

Activity 1.24 The Scale of our Assumptions (The Arts)

Module: 1. Identity and Culture

Duration: 10 minutes

Social Development Themes: Arts

Summary

The exercise could be a more practical way of understanding different values and beliefs in the group. The facilitator should choose to be as provocative and challenging as they feel is appropriate for the group. There will be a need, as always, to be culturally sensitive when thinking about the kinds of provocative statements used and confidence as a facilitator to be able to manage disagreement within the group. It's important to introduce this as an exercise that explores difference and that there will be differences of opinion.

Learning Outcomes:

Value different perspectives – hold assumptions lightly

Approach:

1. Invite participants to stand in the middle of the space. Mark one end of the room with a sign saying 'agree' and the other with a sign saying 'disagree'. Participants should imagine an invisible line between the two.
2. When the facilitator reads out a statement they should position themselves in the space, according to how strongly they agree or disagree with the statement.
3. Choose your statements being culturally sensitive – it's important to know the social, cultural and political context of the group. However, the statements should be intentionally provocative, e.g.:
 - Women should do the majority of the housework
 - It's important not to trust people you don't know
 - If you're under 30, you shouldn't be a politician
 - Young people aren't ever engaged with the world around them.

Ask participants to think about what the statement means to them and to stand in a position that represents this – the more they agree, the closer they should be to the 'agree' end; the more they disagree,

the closer to the 'disagree' end. Encourage participants to be brave and to go with their instinctive reaction. This can be hard if they find themselves on their own.

5. Once the group have settled on their position, ask if there is anybody who would like to share why they've stood where they have? Other members of the group can respond, without attacking or dismissing others' opinions. Nobody has to share why they're standing in that position but a dialogue, well held by the facilitator, will create the space for people to hear how other people feel about certain issues or ideas.

6. For every statement, once participants have heard from people on all sides, ask if anyone would like to move, having been persuaded by someone else's argument.

Debrief:

Ask the group how they found the exercise. What was interesting about it? Was anything challenging? How easy was it to listen to someone with a different point of view? For those who found themselves in the middle, was it interesting hearing views for and against?

What usually happens when we hear a different point of view when we're in our communities? Was it difficult to take up a position that is different from other people? How easy was it to change position, having heard someone else's opinion?

The exercise can often bring up strong emotions, particularly if participants feel their positions, values or assumptions are being challenged. This might require an exercise or energiser to de-role (see alternative approaches to facilitation). It could be interesting to remind participants of this exercise towards the end of the workshop and see if perspectives have shifted.