

The whole group then discusses the brainstorming process as an approach to problem-solving and analyses where this particular exercise succeeded and where it failed.

If this exercise works well it demonstrates that even conflicting parties have broad and honourable goals in common, and that it is just the means of achieving these goals that cause dissension. It gives a person the opportunity to hear opposing views in a safe and often friendly atmosphere, and to understand the sincerity of the people who hold them. It may generate new lines of approach to the problem.

Role Play

In a workshop on conflict management it is advisable to devote much of the group's activity time to role playing exercises related to the local community and its tensions. In these exercises individuals are asked to imagine themselves as participants in particular conflict situations, and then to act and speak accordingly. These improvised dramas teach the participants about conflict situations through imaginative involvement, and they help in the examination of genuine problems both theoretically and emotionally. Insight is gained as well as confidence in handling future real-life conflict situations. The following broad pattern can be followed:

1. Decide on a socially relevant situation and plan the role play beforehand in some detail.
2. Explain it carefully to the whole group.
3. Cast the roles and brief each participant, preferably by means of a script.
4. Give the players time to prepare while you brief the observers on their role.
5. Start the scene and decide when to stop it. Try not to interfere unless this is unavoidable.
6. After a short break, allow the players to be debriefed out of their roles and structure a careful evaluation of the whole process. This may be the most valuable part of the exercise, if difficulties are honestly discussed.

Groups of any size can be involved in a conflict situation role-play. Roles can be played out by two people, for example landlord and tenant. Or a larger-scale exercise can be planned in the field of industrial relations, with sub-groups taking on the roles of workers, shop stewards, personnel department, production managers, public relations and journalists. However, exercises on a large scale need very careful preparation and a good deal of time and space.

If you feel that it would be appropriate to structure a role-play exercise to explore the political conflict of a country, the following might be helpful when writing out the roles. Experiment with reverse role-play in which the individuals in a group reverse their roles halfway through the time allowed.

Basic human needs	How the problem is viewed by the opposition and or the community	How the problem is viewed by the establishment and or community
Economic welfare (food; shelter and prosperity)	Our people are unemployed and are denied the education and resources which would enable them to have economic security.	They are sabotaging the economy and destroying the opportunities for economic growth. They are prepared to run our country into the ground.
Security (physical; safety; psychological)	They are jailing and destroying our leaders. They are killing our women and children.	They are threatening the safety of all our citizens. They are burning the homes of those who work for peaceful change.

You could extend the above pattern in terms of the other three basic human needs:

- Belonging, acceptance and affection
- Status and recognition
- Self-actualisation and control over your own life.

In a workshop which is looking at conflict mediation, the aim to be kept constantly in mind is to show that negotiation increases understanding and that compromises and new approaches can sometimes satisfy both parties.

Role-playing can be a powerful and highly motivational learning process because it involves active participation. It reveals the importance of non-verbal, emotional responses and it sometimes exposes prejudices and personal blocks. Because role-playing can become threatening when exploring conflict situations, each exercise needs very careful handling and systematic management.

Be aware that there can be problems with role-playing in a workshop situation:

- the full process is very time-consuming and it may not be easy to keep it going.
- it needs a fair amount of space to stage
- it can become frivolous
- it may become irrelevant or misleading
- it tends to be over dependent on the skills of the facilitator and the role players
- it could generate more anger than the group can comfortably handle.



TUTOR TALK: Self assessment question

Design a scenario for a role-play relating to a conflict you have been involved in, or an ongoing conflict in your community. Identify roles, characters and major points of conflict to be addressed by the group. If possible, try out the scenario with a small group of friends. Make notes of difficulties you encounter and of what works well.

Conducting Structured Experiences in Small Groups

During a workshop or a negotiation try to concentrate only on the subject matter under discussion. Give careful attention to group dynamics, to the interaction of the participants.

Be aware of:

- morale
- feeling
- tone, atmosphere
- influences
- leadership struggles
- conflict
- competition



Insensitivity to the group process is a major reason for ineffective group work.

Conducting structured exercises is a skill which can be learned and developed only through experience, but this following list summarises some generally useful suggestions.

Things to Do:

Prepare

- have a clear, broad outline or design a flow chart beforehand, at least in rough form
- check timing of planned talks and exercises
- have more than enough material at hand
- if you are going to give out questions, work out the answers beforehand

Plan For Contingencies

- have alternative activities ready in case the group is more or less advanced than you expect
- have fill-in topics available that might possibly be useful
- expect to adapt your programme

Plan Your Process

- give a broad overview at the beginning
- provide further instruction in small bits
- always keep the purpose of the workshop in mind

Facilitate The Process

- give everyone something to do at all times
- participate yourself whenever possible
- let the group help you

Facilitate Learning

- turn everything that happens into learning experiences
- help people to turn their learning into applications

Things to Avoid Doing

Overplaying

- arguing over interpretations of what happened
- repeating an activity until it works to your satisfaction
- over-analysing data

Playing Psychological Games

- putting people down or hurting their feelings
- deceiving people
- giving psychological interpretations

Over Instructing

- giving too much detail
- expressive telling instead of listening or sharing
- pressurising people to participate

Ending with Closure

- leaving people to resolve their own problems that have been exposed in the workshop without any acknowledgement of their difficulties
- leaving future applications entirely to chance as though you did not care

Evaluation

As workshop talk and activities proceed, allow plenty of time for honest feedback so that the participants will remain involved, and so that you can learn more about the group, and improve your teaching skills. If you plan to run more than one workshop then this aspect deserves even more attention.

Consider distributing a questionnaire at the end of a session or of the workshop itself and use rating scales to get a clear assessment of the success of specific sections of the workshop.

Examples are as follows:

Did the workshop increase your understanding of conflict negotiation?

very little	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	very much
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Rate the usefulness of the various parts of the workshop:

Tick the box you find most suitable.