



The Island

Throughout history all societies have borrowed and adopted things from each other. When different cultures meet there are great possibilities for mutual benefit. We would be able to acknowledge this fact if it were easier for us to see beyond our prejudice and ethnocentrism. This is a simulation.

Issues addressed

- Understanding the 'difference' is a necessary step in order to respect and acknowledge it.
- The benefits of tolerance and adaptability.
- The celebration of diversity.

Aims

- To raise awareness of the ways culture affects our lives and outlook
- To stimulate discussion about how people from different cultures communicate and interact.
- To explore cultural taboos and the "limits of tolerance".
- To stimulate discussion about the possibilities which may be open to us as a result of intercultural co-operation.

Time: 2 hours

Group size: 10 -16

Overview of the game

There is an island where two tribes live. Tribe Y lives in the upland hilly regions and tribe Z lives by the coast. They co-exist side by side and rarely have contact with each other.

The two tribes have different languages and different cultures, although for both tribes balloons have a special significance. In tribe Y, people put great value on the diversity of balloons for religious reasons and try to collect as many different types, shapes and colours as possible. In tribe Z people use balloons, particularly round, red ones for medical purposes.

Recently the people in tribe Z have begun to suffer from a strange illness for which, according to legend there is only one cure, a rare type of balloon which can only be found in an unknown location on the island. Luckily for them there is a map which has been handed down over the generations which they are sure will lead them to the new balloon they need. Unfortunately, many years ago the map was almost destroyed in a war, tribe Z only has a part of it. Legend has it that tribe Y has the other half.

The aim of the game is for tribe Y to protect their balloons and for tribe Z find the medicine they need. However, as in real life, the participants may find that there are other unexpected outcomes.

Preparation

A. For creating group cultures:

- Pencils and paper
- Photocopies of the notes for tribes

B. *For the meeting:*

- Drinks, cups and biscuits enough for everyone

C. *For the search:*

- Map showing the location of the hidden balloons cut into four pieces
- 5 round red balloons
- 3 more balloons each of a different shape and colour e.g. one round yellow, one long green, one long blue.
- 2 more balloons similar to each other, but different from any of the others (possibly condoms) hidden in a secret location.
- String to tie up balloons
- Tape to fix balloons to walls
- A box of 'equipment' including pins, scissors, a stick of red lipstick, tape.

Instructions

There are three stages to the game: In part A the two tribes learn their culture; in part B the two tribes meet and learn to communicate in each other's language and in part C the tribes search for the balloons.

1. Be sure everything is ready and set up beforehand.
2. Divide the group into two and read out the overview of the game.

Part A. *The two tribes learn their culture and create their own language:*

3. Send the two groups to opposite ends of the room (representing the hills and the coast).
4. Hand out the copies of the roles to each tribe and pens and paper to make notes.
5. Tell the groups that they must decide on a name for their tribe, learn the rules of their culture and create a special language.
6. Tell them that they have 20 minutes to develop and practice their language together and to ensure everyone in the group is proficient.

Part B. *The two tribes meet. This is an opportunity for them to learn how to communicate and co-operate with each other through sharing the food and drink:*

7. Give tribe A the biscuits and tribe B the drink and cups.
8. Call the two groups together into the middle of the room (representing neutral territory).
9. Tell everyone that the simulation starts now. From now on everyone must be in a role, that is they must use the language and culture of their tribe.

Part C. The search for the balloons

10. Tell the group that they now have 45 minutes. Tribe Z may start negotiating for the missing half of the map and try to find the hidden balloons.

Debriefing and evaluation

Start by talking about what happened and then move on to what people learned and how the simulation relates to real life.

- Was it hard to use and understand the languages?
- During the search how did you communicate? Using only one or both languages? By using signs? What misunderstandings were there?
- How did you solve the problems of opening up tribe Y's balloons? Who did it? How did you feel about breaking the cultural taboos?
- What cultural taboos are there in our society? What's their function?
- Which things do we use in our daily life that come originally from other countries or continents?
- Can we imagine living only on what comes from our own culture or country? Why is culture important to us?
- Is your culture important to you? Why?
- What stops us understanding other cultures?
- Can you think of any real life examples in the past or in the present where two cultures have adapted to each other and gained in the process?
- In the world today there are lots of examples of conflicts between cultures. Decide on one example to discuss: What brings the cultures into conflict? Who gains and who loses from the conflict? What do people lose in opening up their culture? What have they got to gain?

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Tips for the facilitator

Before you start be sure to read all the instructions through so that you have a clear picture in your mind of what the players are meant to do.

This game needs careful preparation:

- We suggest that you use condoms for the hidden balloons. First because they are of a different shape from traditional balloons and second because for many people condoms are still a 'taboo'. Using condoms could therefore lead to 'test' the limits of tolerance of some participants. Furthermore, during discussion, the issues of AIDS and discrimination against people who are HIV positive could be raised.
- Find a suitable location to hide the special balloons (condoms) but don't inflate them.
- Draw a map to identify this location but make sure that the place can not be identified from only half or three quarter of the map.
- Then cut up the map into four pieces. Two pieces you will give to tribe Z. Fold up the other two pieces and put one piece in each of two of the balloons which you will give to tribe Y.
- Blow up the 8 coloured the balloons and tie them with string so that they may be undone and deflated without damaging them.
- Tape the four round red balloons on the wall at one end of the hall (the coast where tribe Z live) and tape the other four balloons on the wall at the other

end of the hall (the hills where tribe Y live). Leave the two quarters of the map for tribe Z in an envelope at their end of the room.

- Place the box of equipment in the middle of the room. Do not specify what the items could be used for. They may or may not be needed in the game, it should be decided by the participants as they invent their cultures and rules. Add other items if you think they may be useful e.g. a magnifying glass if the map is very small, a torch if the map is hidden in a dark place, a key to unlock a box holding the map etc.

Helping the tribes learn a language and develop their culture:

- This is an opportunity for the players to be creative
- If a group finds this difficult suggest that they substitute all consonants with a single letter e.g. in English 'l' or 'r' work well. Other suggestions include saying words backwards or starting each word with a certain letter.
- Make sure that all members are fluent in the language before proceeding and that the groups know their culture.

The meeting:

By giving one tribe the biscuits and the other the drink you will be creating an opportunity for the players to learn each others' language. Players will have to communicate if they are to solve the problem in a mutually satisfactory way.

The search:

There are many possible outcomes depending on the negotiating skills, temperament and the importance of cultural values to the participants.

If the game gets stuck you may like to intervene with one or more prompts.

The scenario may proceed as follows:

- Players need to spot the pieces of paper in Y's balloons.
- They then need to work out that it is possible to retrieve the pieces of the map and still respect Y's balloons.
- Careful observation will reveal that the balloons could be untied, deflated and reinflated. However, members of tribe B will need to negotiate carefully to persuade Y to allow this to happen; someone will have to break the cultural taboo about touching balloons and tribe Y may demand that whoever does it wears a red nose and has to be qualified to 'walk the circle'. This will be another taboo to overcome.
- Initially there doesn't seem to be any advantage for tribe Y if they help tribe Z because tribe Z only has red balloons and tribe Y already has one of them. However, it will turn out in the end that tribe Y can gain because there are two new balloons hidden and Z may share them.

Suggestions for follow up

Learning and growing are part of the continuous process of intercultural education. But the process won't happen and we won't reap the rewards unless we work at it. Something you could do is to organise an intercultural festival in your group or organisation and invite people from across the local community to come and share food, drink, music, dance, crafts and games etc.

It's not always as easy as we would wish to feel comfortable with, or to accept, the ways of people who are different. If you would like to explore how you would feel about sharing a long train journey with people who have habits and customs, which are different from yours, then go to 'Euro-Rail "à la carte"' (page 78)

ROLE CARDS (to be copied for participants)

ROLE CARD FOR TRIBE Y

You live on an island which is also inhabited by another tribe. Your two tribes co-exist but you have different languages and different cultures and rarely meet each other.

Your language:

You must invent a special simple language to use throughout the game. Make sure everyone in the group can use it proficiently.

Your culture:

You put great value on the diversity of balloons for religious reasons and try to collect as many different types, shapes and colours as possible. The balloons are considered sacred and no one is allowed to touch them, if they do they face punishment. The only people who may touch the balloons are those who have been trained to perform the ritual of walking the circle. In this rite the chosen person has to wear a red nose and balance a balloon on their nose while walking round the circle.

You need to invent some other aspects of your culture including a name for your tribe, a way of greeting and rules about your social organisation for example who makes decisions and who speaks for the group.

ROLE CARD FOR TRIBE Z

You live on an island which is also inhabited by another tribe. Your two tribes co-exist but you have different languages and different cultures and rarely meet each other.

Your language

You must invent a special language to use throughout the game. Make sure everyone in the group can use it proficiently.

Your culture

You are a peaceful and sociable people. When you greet each other you do so by rubbing noses. For this reason it is considered very anti-social not to have a very clean nose at all times. You put great value on round red balloons which you use for medicine. Red balloons are very scarce.

You need to invent some other aspects of your culture including a name for your tribe and rules about your social organisation for example who makes decisions and who speaks for the group.