

Activity 2.17 The Dialogue Machine

Module: 2. Intercultural Dialogue

Duration: 5 Minutes

Social Development Themes: Arts

Summary

This exercise allows participants to explore dialogue through a group rhythm/movement exercise. This is an abstract way of exploring dialogue; some participants may need more support than others to see the link between the exercise and the theme of dialogue.

Learning Outcomes:

Understand dialogue, how and when it can be used

Approach:

1. Ask the group to define what a 'machine' is.
2. Tell the group they are going to create a machine, using their bodies and mouths, as one group exercise.
3. Ask a participant to enter the space and imagine they are a moving part in a complicated machine. They should repeat an action that they're able to continue for a few minutes. They should also make a sound that goes with the action.
4. Everyone else watches and listens. Once in the middle of the space, the participant keeps repeating the sound and action.
5. Once the action is established, another person enters the space and adds another part (their body) to the machine, with a different movement and sound. A third person does the same until all the participants are integrated into one functioning machine.
6. Once the machine is fully operating, the facilitator can encourage the machine to speed up. Once it is near explosion, the facilitator asks the first person to slow down, until eventually the whole machine slows down and then stops completely. The facilitator can also freeze the machine and bring to life each individual part so we hear each person's sound and action.

7. Once the machine has been played with for a while, ask the participants to sit back in the audience.

8. Next the group will create the 'conflict machine'. Make sure there is a shared understanding of the word conflict. Repeat steps 3 to 7 but each person's sound and action should now be a part of the 'conflict machine'.

9. As with all of these arts approaches, there is no right or wrong.

10. Finally, the group can repeat the process but this time creating the 'dialogue machine' – how might this differ from the conflict machine?

Debrief:

Did it feel different being part of the 'conflict' and the 'dialogue' machines? If yes, how?

If we expand the metaphor of the machine and focus on the dialogue machine, what are the things that oil this dialogue? What keeps it going? Did the machine tell us anything about the values that dialogue requires? This is where you can pull out the values and attitudes that dialogue requires – listening, openness, value different perspectives, body language etc.

How did it feel to look at dialogue in this way? Was it helpful to explore the topic physically?

What might this tell us about the skills and attitudes needed for community based dialogue? As Active Citizens we may encounter people on their journey who don't want to listen, or be open – what are our strategies for dealing with this?

You can introduce variations to this exercise to explore different issues; all participants must imagine a love machine, then a hate machine, a community or country machine, political parties (handled sensitively). It could be used to further explore issues and ideas that are coming out during the workshop.