repeat what the former dialogue partner has just said. Other two participants have the role of observers. After the exercise

lasting maximum 5 minutes, interlocutors and observers discuss what has happened and why, concentrating on the difficulty of repeating and the disadvantages of the use of repetition as well as the advantages of it.

These exercises are the basis for acquiring skills in asking questions in order to check and clarify one's understanding. This communication skill can be exercised through simulations and role-plays related to the above mentioned three contexts:

- ◇ work situations
- ◇ doctor-patient interactions
- ◇ bureaucratic-institutional settings

In the same role-plays, another communication skill can also be exercised: repairing and negotiating meaning, especially social meaning. No one is able to communicate without making "errors" - not simply linguistic errors, but social errors. Such incidents one can learn to repair.

MANAGING THE USE OF COLOURS

Colours have an instant effect on an individual and influence his or her communication. Black e.g. often has the effect of closing a conversation, creating a barrier between people, while red can have an aggressive effect, blue a calming effect and so on. It is important, especially in many public situations, to be aware of these effects and take them into account, considering that being a 'foreigner', a 'migrant', may entail social disadvantages and even exclusion. Knowing about the negative and positive effects of colours, and using them in a way appropriate to the general context and the specific situation, can help to overcome the social disadvantage.

Eventually, this knowledge becomes the basis for an understanding of the symbolic nature of colours used in different countries. Thus it makes a difference if someone from Ghana (West Africa) associates the brown colour to the earth and someone else from a European country instead to old age. While the psychological effect of colours is rather universal, the symbolic use of colours is culture-bound.

Get inspired!

Exercise 1 “Colours - moods, activities and feelings”

Participants will first reflect on colours to be associated with certain moods, activities and feelings. Although this association is on one hand subjective, on the other hand it is determined by the universal psychological characteristic of a colour and therefore most of the persons, independently from their cultural background, will associate red with passion and black with something sad and negative.

Exercise 2 “The colours in my life”

Once this knowledge has been acquired, the trainer will ask participants to tell a personal experience when a certain colour played a specific role in their life.

Exercise 3 “Colours in my culture”

Going through this process of awareness gaining, participants will later be able to realize the symbolic use of colours in their national flag or in wearing clothes for certain ceremonies, such as a funeral for which different people wear different colours: white (e.g. in China) or black (in most Western societies), dark blue (South Togo and South Benin) or red & black (in Ghana). This can also help understanding other people’s concept of life, reflected by the use of a specific colour for a specific important event in one’s life, such as birth, death, wedding, etc.

BEING ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THE SOCIAL AND METAPHORICAL MEANING A VOICE MAY CONVEY WHILE SPEAKING

Not many people are aware of the fact that we convey social and metaphoric meaning through our voice. Like body language, our voice may substitute words, discourses, integrate or even contradict them.

It can often be observed that people increase the volume of their voice when talking to a foreigner, as if the higher volume facilitated understanding and without checking the language competence that the adult-in-mobility has. But rising the voice volume often has a negative effect on the hearer, especially when in his/her culture this is associated with bad education.

Therefore, such paraverbal message may scare an adult-in-mobility who perceives it as scolding. In reality, rising the volume of voice may convey a different meaning, i.e. that the person sending this message is in difficulty, or is nervous and does not know what to do, how to react, especially in a situation where the adult-in-mobility does not understand.

As a Philippine participant reported in one of our workshops, in the Philippines the use of a high voice volume is a sign of bad education (see example reported on the ARTERY platform under Paraverbal communication). It is important for adults-in-mobility to know that a certain voice element (volume, speed, intonation, emphasis, pause, etc.) may have a different meaning in the migration country than he or she is used to or expects.

Also in many African countries lowering one's voice volume, while coming near to a person, does not mean, as it may be the case in European countries, which the person is going to tell a secret to the other, but simply that he or she respects the other person.

To know about such differences and the possible implications of the use of one's voice may be even more important than knowing the grammatical rules of a language.

Get inspired!

Exercise "Voice - moods and feelings"

The trainer establishes a list of simple words to be pronounced in different ways expressing different moods or feelings. Each participant is invited to try out one of these moods or feelings, the other participants have to guess what moods or feelings he/she wanted to express. In this way everybody becomes more aware of his/her voice and what he/she conveys. It also becomes clear that not each participant necessarily perceives the other's voice in the same way.



BEING ABLE TO UNDERSTAND THE SOCIAL AND METAPHORICAL MEANING OF ONE'S BODY LANGUAGE WHILE SPEAKING OR BEING SILENT

Body language, although having some universal meaning, is influenced rather culturally and one can make easily a social error through a gesture, an eye contact or a body contact conceived to be “wrong” by our interlocutor. Thus in most Western societies children learn to look into the interlocutors’ eyes while speaking because otherwise they would be perceived as insincere, insecure or even untrustworthy. However, in many other countries a person is not allowed to keep a long eye contact, especially if the interlocutor is of a higher status or elder than the speaker or a man speaking to a woman.

Likewise, the management of eye contact, physical contact as well as the interpersonal distance is culture-specific. In some societies, people are used to stay closer to each other without being embarrassed because of that, in others, keeping a greater distance is preferred. In some societies (e.g. in Afghanistan), it is not allowed that a woman and a man shake hands while greeting each other, in others (e.g. West Africa, Germany) shaking hands for greeting is very important, in some (e.g. Italy) it is not so important. Greeting is one of the first contacts between unknown people, and later as well when they meet again and say goodbye.

Our body always receives and reveals some information whether we want it or not. It may reveal our social status, our age, gender, profession, physical state, feelings, and emotions. This is why it is so important to be aware of our body talking, and when with different cultural background it is extremely important to know about the main ritual gestures in order to avoid socially and culturally inadequate gestures on one hand, and, on the other hand, to be aware that in a different society certain communicative rituals (greeting, apologising, congratulating, etc.) may be accompanied by a different body language.

Get inspired!

In order to make participants aware of the importance of our body in communication, the trainer proposes different exercises.

Exercise 1 “Facial expressions”

Trainer shows a sheet with a series of caricatured facial expressions (laughing, happy, sad, angry, etc.) and trainees define each expression.

Exercise 2 “Greeting ritual and interpersonal distance”

Trainer will ask two participants do perform a typical gesture of compliment in front of the group; then the participants will talk about it: how they perceived the gesture and if it give them any context information.

Exercise 3 "Observation of videos"

Trainer proposes to watch e.g. a TV talk show; trainees are invited to observe carefully the body language (non-verbal messages) and describe what they see.

Exercise 4 "Role play"

Trainer invites participants to invent a short story and to perform it in a role-play. This simulation is video-recorded in a different space than the plenary room. All participants, in groups of maximum two or three persons, invent a story and these are again video-recorded. These videos are later shown in the plenary group where the audience are invited to observe each body language element and describe it in a neutral, non-judging way. The whole process facilitates learning to observe and to suspend any judgement. When interacting with people from different cultural background, this skill is extremely important to avoid stereotyping, discriminating and even racist behaviour.

STUDENTS WHO NEED SPECIAL SUPPORT

By AGRICOLA CENTRE FOR EDUCATION AND TRAINING

The workshops in Agricola Centre for Education and Training are aimed at learners with special needs. Groups taking part were "OLE" (Learning to take over the reins of my life), "Arjen Suola" (The spice of everyday life) and „"Kasvua Käsillä" (Growth at hand with hands).

"OLE" ("Learning to take over the reins of my life") training is aimed at people who are recovering from mental health problems and therefore need support. This course aims at developing learners' self-esteem, social competences and learning skills, as well as improving their possibilities to apply for further education. "OLE" learners live in the student dormitory, in supported housing units or independently. The learner has both right and possibility to attend this training from 1 to 3 years and all "OLE" learners study together in the same class. There are 13 learners participating in this training at the moment, aged between 20 and 46 years. The assistant instructor of the "OLE" group works both with the teacher and independently in supporting and supervising the learners. The strength of the "OLE" group is in its members; the age structure and different backgrounds of the learners enable them to learn from and with the peer group. In addition to this, the motivation of the learners can be seen as one of the most important strengths of the group. On the other hand, the heterogeneity of the group is one of the biggest challenges as well as developing the learners' self-esteem and strengthening their identity.

“Arjen Suola” (“The spice of everyday life”) training is aimed at adult disabled people as well as adults who are recovering from mental health problems. The aims of the training are to brighten up learners’ everyday life, to support the development of the learners’ personality and to support the capability of living and acting in groups and in society. “Arjen Suola” learners are between 20 and 70 years old and they live in supported housing units or independently in Pieksämäki area. The size of the group varies daily; usually it is between 8 and 12 learners. Some learners attend “Arjen Suola” training once or twice a week and many of them have been attending this training for several years. Also with this group, the heterogeneity is quite a challenge for teachers and supervisors. This group is also heterogeneous when talking about the learners’ literacy skills; some of the learners can read and write well, some of them cannot read or write at all. The teacher and the special needs assistant of the group work together in supporting and supervising the learners. Some of the learners have their own personal assistants who also attend the class, as well as the assistants from supported housing units.

Arts and textile work are emphasized in the “Kasvua Käsillä” (“Growth at hand with hands”) training, which takes a year. Some of the participants need special support and some of them are immigrants. The age structure of this group varies a lot, between 20 and 50, and some of the learners have participated in this course already earlier. The assistant instructor of the “Kasvua Käsillä” group attends all the lessons and co-operates with the teacher.

FINDING THEIR OWN WAY

All the learners joining the different groups are interviewed before starting the training. Many of the mentally disabled needing special support have a tutor or a guardian, who is also consulted on the needs and competences of the student. The personal willingness and/or motivation of the learner are of course important. Those recovering from mental health problems also need to have a physician’s statement of their schooling ability and ability to co-operate with others and stating that they do not have strong fears of social situations. As a matter of fact in educational context, the ability to participate in group activities is important. Concerning the mentally disabled persons, e.g. aggressively behaving or very restless persons cannot be accepted as learners. They must also be able to manage the everyday routines. In the course of the training, personal and group evaluations will be conducted, where participation, development and the learner’s needs and challenges will be considered.

THE POWER OF ART

For all of the groups one of the main objectives is to boost self-esteem: to recognize and acknowledge one's own value and uniqueness, strengthening one's own positive identity and searching for the value of one's own actions. It is important in this process that the learner's inner tale and inner speech evolve into the opening up of new possibilities. According to Michelle Borba (Kokkinen, Rantanen - Väntsi, Tuomola 2008, p.87) a healthy self-esteem is built upon five steps as follows: 1) security, 2) selfhood and self-knowledge, 3) community awareness and affiliation, 4) mission and purpose, and 5) competences and accomplishments.

A safe small group with a positive, caring and supportive atmosphere and secure relationships enables reflection on your own identity and issues. Artistic activities offer the possibility of indirect communication through materials, media or different roles, which for many feels more secure than revealing their own feelings directly. Artistic activities enable an individual to be and feel safe in a secure relationship through distancing. Artistic activities give a person a feeling of individuality, new experiences and build a realistic image of the person's own roles as well as of his/her physical, psychological and social qualities. Art is about dialoguing with materials and instruments, enabling also the change in one's own life story and inner speech to turn into something more positive. According to Kokkinen, Rantanen - Väntsi and Tuomola (2008, p.84), to be able to think positively about yourself strengthens your self-esteem, by changing your inner speech and turning it into something positive and encouraging. In addition to this, your self-esteem strengthens when you do things you enjoy and which give you pleasure and good feelings or when you are given praise for the things you do. When a person strives to overcome his or her fears by doing the very things that scare him/her, the things that feel uncomfortable or difficult, it will strengthen his/her self-esteem. Recalling the positive experiences and successes is good for the self-esteem. It is strengthening for a person to accept his/her fallibility, while striving to turn the negative and restrictive ways of thinking and beliefs into positive, encouraging oneself and opening up chances. Sharing and recalling good experiences in a group, giving encouraging feedback to others as well as receiving such feedback create a good basis for progress.

The aim of the training is to encourage learners to autonomous work both in studies and in other fields of individual, communal and social life. An autonomous person is able to direct and assess on his or her own initiative his or her needs and goals and to choose and put in practice different operating strategies. Autonomous work is active, goal-oriented and structured action, where the person takes responsibility for his or her own life and choices. Several different art forms are combined in our work. Visual arts play a central role, but combined with narrative methods as well as with theatrical expression. Often a picture, an object or a material is a gateway to the verbalization of experiences, feelings and thoughts. Verbalization is not always necessary.

It is essential to be seen and accepted, but also to see and accept others' pictures and experiences. The work is realized in groups, but gives room also to individual expression.

Work with visual arts

In visual arts we work through different forms of artistic expression, materials and instruments, which gives perspective and distance but also enables joining the expression to the actor's own life experiences. This allows the opening up of new perspectives. According to Van Marissing (Rankanen, p.36) art is a process where we shape and model the existing reality.

◇ Perception of the self through collages made of natural materials and objects

One of our teachers worked for the "OLE" group on a process of picture collages using natural materials. A self-portrait was formed with natural materials (with at least 5 different elements), answering to the question: what are you like? Then the learners wrote about their picture and the picture was also verbally presented to the others. The pictures were photographed, the photos were laminated and the hanging strings were decorated. The pictures were exhibited at the school as well as at the town library.

It was important for these exercises that the learners completed them; in order for them to feel that the self-portraits are important and valuable. The pictures are exhibited in a beautiful and dignified way giving valuing visibility to the students. The striving and completing efforts were hard, but the students learned that the final result was well worth it. Choosing a material, an object or a picture is already an autonomous act.

◇ Collage made of photos from magazines

One of our teachers has processed with the groups "Arjen suola" ("The spice of everyday life") and "Kasvua käsillä" ("Growth at hand with hands") the perception of one's favourite colour by letting the learners search for such pictures in magazines where their favourite colour is present. Then those pictures are pasted on a paper to form a collage. So one's own favourite colour concretizes in different shades and different contexts: objects, flowers, landscapes, surfaces, patterns and not just plain red or whatever. Telling about one's favourite colour and its occurrences helps the learner to perceive differences and details and to name them. The learners continued by preparing a collage called My Colour Mandala using different yarn and fabric materials and recycled handiworks. The group organized an exhibition with their teacher.

◇ Making of figures, puppets or masks

One of our teachers directed a process of making figures of Well-being with paper. These figures were made in 3D with one group and with another group they were flat paper puppets based on stories told by the learners, and these paper puppets were also used for acting.

Narrative methods

Narrative methods can be realized both orally and in writing. Every human being has a life story which needs to be told in order to analyze one's own being as a human and to open up a chance to change. A life story can be told by means of a short metaphor or in sentences and stories. For example choosing an object to describe oneself is an object metaphor. Teemu, one male student, chose a wooden cow: "Cows do nothing but bask in the sun. I like lazing around, I'm comfort-loving like a cow, but even cows take care of their business". The person expresses by the means of the chosen object his or her feeling of the moment and at the same time gives information to the instructor about his/her present situation. An object, a cut out picture or a picture made by oneself or a press cutting collage may be used as a stimulus for an individual or group narration.

Narration can also consist of The Story Crafting Method where the storyteller chooses what he or she wants to tell and the instructor writes it down word by word, reads it to the teller, and the teller can then complete the story. Other forms of narration are e.g. individual or group writing.

Group writing and also group performing make both writing and performing more accessible.

DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS

INTERACTIVITY IN THE GROUP

A feeling of belonging to a group and being accepted, needed and appreciated as a person is important to a human being, as well as feeling approved of and respected by the others. It is important to learn how to exist as a self, within oneself, to show consideration for others, for the group, sharing experiences with the group, to be giving, listening and appreciating the others. Taking the others into consideration and observing the rules of the group.

Get inspired!

- ◇ Visual art gives a person possibility to create individual work, but sharing your experiences with the group is part of the work.
- ◇ Narrative methods teach you to express your own ideas, but in the group you also learn listening and concentrating in the situation. One form of narration is e.g. individual or group writing. In the group writing you can use as stimuli self-made shapes or chosen objects which are set on their own place with an empty sheet of paper in front of each. Participants start with their own object or shape. The objective is to write about each object, whatever comes to your mind, a word, a sentence, or a poem. After a certain period of time determined by the instructor, the participants switch places. The place switching will go on until everyone is back at his/her initial place. A swan shape inspired the learners to produce the following texts: Blue and white - swan - Noble, beautiful, imposing - Freedom, beauty of nature - garbage bag - Beautiful swan. I like swans. They are beautiful birds. - Freedom, don't chain yourself. - A swan is a beautiful and white bird - Good looking - freedom - Swan song - white. Group writing and also group performing make both writing and performing more accessible. The texts written in group were read aloud in small groups with the objects standing on the table. The table with the figures covers the reader; this is hoped to lower the threshold of doing and participating.
- ◇ Theatre exercises create safety atmosphere in the group at the beginning and common goals - theatre performance or exhibition give possibilities to co-operate.

FACE NEW CHALLENGES

One of the main objectives of using different artistic activities in education is to turn passive receivers into active participating actors. For those living in institutions and large housing units, life becomes easily institutionalized because they receive their food and many other things ready to consume. Why strive or bother when things are done by others and running smoothly. Concentration is short-sighted and completing things is difficult. The learners give up, leaving things halfway and not wanting to strive. They are afraid of failure or they do things by force. Arts are a world of possibilities where everyone is his own master and where one can venture to new experiences and new perspectives.

Get inspired!

Visual arts involve concrete doing. Instruments help concretizing, perceiving and becoming aware of things. Through an instrument - an object, materials taken from the nature, paper, or a puppet - the learner will discover new aspects and also new skills that had existed unnoticed until then, within him/herself, as well as within the other members of the group. This will encourage the learner to try out new things that may have seemed impossible until then. The learners will learn how to set realistic goals, to make plans, strive, stay concentrated, to tolerate uncertainties and to complete tasks. Presenting one's own works and processes to others, viewing and listening to the works and processes of others teaches to appreciate your own and others' works. The process of doing and experiencing, feeling and reflecting is individually important as well as for the equality within the group.

VIEW ONESELF AS VALUABLE

Artistic activities are an essential part in the training of groups needing special support. In a group of mentally disabled, for example, some of the learners have not had much schooling and some of them have a very weak or nonexistent literacy level. Artistic activities enable them to participate on the level of doing and experiencing, offering them feelings of successful adventure, strengthening their self-esteem. They can express themselves, their thoughts and feelings through arts, produce knowledge of their own and make themselves visible as equal human beings. Through arts they become visible to themselves, to the group, to the entire educational establishment/school community and through exhibitions and performances also to the townspeople. They learn to appreciate their own doings and achievements, works made with their own hands, feeling comfortable in different roles on the stage. They find they can be proud of their own exhibited works. Everybody has the right to come out as a unique person, valuable as such.

Get inspired!

An object, a cut out picture or a picture made by oneself or a press cutting collage may be used as a stimulus for an individual or group narration. For example in the group "Arjen suola" everyone made a press cutting collage on a sheet of paper about things related to home. They told stories about homes, about loved ones, about close relatives or pets that died. Those pictures sparked off both memories and dreams.

Narration can also consist of The Story crafting Method where the storyteller chooses what he or she wants to tell and the instructor writes it down word by word, reads it to the teller, and the teller can then complete the story.

LEARN TO BE ASSERTIVE

Resolutely defending one's own needs, boundaries and rights, but having also the ability to stand criticism.

Get inspired!

Puppets, masks and theatre roles help a person express different feelings safely and give them opportunity to make observations of behaviour and its consequences.

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITY DUE TO SEVERE AND PROLONGED MENTAL ILLNESS

By INTRAS FOUNDATION

INTRAS Foundation provides socio-health and educational services through different resources and programmes. The development of its services and programmes is based on the “Recovery approach”, since the research confirms that even people seriously affected by mental illness can recover and lead productive lives in the community. Past experiences show that more than 50% of people mentally ill can recover. In this sense, the recovery is seen as a journey to a new and valued sense of identity, to a role and purpose outside the parameters of mental illness.

INTRAS places a strong emphasis on education, development of special pedagogical techniques and support for people with schizophrenia, bipolar affective disorders and personality disorders. The nature of this disorder involves certain degree of deterioration in basic aspects of the people with mental illness daily performance, thus seriously affecting their quality of life. Therefore, issues such as personal care, hygiene, interpersonal relations, lack of motivation to develop activities and other aspects related to the lives of these people define and give meaning to the programs developed by the Foundation. In this Manual we focus on the theatre group TeaTREVÉS

for people with mental illness, run at our Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre, and attended by 15 participants. Theatre workshops are run two times a week for two hours. In addition to this theatre programme, the Centre provides people with psychiatric disorders training for development and maintaining of personal and social skills in three areas:

- ◇ Training on daily life activities for development of autonomy at home.
- ◇ Training on social skills for improvement of communication and social relationships.
- ◇ Training on how to organise leisure and spare time to regain love of interests and hobbies.

The main aim is that people with severe and prolonged mental illness acquire and/or recover the skills enabling them to function autonomously in their social environment with the least support and thus improving their quality of life. Work experiences indicate that a high percentage of people with mental illness can live healthy and be active as long as they carry out appropriate treatment. As a complement of medication in relation to mental health well being, we believe on benefits of drama and theatre to promote social skills.

FINDING THEIR OWN WAY

The main aim of training and rehabilitation activities is to achieve an own life project with an appropriate level of quality of life, despite the fact that some symptoms of the mental illness may persist. To achieve this mission, special attention is paid to listen to the voice of the people with mental illness demanding new programs and activities. In order to provide services that take into account the possibilities of each person and providing people with resources to empower them to be the protagonists of their recovery process and thus of their own life. Planning is therefore based on the person and not on the programme development. An “Individualised Rehabilitation Plan” is established, adapted to each person and oriented to empower the person to plan and take decisions about their own life and aims. This model emphasizes the importance of training and professional support addressed to reinforce personal and social skills in order to reach the highest level of autonomy.

When preparing activities for psychosocial rehabilitation of people suffering from mental illness, we must plan the following aspects:

- ◇ The objectives: A pre-assessment is made to evaluate the deficits and possible targets, regarding development of social skills, to be included in the “Individualised Rehabilitation Plan”. The use of self-assessments is useful provided that we use appropriate questionnaires that should be designed to be completed in the beginning of the programme and every 6 months after that. It is important to show participants that this questionnaire is designed to help them to reflect and solve questions that will facilitate them to take control of their lives. The questionnaires are brief, designed with close format questions, to be completed in less than 10 min. They can be built on the social skills included in chapter 2 of this Manual.
- ◇ The benefits of the programme: Beneficiaries (people with mental illness) are informed in advance about the programme and the benefits that it will bring them, according to the “Individualised Reha-

bilitation Plan”. Moreover, they are informed about the progress during the whole process, comparing initial and final execution.

◇ The methodology: The sessions are planned to be participative, encouraging cooperation and expression of all participants. Guidelines are established within each session to structure the activity and allow participants to anticipate the meeting and plan the next activity.

THE POWER OF ART

The aim of the theatre group TeatREVÉS, managed by the Psychosocial Rehabilitation Centre at INTRAS Foundation, is to reach the social inclusion of people with disability due to mental illness. Performances are used as a tool to minimize stigma of mental illness. “The de-stigmatization requires working with the public” said Cristina Vega, the trainer. And she adds “people with mental illness have some difficulties but they also have a lot of things to teach us, starting with their hard motivation and willingness to improve, as we see during rehearsals. Theatre has the ability to get the most out of us”.

The improvement of social skills such as communication, management of emotions, conflict transformation, etc. is needed to build up a satisfactory life. In this sense, theatre, the rehearsals and the group dynamic, are powerful tools to improve social competences whilst enjoying the experience. Theatre helps us to understand the other, and understanding the other we better understand ourselves. Performing means becoming another person, and it makes us face another reality and helps to develop skills such as flexibility to solve problems, to adapt oneself to new situations or as Joseph J. Moreno expressed in his book “Music Therapy and Psychodrama”, ...“the essential goals of psychodrama are to enable people to develop spontaneity and creativity, which are often diminished in those who are suffering from significant emotional problems and tend to become withdrawn”.

Calheros y Albuquerque (1997) declared that it is not about to defend theatre groups as a kind of psychotherapy but to take into account the therapeutic potential: “... Theatre and therapy are combined in a mixing with great therapeutic potential. On the stage life is being recreated, allowing us to break down the barriers to live life to the full. Theatre gives us what is one of the fundamental needs of human beings: to have a space to experience dreams, wishes, fears, ghosts; main ingredients for rehabilitation. Theatre is therapy for life.”

Professionals from INTRAS Foundation who are part of the TeatREVÉS group have found in theatre a valuable tool for personal and social development of people with mental health issues and clients have found a valuable and enriching outlet for themselves. The structure of the workshops has been established towards the development of the play. The play was performed by people with mental illness, who also created the plot, characters and situations with the support of Camila Silva, professional actress, and Cristina Vega, social worker. They reflected and decided what they would like to express. Their problems, fears and wishes were reflected in those characters.

The activities carried out by the TeatREVÉS group have been designed to identify and manage feelings and emotions and communicate them spontaneously, to help the creation of a positive self-identity and to streng-

then the sense of membership. The workshops had some common guidelines which are useful to structure the sessions, helping people with mental illness to know when they will have a break, time to reflect or when the session will finish.

You will find below some activities to use in the beginning and end of each session:

- ◇ Introducing the session: Participants ready for a circle-time activity say “hello” to everyone and talk about something that happened between the last session and the current one. The comments help trainers to address the activities around the worries or difficulties of participants. Including an activity where participants can reflect on these issues could be useful, such as trying to find a different end for a given story, ask how other participants would have reacted in a certain situation, etc. Following this activity the session and the theatre-related activities start.
- ◇ Closing the session: Before the end of each session, all participants sit in a row to evaluate positive aspects of the session, thus closing the session on a good note. Then, the trainer reinforces participants if necessary. Each participant, at this point, should identify one thing from the workshop which she/he would like to walk away with, and express why she/he found it enjoyable. Trainers should aid participants to express themselves using questions such as “Why was it nice?” “Why did you like it?”

DEVELOPING SOCIAL SKILLS COMMUNICATION

A lack of communication skills of people with mental disorders causes some difficulties in order to interact within their social sphere. This is one of the most frequent and most important deficits that occur in the premorbid level, outbreak and subsequent development of mental illness. Providing people with mental health problems with strategies to improve their verbal and non-verbal communication, means offering them an advantage to cater for emotional and instrumental needs, therefore, enabling them to interact with others with greater ease. Non-verbal communication is important because when talking to someone, only one part of information comes from words and the rest of it is obtained through nonverbal language: gestures, appearance, posture, gaze, facial expression, etc. Non-verbal communication training is important not only to enable each participant to express themselves adequately, but also to understand the expressions and needs of others in communication situations with familiar and unfamiliar elements.

Get inspired!

For training on communication skills we use role playing techniques. Short argument role play scenarios are performed (individually or in groups) and videotaped for watching the performance later and correcting deficits in every area. Trainers and psychologists monitor the participants outside the context of the training session to see if learning is transferred to other areas of their daily life. Special attention is paid to intonation, tone, fluency, and clarity of speech, volume of voice, speed, speech timing, and response latency. The same methodology is used to train on basic social interaction skills, conversational and advanced social interaction skills and non-verbal communication:

- ◇ Basic social interaction skills: listening, following directions, asking for information, courtesy and kindness, giving presentations and paying compliments.
- ◇ Conversational skills: starting a conversation and maintaining it, getting a word in and giving others a chance to speak, changing the subject and ending conversation.
- ◇ Advanced communication skills: asking for help, apologizing, getting involved, persuading others and conversing with strangers.
- ◇ Understanding non-verbal communication: facial expression, smile, eye gaze, posture, physical appearance in communication, body orientation, distance / physical contact, gestures.

During the workshops, one activity is used to develop communication skills: “The first step”. While participants walk around the room, the trainer asks them to think about one situation and evoke the feelings regarding that situation. Without stopping walking participants should reproduce that feeling using just one movement. Then in a row, the whole group repeats each movement.

MANAGING EMOTIONS

People with mental illness face psychological problems related to emotional disorders such as anxiety, stress, helplessness, fear, etc. Throughout their lifetime they experience stress related, on one hand, with their condition and, on the other hand, with everyday stresses. The theatre has a therapeutic effect in these cases because it helps people to acquire coping skills to manage these emotions, based on the ability to direct their own behaviour in various situations of stress, handling internal and external variables in the desired direction of each person.

Get inspired!

For training on managing emotions, you may use the activity “How I would like to be”. This activity has three stages:

1. The first stage is called “Self-portrait”. Participants identify a situation experienced during last week and link how they felt with something specific (a color, an object, a season, a landscape, etc.). Then, they are asked to capture the feeling in a canvas using acrylic painting.
2. The second stage is called “Choose your own end”. Trainers work individually with participants about the situation chosen and ask them to imagine a different ending for this situation and how they would have felt. Then participants are asked to express in a painting the emotion that the different ending (for the same initial situation) causes to them, explaining the importance of managing the situation to control emotions.
3. The third stage is an exhibition where each participant shows their art-works and both emotions, explaining what they learnt from that situation.

COOPERATION WITH OTHERS

Interpersonal relationships are important for psychosocial functioning in general and as a protection against environmental stress factors. The social network surrounding people with mental illness is of such importance that it might be one of the most important aspects in the treatment and rehabilitation. Social support systems are vital to remain successfully in the community.

Get inspired!

From the moment a person is involved in ARTERY project, he/she becomes part of a group. The person does not feel isolated and in this way his/her sense of security is enhanced. The relations built in the group are transferred to an external environment, enabling participants to interact in a playful and personal way.

The activity called “Who we are” may help you to develop cooperation, team work and a sense of membership. You may run it in the beginning of the workshops, starting by asking participants to look for a name to call the group. Everyone has to propose at least one name for the group and write a short story about it. Once everyone has shared name proposals, participants express their opinions and try to persuade the others to choose their proposals. When the name is chosen, participants with the support of trainers look for a collective movement or gesture that will be performed to strengthen team work and membership. Then participants create a group scene where everyone has their own space and position. This scene, which will be used at the end of each rehearsal, shows that everyone is important. If someone misses the rehearsal, his/her space will be empty, nobody will fill it.

[The name of the theatre group TeatREVÉS was chosen by participants using the activity above “Who we are”.]



TOP RECOMMENDED EXERCISES



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CHAPTER 6

exercices



In this chapter you will find some exercises and methods to work on the issues described in the sections above. However, exercises are only tools, and as with every tool they can be ineffective if not applied correctly. It is very important to use these exercises responsibly. Always start with defining your aims and then check if one of these exercises could help you reach the aim and not the other way around. Also, please remember that exercises should always be adapted to the particularities of your target group.

A ship on a stormy sea

Author: Grodzki Theatre Association

Duration: 2-5 minutes

Number of participants: 20-30

Material/Space needed: a large room, blindfold for the ship

Objective: This theatrical exercise can be practiced with a variety of groups, with different levels of ability and skill. It brings feelings of safety and security in a team and improves the integration of its members. It also exercises different senses - hearing and touch. We often do this exercise at the request of participants with learning difficulties and relational-emotional and physical disabilities. They find it very helpful, comforting, integrative and involving. It helps them with participating in the group and increases their sense of well-being.

Process: Participants should form a circle, holding hands. They will play the sea - individual waves. One person is asked to be a ship - to stand in the middle surrounded by the waves (it is best if someone volunteers to do it). He or she should have his/her eyes closed or covered with a blindfold. The task of the ship is to get to a lighthouse despite the noise and the movement of the sea. Another person is selected to take on the role of the lighthouse and try to 'navigate' the ship by calling it by its name (it could be the real name of the person). The waves move inwards and outwards (towards the ship and away from it) to cause confusion. The participants should always hold their hands in circle. They will also make the sound of the sea - hissing, whistling, whispering, and swooshing to make it more difficult for the lighthouse to communicate with the ship. It is allowed to gently turn the ship round from time to time to make it lose its course. The ship can press (not push) against the waves, finding the way. At the end, when it is near the destination, the lighthouse can reach out its hands towards the participant and lead the ship to the shore.

Risks and challenges: As to risks and challenges, it can be confusing to try to find one's way through chaos and commotion. The role of the lighthouse should be given to someone who can project his/her voice though the crowd. The trainer should explain at the beginning that it is not allowed to push, catch or hold back the ship, especially if the exercise is done with younger groups.

A safety net

Author: Grodzki Theatre Association

Duration: 10-20 minutes (depending on the number of participants, as each of them does this exercise, one by one)

Number of participants: 10 - 20

Material/Space needed: a large room, a blindfold to cover one's eyes

Objective: This theatrical exercise can be practiced with a variety of groups, with different levels of ability and skill. It helps to alleviate anxieties and fears and increases mutual trust and understanding. It brings feelings of safety and security in a team and improves the integration of its members. We often do this exercise with participants with learning difficulties and relational-emotional and physical disabilities. It helps them with participating in the group and increases their sense of well-being.

Process: A safety net is created by participants who stand at one end of the room, holding hands. They stand in a line, forming a semicircle - some of them stand at the end of the room, some in its corners and some at the sides of the room. Two people stand in front of the net - they are catchers (it is best to choose the trainer and a participant). A member of the group who volunteers to be first goes to the other end of the room. He or she should have his/her eyes closed (it is best to blindfold them). The task is to run from one end of the room to the other as fast as one can without fear of hitting a wall. The task of the group is to make sure the person does not bump into anything. If he or she is not running straight, but, for example, turning right, the net moves in that direction. Participants usually run in a straight line, but the net needs to be ready to move to protect the runner. When he/she is in the middle of the room, the catchers need to stop the person in a safe way. It is best to catch the person by his/her waist to slow them down and bring them to a halt.

Risks and challenges: As to the risks, it can be uncomfortable for the catcher to stop the runner if he or she protects himself/herself by sticking out hands or elbows. The trainer should inform the participants that the catchers could be hurt this way. Paradoxically, the role of a catcher is sometimes more uncomfortable than the role of a person falling into the safety net. All members of the team should take the role of the runner, unless someone strongly objects. The first person to do the task needs most encouragement, afterwards the exercise runs smoothly as participants can see that they will be protected by the group.

Magic shoes

Author: Theatre With No Home

Duration: 5 minutes for each participant

Number of participants: 3 - 10

Material/Space needed: an area big enough to move around; pen and paper; a list of various types of disabilities (e.g. Parkinson's disease, a person with no legs or a disability of the lower limbs, a person suffering from manic-depression, etc.)

Objective: This exercise helps participants to get to know different types of physical and relational-emotional disabilities. It enables them to “walk in the shoes” of people with different disabilities for a while and to experience how they feel. Specifically, this exercise can be used to:

- ◇ help make healthy people more aware and understanding towards people with physical or relational-emotional disabilities
- ◇ improve the coexistence between healthy and disabled people in society
- ◇ focus on your own body and feelings
- ◇ improve memory
- ◇ create an awareness of different types of disabilities
- ◇ inspire and improve creativity
- ◇ increase confidence
- ◇ teach clients to follow procedures and to create a simple structure
- ◇ discover new feelings and insights
- ◇ enable clients to experience the feelings of other people
- ◇ develop nonverbal means of communication
- ◇ initiate a debate on social conditions, rights and opportunities of people with disabilities in our country

Process: The trainer shortly describes the exercise to the group and explains the purpose of the exercise. The trainer then gives out one piece of paper to each participant in the exercise, upon which various types of disabilities are described. The trainer asks the participants to concentrate and think about the disability described on the piece of paper they received. Every participant then acts out their disability in front of the group without using any words. The group tries to guess which disability is being presented by the individual. Finally the trainer conducts a round of verbal feedback from the participants of this exercise to explain how they felt while performing the disability.

Risks and challenges: Before conducting the actual exercise, it is necessary to ask each participant whether the exercise is acceptable for them. Clients who are still learning to cope with their disability, may find some exercises to be a bit confrontational.

Recommendations for conducting the exercise:

- ◇ have the group include clients with disability from physical and relational-emotional point of view
- ◇ have the coach or therapist practice the exercise on their own before doing it with clients
- ◇ while presenting the disability, we recommend 5 minutes maximum for each participant
- ◇ do the exercise indoors as it is more intimate and the participants can focus better
- ◇ do the exercise with a group of clients that already know each other as they will feel more comfortable, having already established these safe relationships with their peers

You can also ask clients when they are guessing what disability it is, further questions such as “Why do you think it is that particular disability? What makes you think that?” etc.

Situation X

Author: Key & Key Communications

Duration: 1 hour for each situation

Number of participants: 8 - 15

For all the communication exercises the ideal number of participants is between 8 and 12. Fifteen participants are still acceptable. If you cannot avoid having more than 15 participants in the group, it would be good to have a tutor who can take some sub-group in charge for the training activities and thus support the trainer.

Material/Space needed: A paper template for the description of the interaction; video camera and video recorder or computer with projector; a paper template with a guide for observation; if there are video recordings from other workshops, and the participants gave their consent to be shown, this video can also be used for observation.

Objective: In this exercise the body language can be observed in a much more detailed way, letting participants focus on each significant part of the body, its position, movements, distance from other interlocutors and place within the situational space. Participants learn to observe and avoid to judge, because they are asked to describe what they see in a neutral way. Through this training activity trainees can apply all their knowledge and skills gained during the former communication sessions - they can observe communication elements and practices they have learnt. With this exercise they will see that all four communication planes interact. In this way participants understand the complex nature of communication.



Process: In the training activity “Situation X”, participants should describe/invent the situation X and give it a name. If not all participants speak the same language, people sharing more or less one language should work together. If all the participants speak the same language (even if not at the same degree) the time needed is all in all at least 1 hour for one situation. The work consists in three main steps:

- ◇ describing/inventing a situation
- ◇ simulating that situation assuming the necessary roles (is video recorded)
- ◇ watching all together the video made during the simulation.

The work is carried out in two persons: firstly, they describe a story taken from a real life interaction (they have lived or witnessed or they just invent one) between an adult-in-mobility and a local national; they will describe shortly the physical situation, the participants and their objectives to reach in the situation. Secondly, they simulate it in a quiet room separate from the plenary room: not to be seen at that moment let the role-players feel more relaxed. Thirdly, after each participant has produced a role-play within a simulation and all scenes have been video-recorded, the trainer starts to show the videos. Before making trainees watch it, the trainer distributes assignments: how to observe and what to observe. They have to concentrate, by watching or listening, on only one of the communication elements learned so far (e.g. volume of voice, speed, pauses, smile, eye gaze, colour of the dress, etc.); this is important not because it is easier, but because a careful observation is an opportunity to learn more about our and others’ behaviour. Another important reason lies in the fact that being obliged to observe details and describe them, one is less pushed to judge. Indeed it is fundamental that participants do not judge each other but describe neutrally what they see or hear.

Risks and challenges: There are two potential risks in this training activity:

- ◇ Rather than describing, trainees tend to judge the others and themselves.
- ◇ Stereotypes may come up.

The challenge then is to face such stereotypes, both negative and positive. Eventually, a general challenge is that the skills acquired in the training room will get applied outside in the “real” world.

Object as a metaphor

Author: Agricola Centre for Education and Training

Duration: 15 - 30 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Number of participants: 5 - 20

Material/Space needed: Materials consist of a collection of objects disposed for example on a table. The objects may include: a) A collection of different things, e.g. toys, household utensils, clothes, decorations, among others; b) a collection of different stones; c) a collection of different buttons; d) a collection of different hats; e) a collection of different animal figures; or f) some objects present in the room are chosen; g) objects/materials are chosen from nature; h) different kinds of pictures.

Objective: An object or a material helps the learner for instance in a situation of introduction to tell something about oneself. The object provides distance, but it also stimulates the imagination. Narration and listening to others' stories also ties the group closer together and stimulates the learners to perform common activities. At the feedback stage the object also diversifies the feedback.

Process: Each group member chooses an individual object to represent something that was asked and explain their choice - why did they choose that particular object? The object can be chosen to describe oneself, one's own physical or mental feelings of the moment, one's life situation of the moment, one's age, a feeling of the moment, something one's dreaming about, something one's afraid of or what one's expecting to happen that day, or what the group feels like. After making the choice, everyone is asked to tell why he/she chose that particular object. The object choice activity can also be used at the end of the work to concretize the feedback.

Risks and challenges: There must be enough objects proportionately to the number of participants, to enable the participants to have a real choice. The choice must not be made in a hurry. Also the narrative situation must be peaceful in order to give everyone enough space. However, the aim is not to tell one's entire life story. It is also important to focus on listening to the others' stories. This exercise can be used with the group on several meeting occasions by changing the question on which the choice is based. However, the instructor must be careful that the exercise does not become mechanical and boringly repetitive. The instructor must also pay attention to the story; the story narrated will be appreciated, and the storyteller will not be labelled by the object he/she has chosen.

The Storycrafting Method

Author: Monika Riihelä/ Agricola Centre for Education and Training

Duration: 30 minutes and more

Number of participants: 2 and more

Material/Space needed: For each story a sheet of paper is needed. The storyteller owns the copyright on his/her story. In other words, he/she will own the written story. The instructor or the partner may ask for a copy of the story and the storyteller may either give it or refuse to give it (Riihelä, 2000).

Objective: The aim is to encourage the storyteller to tell his/her own story and get it heard just the way he or she has experienced it. Everyone's very own experience is special knowledge that the others do not have. Hearing others' stories has a clustering effect. Hearing your own story just the way you told it is empowering and deepens your understanding of yourself. Furthermore, this activity can also increase the understanding of others' experiences within the group of learners in question. When the storyteller hears his/her own story read aloud, he or she may notice some of their own "mistakes" and gets a chance to correct them.

Process: The Storycrafting Method is a narrative method developed by the Finnish psychologist, Monika Riihelä (2000, 2001), who initially created it when she was working with children. This method is suitable also for use with adults. The method consists of four steps, which differentiates it from other narrative methods: 1) the story telling (storyteller), 2) accurate word-by-word and sound-by-sound writing down of the story (the instructor or a partner), 3) reading aloud the story (the instructor or a partner), 4) making the corrections requested by the storyteller (the storyteller and the instructor).

In Storycrafting you ask the participants: "Tell a story that you want. I will write it down just the way you will tell it. When the story is ready I will read it aloud. And then if you want you can correct it or make any changes you wish."The adult or instructor or partner writes down the story on a separate piece of paper. It is important to write the story down exactly as the person tells it. One has to control one's own desire to change the spoken language and to correct mistakes made by the storyteller (Riihelä, 2001).

When using the Storycrafting method, there is neither anticipating, nor directing the course of the conversation. There is also no evaluation of the narrative. The storyteller will decide him/herself the subject and how and what he or she wants to tell about it or not to tell.

Storycrafting can be carried out in pairs or in a group, in an intimate situation or in a public place. If all of the group members can write, the group can be divided into pairs, so that one is the storyteller and the other writes the story down. After the first process, the roles are switched. In a group, it is also possible to take turns to narrate and the instructor writes the story down and reads it aloud to the group. In this case, a common subject can be chosen (Riihelä, 2000, 2001).

Risks and challenges: It is important for the one who writes the story down to listen very carefully to the teller and to write it all down word-by-word and sound-by-sound. The mistakes in sound, grammar or in the story itself must not be corrected. The story must also not be evaluated. The only one allowed to correct the story is the storyteller him/herself.

Truth Play

Author: Agricola Centre for Education and Training

Duration: 15 - 20 minutes

Number of participants: 6 - 20

Material/Space needed: Chairs set in a circle, one chair less than the number of players.

Objective: This play helps to get to know each other. On the level of favourite foods and hobbies there is humour involved in the play, which can help in relaxing the atmosphere and energizing the participants. The physical movement activates and warms up to the shared activity.

Process: The participants are sitting in a circle on chairs. There is one chair less than the number of participants. One person is in the middle of the circle. That person says something that is true for him or her, and all the others, for whom this is equally true, switch places. The person in the middle tries to get one of the vacated chairs for him/herself. The switcher is not allowed to sit back on his or her chair, or on the chair next to him or her. The one who will not get a chair will be the next one in the middle.

This play can be realized on a lighter level, when it is easier for the participants to express their own truths. The one in the middle says for example: "I've got black shoes", when all those having also black shoes will switch places. Or: "My favourite colour is red" or "My favourite food is pizza". The topic field can also be agreed upon in advance. You can also choose more serious topics, for example: "I'm scared of... I dream of..."

Risks and challenges: The instructor must take care that the chair switching does not become too quick and rough. The instructor also ought to avoid taking the conquest of chairs too seriously. In addition to this, if a serious topic is chosen, the group members ought to know each other already well enough.

Follow the rhythm!

Author: INTRAS Foundation

Duration: 30 minutes

Number of participants: More than 10

Material/Space needed: Room (a physical space of sufficient size is needed to perform the activities) and laptop to play music.

Objective: This activity aims to promote non verbal communication (eye contact, facial expression, body contact and physical distance, interaction with peers) and psychomotor process (the rhythm, controlled movements).

Process: Before starting the activity, the trainer prepares a sequence of movements easy to carry out by people with disabilities, i.e. clapping hands, claps on legs, stamping feet on the ground, shouting aloud a greeting “Helloooo”, whistle, etc. Also, the trainer should have a list of music, some quick paced and some slower songs, to work with during the sessions. While listening to the songs participants can choose which song they would like to prepare (they can be given the possibility to bring their own songs for the next session). At the beginning of the session, the trainer asks participants to form a semicircle around him/her, with everyone standing. The trainer introduces a sequence of movements to be undertaken and repeated by the group, one by one. Each movement is made firstly by the trainer and repeated by the group between 3 to 6 times. Once two different movements are learnt, the trainer mixes both of them and ask participants to repeat the sequence. Then, a third movement is introduced by the trainer, repeated by the group, and afterwards joined up with the two previous movements, and so on. As the group learns the sequence, the trainer may increase the rhythm to teach them how to follow the beat. Once the sequence is learnt, it may become more complex, leading to changes in posture and even a chance to work with a partner, and finally working the sequence to the rhythm of the music. Participants may practice it face-to-face, in a group of three or four, etc.

Results: This activity develops membership, improves eye-contact, body language and non-verbal communication. The results are better because this activity is fun and amusing and it is very useful at the beginning of the session. It is a very effective ice-breaker and warming up activity.

Risk and challenges: The trainer must take care that the movement sequence is learnt by all the members of the group, repeating each movement as many times as needed, and making it shorter and easier if the group has problems to follow the first steps. The risk when repeating the movements many times is that people who are good at following rhythms become bored. When selecting the song for the section, the trainer has to ensure that the rhythm of the chosen music is not too quick.

Imagine Theatre

Author: INTRAS Foundation

Duration: 20 - 30 minutes

Number of participants: 6 - 12

Material/Space needed: A room of sufficient size to perform a human sculpture

Objective: In image theatre, small groups create still photographs or tableaux of real situations that a member or members of the group have experienced. It allows the exploration of feelings and possible resolutions in a safe environment.

Process: The trainer asks the group to think about an issue - for example, isolation, discrimination, prejudice, intolerance - which they feel strongly about and which they could illustrate with a specific example. Then ask someone from the group to volunteer to use their incident or experience and become the sculptor, indicating how many people they would need to represent this. Ask for volunteers to become a living sculpture. The sculptor moulds each person into a character in their scene. They can do this by demonstrating the pose and asking the person to copy. If participants are comfortable, the sculptor can adjust facial expressions and physically move limbs into the desired position. When the picture is complete the sculptor asks the frozen characters to come to life one at a time and to speak their thoughts out loud. These are called "thought tracks". You can follow each discussion of the image by asking members of the group to sculpt a possible solution to the situation. Let each person in the group have a turn at being the sculptor if they wish and time permits.

Results: Improvements have been observed in specific areas related to communication skills with significant improvement in facial expression and body language. The changes in the non-verbal components are also significant. Participants also gain self-confidence and improve their capacity for empathy.

Risk and challenges: The trainer must ensure that no one is likely to be injured! A challenge would be to end the session by a constructive reflection and evaluation of the activity. You could ask each tableau member how it felt to be moulded into a character or into portraying a specific emotion and ask the observers what they felt about the representation. Finally, you could ask the original volunteers whose issue had been explored what they had gained or learned from creating the tableau. Work of this nature, depending on the subject matter, can arouse strong emotions and so must be treated with great sensitivity. Always ensure the session allows sufficient time for a wind down activity to restore equilibrium.

Everybody has skills

Author: INTRAS Foundation

Duration: Twice 20 minutes plus evaluation time (especially after the second run)

Number of participants: 6 - 30

Material/Space needed: Room (a physical space of sufficient size is needed to perform the activities) and a long strip of paper (5-10 metres) with a scale on it from 1 to 10

Objective: An exercise to be used twice as part of a longer training or workshop, once in the beginning, once in the end. The aim of the exercise is to make people with disabilities aware of their own skills, and also of what they may learn by participating in a given training activity (yet).

Process: The trainer starts the session explaining to the participants that the scale is to show their personal abilities and that all participants are supposed to judge honestly for themselves if they still need to gain these abilities (1) or if they think they already have them perfectly in order (10). It should be also explained that the exercise will be repeated at the end of the training/ workshop to see if there are any changes, either because people acquired skills or discovered they had skills they did not know about yet. It is important to make clear no one will be judged on where they are going to stand, that the exercise is mainly for them. The trainer puts a statement to the group and asks people to take places; if they agree completely with it, they should go to 10, if they feel that it does not apply to them at all, to 1. Alternatively they can find a place in between. Then, the trainer asks a few people in the group to explain their positions, but he/she should not force anyone to say something if they do not feel like it. The exercise could be repeated with several other statements. At the end of the training, the trainer repeats the method and asks people if anything has changed for them since the first time.

Examples of statements :

- ◇ I am very good at listening to people
- ◇ I am good at expressing my feelings
- ◇ I am good at working with others
- ◇ I am good at helping people
- ◇ I am good at telling stories
- ◇ I am good at talking in front of a group
- ◇ I have a good sense of humour

Results: This activity helps people to be aware of their personal abilities, thus improving their self-confidence and self-esteem. It is a very effective evaluation method and self-awareness activity.

Risk and challenges: There must be enough statements so that everyone finds him/ herself good at one or more abilities, thus avoiding some participants feeling bad because they haven't found any statement fitting their qualities/skills. The trainer should take the time to choose the statements carefully, taking into consideration the competences of all members of the group. It is important to observe the reaction of participants (facial expressions, gestures) during the session to detect whether any member of the group is feeling uncomfortable with the activity or feeling judged by others. This activity can be followed by a final reflection and evaluation by asking the participants the following questions: Was it difficult for you to think about your own abilities? Did you learn more about yourself or others? Do you want to improve the skills you noted with lower score? Do you want to help others to improve the skills they noted with lower score? Do you think that you have gained certain qualities/skills by participating in this training/workshops? If so, which ones?



EXAMPLE OF BEST PRACTICE



CHAPTER 7

practice



Many years of experience in working with disadvantaged groups have brought substantial “know-how” to all of the ARTERY project partners. From many training activities that were successfully implemented with homeless people, physical and relational-emotional disabled people, and had outstanding impact on the group, we have chosen an example of voice training, carried out by the Grodzki Theatre Association. The videos illustrating activities described below can be found in the section Actor’s craft of the ARTERY platform (<http://arteryproject.eu/>). Filmed participants attend Occupational Therapy Workshops for people with physical, relational-emotional and cognitive disabilities. The voice training formed part of a longer development process of a puppet theatre performance called “The Gift of River”. For four months participants were supervised by Barbara Rau, an actress, puppeteer and experienced trainer of the Grodzki Theatre.

Voice Training

1. Diction

The trainer always starts working on diction with two members of the theatre group. She/he practices with each of them individually for 20 minutes. While one participant is practicing, the other has some time to rest and relax as well as to watch the practicing person in action. The task is to recite their roles from memory, however, each person has his or her text in front of them, just in case. The aim of this work is not to learn the text by heart, but to practice diction. Such exercises help the participants to be understood by the audience and are essential for the success of the performance.

◇ In our case, the trainer starts working with the person who has a significant speech impediment. She will be wearing a mask during the performance, so proper articulation of words is very important. At the beginning it is difficult to understand what the participant is saying. She is stressed out and over-involved, so she forgets most of the text. The trainer asks her to read the text out loud. The first reading is recorded on a dictaphone and everyone listens to it. This way a commentary is not necessary - the participant can hear that she is not speaking clearly. In the next round she repeats the text, sentence by sentence, after the trainer, who points out the most important words which should be stressed. Next task is to stretch out vowel sounds. When we enlarge them artificially, our tongue will get exercised and warmed up. When one is used to 'stretched' vowel sounds, one does not 'swallow' them while playing on stage. One more reading of the role takes place. This time the trainer helps the participant to join the words smoothly into sentences by adding gestures. She reminds the participant of particular situations in the play and the emotions expressed in those moments. This helps the actress to articulate and emphasize the meaning of each phrase. After 20 minutes of work the first person has a rest and the second participant starts his exercises.

◇ The second participant remembers his role, but he speaks too quickly, 'swallowing' some sounds, especially word endings. The trainer suggests opening his mouth wider. She mentions different exercises which he can do before acting on stage, for example snorting like a horse or speaking with sweets in his mouth. The famous Greek speaker Demostenes would put stones in his mouth to learn to articulate words clearly. Such exercises warm up the muscles in our speech apparatus, which loosen and work more easily. The trainer suggests an exercise in front of a mirror, focusing on vowels. The participant repeats his text watching movements of his mouth in the mirror. The articulation of particular words is analyzed, for example "Opowieści" (story). The actor needs to look at the audience.

2. Recording the sound

The sound recording of all texts is very useful in a group of people with disabilities. Some of them have problems with memory or a speech impediment, which would make it very difficult and stressful to recite the text live on stage. They will be able to focus on their play during a performance and their voices will be projected from a CD player.

The recording is done individually, person by person. Then the tracks will be put together into one recording. The trainer holds the text in front of the person who is recording his or her role. She whispers the text to help the participant remember it. After each sentence she puts her hand on their shoulder to signal a pause. She also performs gestures and movements which accompany the role, to remind the participant of the context in which the lines are being said. Some sentences need to be repeated if they are unclear or recited too quickly.

Sound Recording - Do it yourself!

There are many methods of sound recordings: from the simplest, where we can use a laptop with appropriate software, to more complicated, based on expensive software and hardware (microphone, sound card, mixer, etc.). In the Grodzki Theatre, good quality equipment and more advanced techniques are used for sound recording for our theatrical activities. Frequent appearances in various “difficult” locations (open air, large rooms) limit acting opportunities of our workshop participants. We use playback - a recorded text by actors with music. However, this method is expensive, so we will discuss also simpler alternative of recording a voice of an actor.

The cheapest way is, of course, a laptop with built-in microphone (standard laptop) or a desktop computer with the simplest external microphone connected to it - the kind of microphone that is used to communicate through the internet. What is needed is the right program, and there are many free programmes on the internet. One of them is Audacity 1.3, which is very simple. Audacity is a free audio file editor, which is a free alternative to programs such as Cool Edit Pro or WaveLab. Its main task is to record and play sounds, import and export files in formats such as MP3, WAV, AIFF, Ogg Vorbis and others. Audacity 1.3 enables you to edit audio tracks using cut, copy and paste (with the possibility of reversing any operations performed), mix tracks and add effects (echo, noise removal, normalization, etc.).

Let's start. Set the a level of the microphone signal, and the distance from which the actor should read the text to it. You need to remember that the “explosive” sounds such as “P” can cause unwanted rumble, therefore setting the right distance from the microphone is a very important element. In the recording studios, we use all sorts of delicate fabrics between the microphone and the actor, which look like ladies' stockings, to eliminate the effects of the “explosive” sounds... The last task is to install the program on your computer and get it to work.

Summing up...

Working with text in theatre can be laborious and difficult. In order to play one's role well, one needs to understand the lines first. Learning them by heart is the next task. In theatre, it is important to develop so-called stage-memory, i.e. to learn one's lines while acting out one's role. During both, rehearsals and the performance, the movements and gestures will remind us of the words.

Memorizing and reciting one's lines can be discouraging for workshop participants. Some of them might resign from the group; others become demotivated and need support. The situations described below came about during work on a performance entitled 'The Gift of River', prepared by disabled participants of the Occupational Therapy Workshop run by Grodzki Theatre Association.

Risks and challenges

Textual interpretation

One of the participants, who has been given a key role, believes that this performance is only a fairy-tale. He does not take seriously the text he is delivering. The instructor begins to analyze the role with him. She asks him about the meaning of some of the words he is supposed to utter. What is it, really, that he wants to tell the audience? What is his attitude to what he is saying? Is it of interest to him? Is it funny or boring?

It turns out that the participant has chosen the concept of a fairy-tale, told half-jokingly and half-seriously. That is why he did not treat his text seriously. The trainer directs his attention to the question of the authenticity of one's utterances: "When we act genuinely and sincerely, the audience buys it. We will be convincing. If we don't believe in what we are saying ourselves, it will be immediately visible. We can't cheat the viewer: he may feel taken for granted."

The trainer analyzes the role sentence by sentence, asking the participant about his attitude towards some issues: for example, "She was the most beautiful girl!". He must decide what feelings he wants to express. A text without emotion is empty. Does he like the main character, Dandai, or not? Has he ever seen anyone in the street whom he liked or fancied? The actor replies that in such situations he feels that he has no chance whatsoever of winning such a person. The instructor gives him suggestions about how to play out such a resigned attitude on stage: for example, how to announce the arrival of Dandai with a sigh. She talks about the role of theatre in bringing out what we feel: "Theatre has a good influence on one's emotions. We can release them when we are onstage, and we can express them in a controlled way - for example, embarrassment or anger."

Resignation of a participant

One of the participants cannot cope with memorizing the text. She remembers it before the rehearsal, and then, in moments of stress, forgets everything. She gets nervous, and is upset. On the morning of the day of the next workshops she has a headache and suffers from feelings of nausea. She senses the approaching rehearsal and is worried that, once again, she will not be able to cope. She has been given one of the principal roles. She decides to withdraw from the performance, and comes up to the trainer to inform her of her decision. Given her psychological and physical state, it would not be beneficial to try to persuade her to play the role, and could discourage her from any future involvement in theatre activities. The trainer listens to what the participant has to say, and then consoles her. She explains that it is a very demanding role and suggests taking part in the next performance instead, where only a small amount of text will need to be memorized. They part on good terms. The instructor organizes a substitute and introduces the subject of the performance to the new person. Then she explains the decision of the participant who has resigned from the group, welcoming the new actress, who is happy to be playing such an important role.

Dealing with demotivation

After a rehearsal during which he has had to repeat his text countless times, one of the participants is utterly demotivated. He tells the trainer that when things do not work out he always breaks down completely and has no will to go on. “What sort of life do you want to have?” asks the trainer. She explains that there are many things in life that do not work out exactly as one would like. “Theatre is a battle with one’s weaknesses. Through acting you can gain confidence in using your body and your voice. I’m just here to bring out the best in all of you.” She asks the participant to persevere and not to give up. He promises that he will try.

I would like to thank the theatre group from the Occupational Therapy Workshop for agreeing to document their work on the performance entitled “The Gift of River”, and for inviting me to the final performance, which was a real success. I’m also really grateful to the trainer, Barbara Rau, for her goodwill and support.

Special thanks to Tomasz Zieliński, Co-founder of Grodzki Theatre Association, composer and musician, for his description of technicalities of sound recordings.

[Agnieszka Ginko, Teatr Grodzki Association]

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR

TEACHERS AND EDUCATORS



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CHAPTER 8

educators



Hopefully most of you have found some useful information through the pages of this manual, whether it was thanks to the theoretical and practical inputs, the tools and activities to use, or the recommended exercises. As a last contribution from the grass roots, this chapter offers you some recommendations by the ARTERY experts, directly from practice. Practical tips and recommendations on how to develop social skills of vulnerable groups by using arts and theatre will bring you a new perspective.

BY GRODZKI THEATRE ASSOCIATION

The recommendations for trainers gathered here are based on reflections of Piotr Kostuchowski from Grodzki Theatre Association, who runs educational and artistic activities with integrative groups of people with mixed abilities, including persons who are disadvantaged from a cognitive, physical and relational-emotional point of view, with ages ranging between 23 and 70 years old.

“Our language stigmatizes people with disabilities - explains Piotr Kostuchowski. They are described as less abled with a negative prefix ‘dis’ (in Polish non). There are not many positive words beginning with this prefix; we come across disarranged, disused, dislike, disappoint...” We should underline the value of every individual, his/her dignity and right to self-fulfilment.

- ◇ Don’t worry whether you will be able to help or not. Look for opportunities, not threats. It will become much easier to work with people in need of support.

“Many people ask themselves if they will be able to behave in the right way, and act tactfully and efficiently - reflects Piotr. The worst solution is getting ‘paralyzed’, with a lack of any activity based on the assumption that if we don’t do anything then we can’t do any harm. One can always ask what support is the best one.”

- ◇ Knowledge - there is never enough of it. Keep learning and developing your skills.

It is very useful to broaden your knowledge about different disabilities and disadvantages and their influence on individual lives.

- ◇ Allow socially vulnerable people as much independence and autonomy as possible.

Open the door for active forms of behaviour and choices. The example below comes from the CVE group run by Piotr Kostuchowski.

“We decided to make a huge puppet of an auroch - a medieval wild ox, which was going to be used in our open-air performance. It was made of cardboard and required two people to animate it. Putting the cardboard animal onto oneself required a lot of skill, precision and wit. The participant who was playing the “rear legs” of the animal was not a sportsman type, yet, he strongly declined an offer of support where other group members were going to ‘place’ the decoration onto him. He thought of a way to get into the auroch, lifting it and animating the cardboard.

One could have helped him, but only by limiting his independence, giving him a ready-made instruction, and what would that have achieved?”

- ◇ You need to be able to listen and constantly develop in the art of listening. You need to listen carefully to the other person, not yourself.

Communication is a challenge. Our words are only a fragment of it; body language is extremely important, which is often centered around facial expressions. In addition, an important role is played by the context of somebody’s utterance which contains his/her experiences and attitudes. “Someone who has almost drowned will have a different picture of the sea than a holiday maker - sums up Piotr. When he/she listens to someone claiming that the sea is so calm, warm and friendly, it can lead to an outburst of emotions. Empathy and imagination will guide you to an understanding of others.”

- ◇ Safety is the priority. One has to focus on an individual, but also on the whole group.

“Once I was visited by parents who signed up their son to my theatre workshops - recalls Piotr. In the interview they didn’t mention any specific problems which needed to be addressed. This young person was disadvantaged from a cognitive point of view, with learning difficulties. During the first workshop he was not very active, during the second one there was an outburst of activity and emotions. This person - almost two meters tall and of solid build - demonstrated blows, punches and kicks which Bruce Lee would have been proud of. He didn’t hit anyone, but showed how well he could do it. Asked to modify his behaviour, he did it, adding, however, ‘I am best at strangling’. The parents admitted to having let him attend a wide range of combat sports. We had to part.”

- ◇ One should predict and monitor in which direction our participants develop.

One should envisage the future fruits of our educational efforts. It is not possible to make a mathematical calculation out of the results of our actions, but it is possible to imagine what can happen.

BY THEATRE WITH NO HOME

When working with socially excluded groups, especially homeless people, we recommend:

- ◇ Gaining their trust by creating equal relationships among all members of the group.
- ◇ Creating and adopting clear rules for working together, for example not using alcohol or other drugs, practising non-aggressive behaviour, mutual acceptance of other social groups and punctuality.
- ◇ Developing penalties with the group for non-compliance and ensuring these penalties are accepted by all the members. This gives a sense of ownership of the rules to all the members and increases their willingness to comply with the rules.
- ◇ Working with the group regularly and on a long-term basis.
- ◇ Rewarding and encouraging the group members financially, materially, through recognition, appreciation or otherwise.
- ◇ Using simplified vocabulary and clearly explaining any necessary technical terms.
- ◇ Asking for feedback immediately after exercises.
- ◇ Helping to identify and name the feelings group members may have during rehearsals and exercises.
- ◇ Accepting disabilities, mistakes and errors of the group members.
- ◇ Mediating and teaching the group to resolve conflicts in a non-aggressive manner.
- ◇ Setting the level of difficulty upon the capabilities and skills of each group member while rehearsing.
- ◇ Avoiding unrealistic or impractical expectations.
- ◇ Keeping in mind that if a group member is unable to accept your help at a certain time, there is little you can do to help and you should attempt to help him/her again in the future when he/she is willing to accept your help.
- ◇ Working together with a variety of excluded social groups, there is an interaction which fosters mutual cooperation and assistance, leading to an understanding of their own and others' limitations which can ultimately lead to self empowerment.

There are many important issues to be aware of when working with homeless people. One of the most important, which requires having appropriate methods of dealing with it, is that people who have been living on the street for a long period of time develop different survival strategies to cope with the life on the street to get what they need or want from other people. There is a tendency to use these strategies with the therapist or other members of the team. These are often highly individual tactics and it is up to the therapist to recognise and stop their use when they occur and to try to prevent them from happening in the future.

When working with the group members, you can encounter the following situations:

- ◇ Manipulation, when the client tries to arouse sympathy and then manipulates the therapist to do what the client wants or does not want to do.
- ◇ Passing on the responsibility for their own life into the hands of the therapist.
- ◇ Drug and alcohol use during workshops, rehearsals, performances or other group activities.
- ◇ Failure to comply with their word or promise, for example when the client leaves the group without explanation right before a theatre performance.
- ◇ Verbal aggression against the therapist or other team members.

We recommend establishing clear rules within the group at the very beginning, writing them down and distributing them amongst all team members. When a member of the team behaves inappropriately or in contradiction to the rules, feel free to name them openly and then calmly and clearly describe their behaviour and why it is inappropriate. It is also important to explain problems that this type of behaviour can lead to and then suggest methods to deal with the issues. When aggressive behaviour occurs, we recommend taking the member away from the group, somewhere where the therapist or therapists can be alone with them, so that this group member does not have the “audience” of the other members to show off his or her “power” in front of them. For those clients who are known to be unreliable, you must anticipate that they may not attend performances or other important dates and we therefore recommend having an alternative person or understudy to replace them, in case they do not show up.

BY KEY & KEY COMMUNICATIONS

First of all, it is fundamental to become aware of the differences and to be able to accept them, as well as to learn from others. In this process of awareness raising about one’s own communication and the others’ communication styles and practices it is important to avoid generalising and stereotyping ways of communicative behaviour.

When working with people from different languages, it is important to establish from the very beginning which language or languages will be used in the workshops. According to our experience, it is also useful to find out at the very beginning which languages are spoken in the group, who does not share any language with the trainer and whether there is someone who then might be able to translate. For these cases it is important to make sit these two (or three) persons next to each other so that translation can be smooth.

In a multilingual group doing verbal exercises, such as verbal greeting rituals e.g., in order to show the differences, it is also important to learn words and short sentences from all the participants. This shows the difficulties

in pronouncing words in other languages and highlights that not only the language of the immigration country is difficult for the adults-in-mobility but that any language can be difficult to any person. Trainers should participate in such exercises: this lowers barriers between trainer and trainees. However, on the other hand, trainers should always remain in their role of a trainer.

A trainer working with a multicultural group should be careful to avoid marked non-verbal messages, and remain rather neutral. Direct body contact should be avoided, especially between a male trainer and a female trainee and vice-versa.

Rising voice volume, for instance in difficult situations, should also be avoided. A trainer always needs to remain calm and neutral, equally treating all participants, showing respect for the differences, and not allowing disrespect among them.

While working with refugees, in a group there might be different levels of understanding of instructions and even someone who is not used to staying in a training group. When this happens, the trainer should explain the instruction to the trainee separately. Punctuality can also be an issue. As the sense for time can be very diverse from culture to culture, for some people it can be difficult to respect time schedules. It is up to the trainer to decide whether to allow the late comers to enter the workshop room. However, it should be explained that, especially in Middle and Northern European societies, punctuality is essential. Specific rules of behaviour in the workshop room should be established; they should be introduced at the beginning and written with coloured felt markers in big letters on a flipchart for everybody to see during the whole period of the workshop activities.

Last but not the least: the trainer has to be able to gain the trainees' trust. For this, it is fundamental to be sincere, show and let feel your sincere interest in the persons' stories, and not to promise what cannot be fulfilled. Also, showing profound respect to the persons is important: they are not stupid, they are not "girls" (Italian ragazze) or "boys" (Italian ragazzi); we might not be able to guess their age correctly and under-estimate it, thus treating the persons as "youngsters" while they are husbands, wives, fathers, mothers. This implies for languages where the pronoun forms distinguish between a formal and less formal second person (such as Italian, Spanish and French "tu" or German "du") - to avoid strictly such in-formal forms.

BY AGRICOLA CENTRE FOR EDUCATION & TRAINING

Some important things to remember and take in consideration when you are working with people needing special support:

- ◇ Each and every learner needs to feel him/herself respected in the group. In order to be ready to express feelings and join the group activities, you also need to feel yourself safe among those you are working and learning with.
- ◇ Start with small steps and develop slowly, give the learners time to make things happen.
- ◇ Do not force the learners but persuade them to participate and share.
- ◇ Remember that the process is usually more important than the final result.
- ◇ There are many different ways to reach the goal. Let the learner find his/her own way of progress and support him/her.
- ◇ Do not forget humour, positive attitude and the effect of warmth in learning.

BY INTRAS FOUNDATION

Find as much information about your group as you can in advance. Knowing at least something about each individual before you start working with them is essential - working in this type of group is suitable for many people, but not for everyone. We must not forget that the primary objective is to create a safe space for everyone, in which maximum learning can occur. We do not choose people according to their actual skills but according to the level to which they could benefit from being part of the group, without jeopardizing safety of the other group members. Deciding not to involve someone in the group after an entry interview is less hurtful than telling someone who has already been participating that he/she is not suitable and has to leave the group. Knowing the individuals in your group will also help you to plan the activities, to know which skills need practice, and to assign some tasks with greater effect for the group members.

Pay respect to everyone equally, but accept people as individuals. Do not generalize your view - although some participants may have a disability in common, the consequences of their disabilities will vary considerably from person to person. There are many factors that make a difference (e.g. individual coping strategies and other personality traits, support available, degree and duration of impairment, etc.). Also bear in mind that psychiatric disabilities are significantly different from many other disabilities, in that they can fluctuate and are a result of an intermittent and episodic process. Symptoms such as disordered thoughts, hallucinations and loss of contact with reality can make it difficult for a person to concentrate, process information, solve problems, make judgements or follow instructions. The symptoms cannot be always controlled by medication and their

intermittent or constant presence can result in the person being emotionally fragile and vulnerable to stress. Be aware of this and provide maximum support for the group members in their difficult times. Sometimes it might mean letting the person leave for some time, but motivating and integrating him/her again into the group as soon as possible.

Do not assume that you know what people with disabilities need or want. Listen to what they say. Empower. A person with psychiatric disability can lose confidence in their ability to make decisions, perform tasks and engage in activities. Loss of confidence and self-worth has a compounding impact in all areas of the person's life and can lead to loss of motivation, neglect of self and overwhelming feelings of hopelessness. Although communicating their needs may be a challenge for them, people with disability are no less capable of thinking for themselves than anyone else. As a trainer, ask before acting: do not automatically assume that people with disabilities need your help. Avoid being inappropriately solicitous.

Many of the barriers people with disabilities have to face, are caused by the negative attitudes of other people. Do not treat people with disabilities as though they are sick. As a trainer, you can demand hard work and good performance, but you always have to keep in mind the capacity of the person and set achievable goals. Appreciate not only progress but also effort. Think of the person first and the disability second. Although a disability may cause inconvenience in certain situations and areas of activity, it is not necessarily a tragedy that dominates a person's life. Disabled people are able to live fulfilling lives and are rarely dysfunctional. Also, for the disabled people it is important to be treated in a manner that is appropriate to their age. Do not talk to people with disabilities as if they are children and patronize them, nor refer to them as children. Be yourself, be natural, and don't act with forced enthusiasm.

Communicate with participants in a helpful way. When offering explanations or instructions use language which is easy to understand, free from medical or technical jargon. If necessary, repeat the instructions in other words and check, if all the participants understand. Recognize the stress level participants are experiencing and provide them with strategies of stress management.



CONCLUSIONS

Somehow you have arrived to the end of this book. Either you have read it to the end, or you decided to skip some parts to come directly to the conclusions. In any case, you should know that this is only the end of the beginning, as the real work starts now: putting it into practice!

The target groups addressed by the ARTERY partners are so different; it made the writing of this book a complicated task. Art and theatre are used with vulnerable adults from different backgrounds and in different settings to develop different social skills. In this context we, as an international partnership with a number of different approaches and experiences to develop social skills of disadvantaged adults, tried to gather the most relevant approaches, offering you some techniques, advice and hopefully useful guidelines to work with your target group.

If you work with the homeless and with physically or relational-emotional disabled people, you should know that practicing theatre requires quite a long time, flexibility and an individual approach. However this mixture of different socially excluded people opens up new possibilities for interaction amongst the group. It helps them develop and enrich their personalities, gain a much clearer vision of what their problem is about and also get rid of unrealistic illusions about themselves. You can encourage disabled members to help and teach the homeless to fight with their circumstance, not to pity or feel sorry for themselves, and to be more active. On the other hand, homeless members might help the disabled ones and become their active assistants while rehearsing, performing, travelling, etc. It is important that there is trust, clear rules, safety and fun in the group.

Should you be working with migrants, we can certainly affirm that they are particularly challenging to work with, both emotionally, linguistically, and culturally. Emotionally it's difficult because you get to know personal stories of individuals who had to escape some terrible conditions. Linguistically, because it's not always the case where you share a language with the workshop participants, and one has to invent other forms of communication. Culturally, because one learns so much about other cultural backgrounds and about one's own cultural background: the differences produce constructive insights and suddenly one can see how others see oneself, whether positively or negatively. This means one can learn other different points of view.

If your target group is people with a disability or mental illness, be prepared to experience what it means in practice "the road itself is the goal": The most important thing is not the final product (i.e. a theatre performance), but the whole process of creating it. Preparation of the play may be a great medium for you to offer to the people with disabilities new opportunities to learn, discover their skills and exercise them. Interacting in a wisely combined group where individuals, often without realizing it, act as inspiring examples for the others, can facilitate each participants in leaving their comfort zone and moving to the challenging zone of learning. The small and seemingly trivial elements of the preparation process can represent for some people the seldom given opportunity to decide, speak up, to give their voice a chance to be heard, to express their opinion and

defend it. Your role as a trainer should not be only to facilitate the learning and training of skills during the play preparation, but to extend this process to the maximum level to daily lives of the participants. Today, the achievement-oriented world is usually not sensitive enough to notice small improvements. You, as the one responsible for supporting the learning process, have to be the one to notice them in participants, to appreciate them, and to make the individuals themselves aware of the value of small steps forward they are making.

To sum up, theatre workshops represent a place with an enormous learning potential. The theatre allows each socially excluded individual to “find his own place” in the group. It helps eliminate stereotypes towards socially excluded people that exist in every society in a non-violent way and furthermore allows the members to achieve and experience success. Mind you, the theatre should be a social means, not the finishing line. It is necessary to fully accept the reality, desires and uniqueness of each individual member while using drama and art therapy. Therefore it is recommended to adjust and customize the example exercises you found in this manual to the group of clients with whom you are working.

Furthermore, the theatre provides the participants with a unique opportunity to “give” something to others. People with disability often have to ask for services and favours from others, often are the ones who “get” something. Lack of expectation from others forms part of a social stigma that people with disability experience in their lives. The theatre play performed by these people themselves questions the stereotyped view of disability as something that makes you helpless and dependent, because now the “healthy” people in the audience are the ones who receive something really valuable.

As we hope you have realised now, education for social skills development does not entail a value-free programme. In fact, it gives us the opportunity to connect with values, including codes of conduct, which facilitate the social integration of vulnerable people. We refer to values that have influence on the lifestyle of disadvantaged people, such as sensitivity to the rights of other people, admiration for the activities which are carried out by others, refusal to be involved in drugs abuse, etc. Having a good value system and a positive attitude to life is essential to face challenges and have satisfactory relations with the rest of the community.

Last but not least, a key element of our work should be the coherence between what we aim to achieve and the way in which we achieve it. If we are trying to encourage empathy, interpersonal skills and creativity, with these as essential content parts of our training programmes, we must reflect those in the tools and activities we choose to use, and most importantly in our own personal approach to the people we are working with.

In summary, social skills are pivotal to successful participation in life for people in general and disadvantaged adults in particular. Role-playing and participation in drama and theatre programs foster the acquisition of these skills. All through this manual we have been reflecting on the way to use art and theatre techniques to enhance personal and social well-being of vulnerable adults. We hope you feel stimulated, with inspiration and ideas to apply to your own work. Whether you are a teacher, a trainer, an educator, an intercultural mediator or simply anyone training to improve another person's social skills, you should know that you are in the key position to support the learning process and make the best of it. This might not be easy, but let's work at it!

Trainers, teachers and educators involved in the art and theatre workshops agree that theatre has a enormous learning potential, enriches personalities, helps to eliminate stereotypes, improves social skills and is a useful vehicle to exchange experiences, change one's point of view and be flexible and respectful with the others. They also agree that working with vulnerable adults is indeed a challenge, is very time consuming and requires an individual approach to ensure that the knowledge and skills developed influence in other life-spheres of participants.

We hope you enjoyed reading this book and wish you all the best in your work with vulnerable people. Should you feel encouraged, by what you read in this manual, to share your views with the editorial team, please do not hesitate to get in contact with any of the partners of ARTERY project.

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Grodzki Theatre Association, Theatre With No Home, Key & Key Communications, Agrícola Centre for Education & Training, INTRAS Foundation, EST Lifelong Learning Centre



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◇ http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/llp/index_en.php

This site will offer you information regarding the Lifelong Learning Programme and its funding opportunities through the following actions: Comenius, Erasmus, Leonardo da Vinci, Grundtvig, Policy cooperation and innovation, Languages, Information-communication-technologies, Dissemination and exploitation of results, and Jean Monet.

◇ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lifelong_learning

Here you will find a definition of Lifelong Learning from Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, including history of lifelong learning in US, lifelong learning in Europe, lifelong learning in a learning society, characteristics, international institutions concept of lifelong learning, lifelong learning in developing nations, strategies, measuring lifelong learning, benefits, and criticism.

◇ <http://www.openroad.net.au/access/dakit/>

Disability awareness information kit aiming to promote understanding of issues surrounding disability. It contains useful information (handouts) about disability in the community, expectations of people with disabilities, common ways in which people with disabilities are viewed and treated, interacting with people with disabilities, assisting people with disability, disability discrimination act, and additional material, activities and resources.

◇ <http://www.nasaa-arts.org/Research/Key-Topics/Arts-Education/rbc-toolkit-section3.pdf>

A research-based communication toolkit about how arts learning and arts integration help develop key cognitive skills needed for academic success, as well as promote the social and emotional strengths that lead to academic achievement and positive behaviours and relationships.

◇ http://www.interculturaldialogue2008.eu/1534.0.html?&redirect_url=my-startpage-eyid.html

Describes a training method for intercultural communication in institutional settings (Spices Guidelines; Klein ed. 2007). The training course provides communication skills, analytical tools and didactic prototypical materials to trainers and educators who intend to create tailor-made courses in intercultural communication or second language acquisition for foreign service-users ('adults-in-mobility') or service-providers ('adults-professionally-in-contact-with-mobility') in bureaucratic-institutional settings (schools, local councils, hospitals, universities, tourist offices etc.).

◇ www.edu.helsinki.fi/lapsetkertovat/lapset/In_English/frontpage/index.htm

Here you can see the video of the storycrafting method, invented in Finland, which brings to the fore the skill of listening and the art of establishing a close contact. The aim is to move away from the traditional, objectifying approach to children by focusing on the questions of children's participation and co-operation.

◇ http://www.centreformentalhealth.org.uk/pdfs/Making_recovery_a_reality_policy_paper.pdf

Making Recovery a Reality (Geoff Shepherd / Jed Boardman / Mike Slade, 2007) describes Recovery model for supporting people with mental illness. It defines principles, origins, the role of professionals and the recovery-oriented services. On this paper you will also find information about the recovery journey, obstacles, the importance of work, relatives and friends in the rehabilitation process and practices within this approach.

Social skills are pivotal to successful participation in life for people in general and disadvantaged adults in particular. Role-playing and participation in drama and theatre programs foster the acquisition of these skills. All through this manual we reflect on the way to use art and theatre techniques to enhance personal and social well-being of vulnerable adults. To make it helpful with a practical purpose we include a selection of ready-to-use activities to train social skills, which can be adapted to any group you are working with. We hope reading this book will stimulate you to start or continue working with disadvantaged groups, and will provide you with inspiration and new ideas to apply within your local context. Whether you are a teacher, a trainer, an educator or simply anyone training to improve another person's social skills, you should know that you are in the key position to support the learning process and make the best of it. This might not be easy, but let's work at it!

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www.arteryproject.eu

