

Antonio and Ali

It is said that creative work needs to be done in loneliness, have you ever tried to create a story with 10 people or more? Here's an opportunity to try it!

Issues addressed

- Stereotypes

Aims

- To explore the images we have about people from other cultures, social groups etc.
- To be aware of how these images condition our expectations of people who belong to other groups.

Time: 30 minutes

Group size: 8 - 10. Note: larger groups can be sub-divided

Preparation

- A ball
- Paper and pen for the observer
- Flip chart and marker pen.

Instructions

1. Ask people to sit in a circle.
2. Ask one of them to be the observer. Explain that they have to sit outside the circle and write down the story that is going to be created.
3. Explain to the rest of the group that together they are going to create a co-operative story. For this they are going to use a ball.
4. Then say: "This is the story of Antonio, a young man from Madrid" and pass the ball to a member of the group and invite them to continue with the next one or two sentences of the story, and to then pass the ball to someone else.
5. Continue in this way so that the story is built co-operatively.
6. After 10 or 12 turns ask for the ball and say: "Antonio knows Ali, a Moroccan boy who also has a story" and pass the ball back to someone in the circle and ask them to start telling Ali's story.
7. Bring the activity to an end after about 10 or 15 minutes.

Debriefing and evaluation

Ask the observer to read the notes they took about the stories. Then ask the group to say what the stories of Antonio and Ali tell them about their different lives and follow on with comments about how this relates to the images we have about young men from Madrid and Morocco. Make notes of the main points on flip chart.

Ask where these images come from. Did everyone have similar images of Spain and Morocco? Why? Why not?



Tips for the facilitator

It is best if the story is made spontaneously and with a fast rhythm. In this case the observer may have difficulty in noting everything down. This problem may be solved by having a second observer or by recording the story on a tape.

It is important that the activity is initially presented simply as the creation of a co-operative story.

The names of the characters will lead the group to the theme you want to explore. Therefore, if for instance, you want to do some work around immigrants you should choose names traditionally associated with the majority and immigrants. If you want to deal with images of men and women, choose male and female names.

This activity can be adapted to any situation where there is discrimination by setting the scene in the first sentence of the story: "This is the story of Frank, a young homosexual..." or "This is the story of Maria who is physically disabled..." and compare it to the story of somebody from the mainstream in society.

Variations

1. Divide the group into two sub-groups and ask each group to work on only one of the stories. Afterwards, compare the two. This variation has the advantage that the participants do not suspect that the stories are to be compared.

It is important that the participants are split into the sub-groups at random.

2. Form two sub-groups and ask each group to draw or write the biography, or an important moment in the life, of one of the characters in the story. Afterwards compare the two biographies or stories.

Suggestions for follow up

If you like stories and enjoy surprises then read the 'Tales of the World' (page 160).

IF Ali was living in Antonio's country, how would he feel being part of the minority, and how would Antonio feel being one of the majority? Try 'Force the circle' (page 85).