**Sheena Amos Youth Trust - Side by Side Group**

**Forum Theatre Workshop**

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| **Activity** | **Resources** |
| **Welcome and Warm Ups**  **Touch All the Walls:** *Breaking inhibitions exercise*   * Ask the group how many walls there are in the space, participants must touch all the walls in a clockwise direction and get back into the circle as quick as possible. * The last one back gets a forfeit. Repeat with anti-clockwise.   **Knee Wars:** *Tension Breaker*   * Divide into pairs * The objective is to touch your partners knees without letting them touch yours * Repeat x 2   **Opposite Game:** *Focus, Listening*   * Participants walk around the hall on the instruction “go” and stop at the instruction “stop”. * Two more instructions of “jump” and “clap” are added. * Now the instructions are reversed so that go = stop / stop = go / clap = jump / jump = clap. The more confident the children get the more actions you can add in to the equation.   **Grandmother’s Footsteps – Circle Style:** *Introducing the theme of oppression, group power, gang mentality*   * Play a normal game of Grandmother’s Footsteps. Then create a circle. In the centre of the circle place a volunteer. The group’s objective is to creep up on the volunteer in the centre and tap them on the shoulder. How does this make the Grandmother player feel? Discuss how different this felt to the normal game. * Swap players. Repeat. * Encourage the group to create different atmospheres together, rather than just aiming for the volunteer in the centre? Encourage group to take time, build up the tension of the atmosphere. How can this be done? Try different tactics (neutral face, body, aggressive etc.) Discuss different types of oppression that could be introduced through the game. |  |
| **Introducing Theatre of the Oppressed**  **The aim on Theatre of the Oppressed is to use theatre as a means of promoting social and political change by empowering the audience to explore and challenge oppression.**  **Background:**  Theatre of the Oppressed was established in the early 1970s by a Brazilian Theatre Director and Workers Party activist, Augusto Boal.  Boal began experimenting in participatory theatre in the 1950s-1960s, when he was the artistic director of the Arena Theatre in Rio de Janerio. His aim was to meet and work with the people of the favelas (Brazilian shanty towns); he took his acting troup into to the streets, factories, unions. His experiments began with Image Theatre (exploring images without words) and developed later to Forum Theatre, which is the core of Theatre of the Oppressed.  In 1964 Brazil underwent a military coup and was under a military dictatorship until 1985, it was a dangerous and volatile state, and in Boal’s work had attracted the attention of the government. In 1971, he was arrested and tortured. He was released after four months and exiled.  Boal spent the next 5 years in Argentina, 2 in Portugal and 8 in France, before returning to Rio. During this time, he continued his work, developing Invisible Theatre (transforming a public space or stage into a theatrical event, without the public being aware).  In 1992, Boal was elected to the Chamber of Vereadores of Rio de Janerio. He adapted his theatre techniques for politics, and hired his theatre troup as legislative staff, creating 17 theatre companies of players throughout the communities in the city – as a result there are 13 laws in Brazil created via this method. |  |
| **Image Theatre**  “*We must not forget that words are only vehicles which convey emotions, memories, ideas... which are not necessarily the same for everyone. The word spoken is never the word heard... “*  *“Image is a language. All images also are surfaces and, as such. They reflect what is projected on it. As objects reflect the light that strikes them, so images in an organised ensemble reflect the emotions of the observer, her ideas, memories, imagination desires... The whole method of Theatre of the Oppressed, and particularly the series of Image Theatre, is based on the multiple mirror of the gaze of others – a number of people looking at the same image, and offering feelings, what is evoked for them, what their imagination this throw up around that image, The multiplier election will reveal to the person who made the image its hidden aspects. It is up to the protagonist (the builder of the image) to understand and feel whatever she wants to or is able to take away from this process”.*  **Image of the Word**: **Illustrating a subject with your body :** *introducing Image Theatre*   * Joker/leader asks for 5 or more volunteers to express a theme in a visual form (not looking at the others). * One after another, they present their image, using only their bodies to present the image, still. * Ask the rest of the group if they can present an alternative image to represent the theme/idea. * Possible suggestions of words: conflict, struggle, family, struggle, outsider, minority.   *Dynamisation the images:*   * Original players return and represent their images together. Now rather than a personal image, we have a “social” vision. Discuss common theme? What do we take from the image? * Participants now need to find a way to interrelate their images – now not just presenting your individual image, but linking it to others. Now the image related a single, global, all-embracing vision. * In round one and two, participants have played the protagonist, now they must play the opposite. For instance if you have played the victim, you must now play the oppressor. The aim is not to see how one oppressed person sees the oppressor, but how *the oppressed* *sees the oppressors*.   **Images of Oppression:** *To introduce the element of intervention in Forum Theatre, to explore specific types of oppression, to create a forum debate*   * Discuss briefly different types of oppression where the participants have been victims of inequality or discrimination, and ask each person to choose a moment of oppression from their own lives that they are comfortable sharing with the group. They can have been the oppressed person, witness or a oppressor. * Divide the group up into groups of 4-6 depending on the size of the group (ensure you have at least two groups). * Each person is to sculpt their group into an image of that oppression, and then include him or herself within that image (taking on the role of the protagonist). Each participant must play him or herself within the image (whether that’s the oppressed, oppressor or victim). * Create a playing space and audience space. One by one each person must present their images. As each image is set up, the audience must close their eyes. * First, the image must be presented without the protagonist, then secondly within the protagonist (creator of the image). * Invite the audience to interpret the image. Then invite the protagonist to explain it. Following the discussions, ask the protagonist to alter the image so the oppression is stopped. | * From...Page 174-177. Games for Actors and Non- Actors by Augusto Boal. 2nd Edition |
| **Forum Theatre**  Forum Theatre is the core of Theatre of the Oppressed; it actively empowers the audience to explore oppressions and opinions, and explores options for dealing with shared problems, ideally motivating the audience/spect-actors to make positive changes in their lives. Forum Theatre is not about finding the perfect solution, or really any solution, but it is about opening up a debate, analysing situations and exploring strategies to counter oppression.  **The Process (a guide only):**   * The audience are shown a short play, usually based on a theme inspired by the audience’s shared experience. In the play, the central character (the protagonist), encounters an obstacle (oppression) by an aggressor (antagonist). * The play is firstly performed through, without a resolution. This time through, at any point, the audience can stop the action, and perform an alternative. The audience become Spect-actors (a Forum Theatre term for one that acts as well as observes). It is usually only the protagonist who is changed. * The Joker (leader) leads the discussion with the company and audience, and facilitates/supports their interaction.   **The Game of Forum Theatre:**  Forum Theatre is a form of interactive theatre gaming, and for it to work well, it helps to have established the rules of play.  **How to play:**   * Making sure the group you are working with are comfortable and relaxed is essential. How else will they be willing to share their ideas and actively participate – so a good warm up is essential! Check out Boal’s *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* which is jam packed with ideas. * Firstly watch the performance through, at the end of the performance invite the audience to clap, they may discuss the presentation between themselves * Performance repeated, at any time, any audience member might call out freeze, come onto stage and replace the protagonist in order to change the series of events (thus becoming a spect-actor). Don’t need to be an actor to take part, just have ideas of how to change/resolve oppression/a problem. * You can only swap characters that WANT to change the circumstances presented. You may also introduce characters that may be able to support other characters that wish to change. * The Joker is on hand at all times to guide/support anyone who is nervous. If an audience member has an idea for change, but is reluctant to get on stage, they can suggest their ideas to the actors who can play out the suggestion. * Violence is not an option as a method of change. Forum Theatre believes in peace not passivity.   **The Joker rules:**   * The Jokers are the “midwives assisting the birth of all ideas and actions”, they do not take part in the action and they do not manipulate or influence the ideas and opinions of the audience. * The joker never presents their personal opinions * The joker watches out for magic solutions, they may interrupt the spect-actors actions if they consider the action to be magic. However, the decision about whether the action is magic or not, is up to the audience. * A good debate is more important than a good solution.   You can decide with the performers during the rehearsal period if there are “missing characters” that could be introduced, alternatively you can let the spect-actors decide this.  **Test Run:**   * Working as a whole group, take an example of oppression (Cinderella and the Stepsisters for example) * Keep this example light, maybe a character from a fairy story, so you can demonstrate the method, without getting too involved with the politics.   **Devising a Forum Theatre Scene:**   * Divide the group into two. Ask each group to group share/brainstorm/thought shower their own experiences of oppression (only ones that they are comfortable sharing). * Select one of the ideas of oppression and devise a short scene, in which a protagonist is experiencing this oppression. At this point it might be worth fleshing out the background to the story/character a bit (don’t spend too long on this, but it might help later). * Ask the first group to present their scene. As per the **How to Play** section above. Select a member of the other group to take on the role of Joker. * Repeat, but with the other group’s scene, and a joker from the first group. * Discuss with the group, how they felt this worked? What did work? What would they change about the method and why? | * Flip chart paper * Pens |
| **End Game:** *if time...*  **Toilet Tag:** *Final fun note to end the workshop*   * Tag with a twist, when participants are tagged, they become a toilet (bend knees, arm up for a chain to flush the toilet) * The only way to be released is for another player to “sit” on the toilet, and pull their chain, at which the “toilet” player, must make the sound of the flush.   **Thank you, and goodbye** |  |

**Thank you for taking part in the workshop, we hope that you have enjoyed it!**

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