

THEATRE BASED FACILITATION

Theatre in facilitation

Theatre is a unique opportunity for facilitators to add depth and creativity to the work they do; to facilitate personal growth, create dialogue and invite change. The theatrical activities and processes you learn in the workshop can be applied to any kind of facilitated session, whether it is a workshop on developing skills, a planning session, a reflective team building exercise, an idea generating session, or any kind of meeting that you want to make meaningful and productive.

Why use theatre in facilitation?

- Drama is active and experiential
- Using the body cuts down chatter and allows participants to get to the core of issues fairly quickly
- Action warms up people to what is happening within them. It gives people access to parts of themselves that are not easily visible.
- Drama brings fun, laughter and bonding into a learning environment
- Drama can be used to examine points of view on issues that are sensitive and dialogue collectively as a group

In this resource you will find a brief introduction and an activity that you can use across these areas of theatre in facilitation:

1. Sociometry
2. Improv
3. Role interviews
4. Image theatre

These are just a starting point; there is a whole world of resources freely available online.

Sociometry

What is sociometry?

Sociometry deals with the nature, quality and quantity of human connection. The term Sociometry relates to its Latin etymology, socius meaning social, and metrum meaning measure. So, sociometry is a way of measuring the relatedness degree among group members.

Jacob Levy Moreno (1889-1974), considered the founder of sociometry, defined it as a methodology for tracking the energy vectors of interpersonal relationships in a group, an useful instrument for group assessment and transformation for a better functioning and high performances.

We are constantly making choices about what we feel, think and do. Sociometry explores and concretizes this choice making process. Sociometry offers a way to study groups in their concrete form.

Applications of sociometry

It can be used in a wide variety of ways -

- For the members of a group to get to know each other better
- To contract at the beginning of a workshop/facilitated discussion
- For people to make plans for change
- For people to introspect
- To encourage dialogue in a group
- For people to choose priorities in a group

As a means for the members of a group to get to know each other better

At the beginning of a workshop or any facilitated process, there is likely to be some discomfort as people are unsure about their positions in the group. Sociometry can be used as a non-threatening way of warming up the group to each other and to the work they are going to do together.

Moreno's first experience of sociometry was in this context; when he was working with refugees in Vienna post the first world war. Many people had to live together in close proximity with strangers, leading to conflict. Moreno would have people group themselves in terms of their preferences (what time they liked to sleep, the kind of music they liked, what kind of food they liked to eat). Through this process the refugees were able to identify people who had similar preferences as themselves and change their residences so as to reduce conflict.

The facilitator asks participants to group themselves according to a number of factors (limited only by your own creativity). Some examples

- The first letter of your name
- How many years have you lived in xyz city
- The longest you have gone without sleep
- Degrees
- Industry
- Your favourite foods
- Your favourite kind of movie
- The number of siblings you have

In each case, once the group is formed, you invite members of sub-groups to get to know each other a little better. Doing this multiple times results in people relaxing into the process.

The facilitator could also use "this or that" sociometry which invites people to choose one side of a binary option; for example:

- Introvert or Extrovert
- Logical or Emotional
- Perfectionist or Not Perfectionist
- Risk Taking or Conservative
- Structured or creative

These can be tailored to the content of the workshop/facilitation you are leading the group into.

You can also introduce the concept of dialogue between groups. As a facilitator, ask if one group has any curious questions for the other group; it is important that you step in quickly and rephrase if any of the questions sound judgemental instead of curious.

The advantages of using sociometry like this:

- It's a quick way of getting to know people in a fairly intimate manner
- It gets people to share things about themselves that they otherwise might not have
- It increases the energy of the group: when people are standing up, walking around and laughing, they carry this positive energy into the rest of the day
- It can give you and the group valuable information about the structure of the group

The main caution for the facilitator using sociometry in this manner is not to make any group feel lesser than the other.

As a way to choose priorities as a group

This use of sociometry helps a group make decisions on what is most important (choosing work priorities; deciding what questions are most important; what cases should be worked with in a training program etc).

The facilitator identifies the choices that have come up in the group; marks a clear physical position for each priority and invites the individuals in the group to move to the position that represents the priority that they identify with the most. You could then invite the group with the least number to make a choice between the other two.

The advantage of using the technique in this manner is that it encourages everyone in the room to contribute to the decision making (instead of just the most vocal ones). Make sure you pay attention to the sensitivities of the people in the groups with lesser votes (emphasize that this is just a way of gauging where the energy of the group is at that point in time; it could change with time).

Image Theatre – Opening a dialogue through our bodies

Image theatre is a social change tool developed by Augusto Boal. In image theatre, still images are used to explore themes. Of course, those images don't replace words but they cannot be translated into words either – they are a language in themselves. Images can be “dynamised” or brought alive through thought tracking or by adding sound or movement.

The image can then serve as a springboard for critical group reflection in order to both understand the situation better and to try out possible “solutions.” Through the process of creating and working with an image, participants can decode the situation, dissecting each character's personality, motivation and range of possible actions.

Image theatre can be created on the spot, collaboratively. In this way, it is an incredibly accessible tool to use in trainings, strategy development and direct actions.

Warm up is extremely important when doing image theatre. Two possible ways to warm a group up to the use of images

1. Through getting them to form images around simple, fun themes: Divide them into groups; explain that you will give each group a simple phrase and their task is to create a frozen image that communicates this phrase to the other groups. The rules are that everyone needs to be involved in the image and that no props are allowed; they need to experiment with their bodies. Give them two minutes to plan as a group and then get each group to freeze while the others guess.
2. Through walks and freezes: Ask them to walk around the room, in a random manner, in silence. If you feel they are not fully present, you can ask them to walk at different speeds (3 is normal speed, can go upto 5 or down to 1). As they keep walking, ask them to freeze multiple times (ask them to be more dramatic in subsequent rounds; use different levels; bring more expressions). Ask a few frozen statues to speak as the statue when tapped (this helps them get comfortable with externalising what is going on within them).

Once the group is warmed up, images can be used in a wide range of ways. For example:

- Show how you feel about a particular topic through an image
- Show your vision for your future through an image
- what do you think are the core strengths of our team? Show them through an image
- What's an image that represents what your understanding of this organisational value is?

1. EXPLORING THEMES USING IMAGE THEATRE

Step 1: Create images by freezing or sculpting

The facilitator asks some volunteers to express the chosen theme (say inclusion) in a visual form. Without talking, they position their bodies in a still pose, to express their opinion or idea or experience of the theme, as it strikes them there and then. Having made their image, they need offer no explanation or justification – in itself, it says everything that needs saying, for the moment. When all the volunteers have been into the space and shown their individual images, the facilitator asks if anyone in the audience can suggest an image different to those shown. One by one, anyone who wants to, comes into the middle and shows their own image of the subject being treated – whatever image occurs to them.

Alternatively, when dealing with small groups the facilitator can suggest that the participants form a circle and, at a given signal, *all* simultaneously depict with their bodies their version of the subject. Then as a second stage, still holding their poses, they look round at what everyone else is doing.

Sculpting others

The facilitator asks a first volunteer to illustrate the theme proposed by the group, using the bodies of other members of the group. This sculptor chooses who to use and places them in relation to each other to form a single image composed of several bodies. The one tool she may not use is the spoken word.

It is important that the person who is ‘sculpting’ the image works fast, so that she will not be tempted to think in words (verbal language) and then translate into images (visual language). If the work is not done in this way, the images are generally poor.

The images could be dynamised in the following way:

- Actors add a rhythmic movement
- They choose and repeat a phrase, which is the essence of what the character is thinking at that moment
- On a clap from the facilitator, the image comes alive and performs whatever action it intended to perform.

Step 2 - **Describe & Imagine**

The group participants watching the images can now take some time to look closely at the image in front of them, and the facilitator invites group members to begin describing what they see — using their imaginations to construct stories, narratives, and relationships based on the visual and physical evidence they have before them (body pose, gestures, facial expression, etc.).

Step 3 - **Thought Bubble**

After you “interview” the group’s imagination and develop several stories about the image created by the 2 actors’ bodies, you can also use a paper or cardboard thought bubble to ask participants what they think the characters might be thinking — probing their internal thoughts and emotions.

Step 4 - Shift & Re-Examine

Now, have the actors' make a simple change to their pose that will flip the dynamic between their characters — sometimes as simple as having one of the actors kneel down, sit, or take a different physical position. Re-interview the group participants about the new image, and what is different. Has the power relationship changed? Why? What else might be going on here? You can use the thought bubble again to probe the internal thoughts of the characters.

Step 5 – Reflect

Wrap-up the exercise by inviting the entire group (including the actors) to reflect on what just happened? What did they notice about this exercise? Emphasize how this exercise may have heightened their observation skills and brought out complexity from a series of simple body poses.

Improv

What is improv?

Improv theatre is unscripted, spontaneous theatre where you perform without preparation. You use your imagination, listen carefully, bring yourself fully into the moment and act at the speed of thought.

Improvisation is powerful - not for the performance aspect, but for the philosophical and experiential foundation it would provide. No matter how much we plan or prepare, life is improvisation. We are all improvisors. We make up life as we go along. Improv is doing that with awareness.

Improvisation is a metaphor, a path, a system: It is a modus operandi that anyone can learn. Improvisation is a metaphor for being alive, poised and ready for any adventure.

You can think on your feet only when you trust yourself. Which means you need to access and listen to your intuition and allow yourself to take risks. Improv allows you to do that.

Improv games you can use

Group environment	<p>Divide the class into groups of 5. The first person in the group enters a space and mimes an action that defines an environment. Once another group member knows that what that environment is, they enter the space and perform a complementary action. This keeps going until the entire group is in the environment. Remind students that the key is to create a complete picture. They all have to work together in the moment and not try to add something that destroys the environment.</p> <p>Don't discuss it – do it! Explore all the aspects of the environment. If the environment is a movie theatre, there's the possibility of popcorn, people to sell the popcorn, moviegoers, screen, seats, any of the myriad objects and persons that make up a movie theatre experience. Watch each other, try to create balanced stage pictures. If you see everyone else trying to be the screen, sit down and watch the movie.</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbsrDEKSVg4</p>
Human machine	<p>This fast and physical group gets participants moving and working together in a way that generates energy and promotes collaboration. One at a time, members of the group become parts of the "machine", each one making a distinct physical motion and a sound, until the whole group is working together in motion, as one human machine.</p> <p>Stand in a large circle. Explain to the group that their task is to build a human machine. Each individual will become one moving-part of the machine.</p> <p>One person enters the circle and begins making a repeating sound and a physical movement (eg. a "whoop whoop whoop" sound while flapping one arm.) After a 5 seconds, another person enters the circle and connects to the first person, also making a sound and a movement.</p> <p>Continue building the machine until everyone is connected, everyone making their movements and sounds throughout.</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inVS2Nb-UhI</p>

Role interviews

What are they?

Role interviews are a technique from the world of psychodrama, developed by Jacob Moreno. Psychodrama literally means the psyche in action; it is taking the dramas that all of us have in our heads and playing them out in the safe space of a group.

Psychodrama works with the contents of our imagination, providing an opportunity to see, feel and even touch some of our inner images by bringing them into concrete, physical reality. This world of the imagination, both concurrent with and beyond our ordinary everyday reality Moreno termed “surplus reality.”

It is about acknowledging the voices we hear in our heads, isolating them and engaging in dialogue and expanding to make room for other voices as well.

The structure of a role interview is simple and versatile.

1. The facilitator identifies one or more roles that participants could explore in the context of the workshop/discussion (for example, you could say “take on the role of your future self”).
2. You ask the participant to physically shift location with the instruction that when they move to the new location, they become their future self.
3. You help the person get into character by asking them questions about their current life (for example, in the interview with the future self, you could ask questions like “which city are you living in?” “what season is it?”)
4. You ask questions to help the participant introspect; make sure they stay in character all the time.
5. Bring them back to their original position and ask them their reflections as a result of going through this exercise.

Some examples of where you could use role interviews:

- As a way of clarifying own thinking
- As a means to understand another’s perspective
- As a tool to decision making

It can be used in any situation where it is useful for the participants to look at perspectives in isolation or take a perspective that they would not normally consider.

As a way of clarifying own thinking

This would involve doing an interview with future self. For example in a workshop on career planning or a facilitated discussion on the future of the group.

The steps would be

- help them get into character
- explore what is the future they are seeing themselves in
- understand how they bridged the gap from where they are and where they are today

Sample questions you could use for a session focused on career planning (after getting the person into character as their future self)

- What is the role you are playing today? What kind of work are you doing?
- What are some recent achievements of yours?
- What are your team members/management team saying about you? How is your team regarded in the organisation?
- What are the strengths you're using today that contribute to your success?
- What were the challenges you had to overcome in order to get here? What resources of yours did you use to get over those?
- What were some significant turning points or decisions that you made over the last X years in order to get to where you are today? What helped you make those decisions?
- If you had one line of advice for your past self, what would that be?

Why do role interviews work?

- They allow the protagonist to look at the issue from some psychic distance and clarity which allows the fuller picture to emerge
- They generate more spontaneous expressions of thoughts and feelings
- They help us develop insight into and compassion for parts of ourselves and for others
- They allow us to investigate one aspect at a time, holding it up for scrutiny without being confused by other aspects that are contradictory. Allow us to explore the full truth of each aspect