

Force the Circle

*So you want to feel what it means to be part of the majority or the minority?
This is an energetic activity*

Issues addressed

- Majority/minority relationships
- The social and political mechanisms which divide society

Aims

- To experience being part of a majority group and being in the minority
- To analyse the strategies we use to be accepted by the majority group
- To be aware of when we like to be part of the majority and when we like to be apart or in the minority.

Time: 40 minutes

Group size: 6 - 8 people per circle.

Preparation

- Paper and pens for the observers
- Watch or timer

Instructions

1. Divide the group into subgroups of 6 to 8 people.
2. Ask each group to choose one person to be the 'observer' and a second to be the 'outsider'
3. Tell the other members of the group to stand shoulder to shoulder to form as tight a circle as possible so as not to leave any space between them.
4. Explain that the 'outsider' must try to get into the circle while those who form the circle must try to keep them out.
5. Tell the observer makes notes on the strategies used both by the 'outsider' and those in the circle and also acts as timekeeper.

After two or three minutes, and regardless of whether they managed to enter the circle or not, 'outsider' joins the circle and another member has a turn.

The activity is over once all the members of the group who wish to have tried to 'force the circle'.

Debriefing and evaluation

Bring everyone together to discuss what happened, and how they felt.

Start by asking the players:

- How did you feel when you were part of the circle?
- How did you feel when you were the 'outsider'?
- Do those who succeeded in 'forcing the circle' feel differently from those who didn't manage it?



Ask the observers:

- What strategies did the 'outsider' use?
- What strategies did the people in the circle use to prevent the others from getting in?

Then ask everybody:

- In real life situations, when do you like to feel an 'outsider' or a minority and when do you appreciate feeling part of the group or the majority?
- In our society, who are the strongest groups? And who are the weakest?
- In society, the circle may represent privileges, money, power, work or housing.
- What strategies do minority groups use to gain access to these resources?
- How do the majority preserve their status?

Tips for the facilitator

It is helpful if you give concrete instructions to the observers, such as to take note of:

- What the people in the circle say among themselves or to the outsider.
- What the members of the circle do in order not to let the outsider in.
- What the outsider says.
- What the outsider does.

This activity requires a lot of energy from everybody playing it. In principle, unless the relations within the group are poor, there should be no aggression.

Before starting the evaluation, it is recommended first of all to let the group comment informally on what has happened before starting the structured evaluation.

Variations

If there are enough people to play with several circles you can, at the very beginning, ask each group to give themselves a name. This will reinforce the feeling of group identity. You can then play so that the outsider always comes from a different group. At the end of each round the 'outsider' should return to their original group whether or not they 'force the circle'. This may also stress the feeling of loneliness when being the 'outsider'.

Suggestions for follow up

Suggest the participants say how they could be more aware of their own behaviour and when they may, without wanting to, exclude others from the 'group'. For example, are there representatives from all sections of the local community involved in local groups, clubs, societies or organisations? Could they join if they wanted to? What stops them? What would encourage them to join? Decide what action you could take to ensure the opportunity to participate is open to everyone.

Having looked at the mechanisms of exclusion and questioned the basis on which we exclude people who are different you might like to try the activity 'Dominoes' (page 72) to strengthen the group feeling and to explore the

characteristics which we share as human beings or look at 'Seeking similarities and discovering diversity' (page 156) to explore how each one of us is a mixture of characteristics which we share with some people but not with all and to celebrate the difference.

all different
all equal

cách éagsúil
cách ionann