

Stella¹¹

“In a sad love story, who’s the worst and who’s the best?”

LEVEL: 2

GROUP: 5-30

TIME: 120 MIN.

Complexity

Level 2

Group size

5 to 30

Time

120 minutes

Overview

This activity uses ranking techniques to confront the differing values of participants in relation to issues of morality, and to open up discussion on the issues of gender inequality and socialisation into gender-based stereotyping and prescribed gender roles for both women and men

Objectives

- To encourage participants to think about their own values in relation to morality and gender
- To analyse where differing moral positions come from
- To understand how individuals become socialised into gender-based stereotyping or prescribed gender roles
- To analyse the way prescribed gender roles for both women and men are an intrinsic part of individual and societal morality

Materials

1 copy of Stella’s story for each participant

Preparation

Enough space for participants to work individually, in small groups of 3 to 6 and in plenary.

Instructions

Introduce the exercise to the participants. Explain its objectives and that it will help participants to find out more about their personal values in relation to morality and gender.

Ask participants to read the story individually and to rank each character (Stella, Vitali, Ralf, Stella’s mother and Goran) according to their behaviour, for example, “Who acted in the worst way?” “Who was the second worst?”, and so on. You should give participants 10 minutes for this task.

When everyone is ready with their individual ranking, ask participants to get together in small groups (of 3 to 6), to discuss how they perceive the behaviour of the characters. The task of the small groups is to come up with a common ranking – a list that everybody in the small group can agree on.

Ask them to avoid using mathematical methods in order to establish the ranking, but rather to build the list on the basis of a shared understanding and agreement about what is good and what is bad behaviour.

¹¹ Adapted from “Abigale” Training Resource File Volume 4 – “Intercultural Learning” Examples of Methods Used, Directorate of Youth and Sport, Council of Europe – CEJ/G (1991) 4 rev.

After the small groups have come up with their lists, you can optionally repeat this phase by bringing two small groups together to form medium size groups. If you choose to include this phase, the first round of group work should be conducted in groups not larger than 4 people.

Debriefing and evaluation

Start by bringing together the results of the group work and by discussing the similarities and differences between them. Slowly move on to ask on what basis people made their ranking. You can use the following questions to guide the discussion:

- How did they decide, individually, what was good and what was bad behaviour?
- How did they find agreement in the small groups about what was good and bad behaviour?
- Did they find it difficult to come to an agreement that everyone could live with?
- What obstacles were encountered?
- What role do personal values play in such a process?
- Where do one's personal values, in relation to issues of morality and gender, come from?
- Where do people learn morality and gender related values?
- Can you identify any prescribed gender roles in the story?
- What gender related dilemmas are raised by this story?
- Are any of these present in the context where you live?
- How do these issues affect young people?
- How can we help young people to deal with social pressure related to morality and gender?

Tips for facilitators

In order to get the best results from the exercise, it is essential that you establish an open atmosphere in which every ranking of the story is explicitly acceptable, and where you do not start 'blaming' people for arguments you might consider strange or bad yourself.

Suggestions for follow-up

This exercise can be adapted in many ways. One variation is to run it as done here, and then to repeat it with a changed story, in which all the women become men, and vice-versa. Does the same ranking still apply? Why do things change? You could also include the age of the characters in the story and play around with it, make them all have the same gender, or include ethnic or national background. It would then be useful to look at how the changes in the story make a difference to the ranking, and why.

Ideas for action

Suggest to your group that they explore the issue of values as they relate to gender in a variety of real communities. You can do this in a number of ways: develop a series of in-

- interviews using different audio visual methods with male and female representatives of different religious and cultural communities, or invite women and men from the communities you are interested in knowing more about to come to meet the members of your group and to discuss values related to gender.

HANDOUT

Stella's Story

Somewhere, far, far away, lives a beautiful girl Stella. She loves handsome Vitali who lives on the other side of the river. In early spring a terrible flood destroyed all the bridges across the river, and has left only one boat afloat. Stella asks Ralf, the owner of the boat, to take her to the other side. Ralf agrees, but with one pre-condition: he insists that Stella sleep with him. Stella is confused. She does not know what to do and runs to her mother to ask for advice. Her mother tells her that she does not want to interfere with Stella's private business. In desperation Stella sleeps with Ralf who, afterwards, takes her across the river. Stella runs to Vitali to embrace him happily, and tells him everything that has happened. Vitali pushes her away roughly and Stella runs away, bursting into tears. Not far from Vitali's house, Stella meets Goran, Vitali's best friend. She tells him everything that has happened. Goran hits Vitali for what he has done to Stella and walks away with her...