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Engage. Connect. Empower

HOW TO PRESENT TO A LARGE AUDIENCE

FACTS

GOALS

MATERIALS

PREPARATIONS

INSTRUCTIONS

TIPS FOR THE FACILITATORS

HOW TO PRESENT TO A LARGE AUDIENCE

FACTS

Age of participants: 13+

Number of participants: 8-64

Duration: Two 120-minute sessions with a break of at least 30 minutes

GOALS

In this workshop we use applied theatre methods to help participants:

- Become aware of their breathing and use it to stay calm and connected to their body.
- Learn how to stand firmly grounded and direct their voice to their audience without fear.
- Learn how to look people in the eye and allow themselves to be looked at.
- Collaborate with other participants and support each other with constructive feedback.
- Become confident and sure of how and why they want to present.

MATERIALS

A suitable space for participants to move around

Sound system and music

A4 papers and pencils

A stopwatch

PREPARATIONS

This activity should be preceded by the collaborative preparation of a presentation, as it is the final step in preparing a group presentation for a large audience.

Each participant should have part of their presentation memorised, but if this is not possible, they can use a printed text.

INSTRUCTIONS

Session A

Step 1 – Diaphragmatic Breathing ~ 10 minutes

Gather the participants in a circle and briefly explain what diaphragmatic breathing is.

(See tips for the facilitators at the end of the document)

Then guide them into practicing the diaphragmatic breathing as follows:

- Stand with feet apart, hipwide.
- Place one hand on your lower abdomen and the other on your chest.
- For the first 2/3 of the inhale, breathe into the lower hand so that it rises towards the ceiling and out to the sides, expanding the abdomen.
- For the last 1/3 of the inhale, breathe into the upper hand, expanding the chest and ribcage three-dimensionally.
- Without effort, simply exhale a long, slow breath.
- Relax any tense muscles around the neck and shoulders with each exhalation.

Step 2 – Grounding and voice exercise ~ 10 minutes

Participants stand firmly on their feet, relax their knees and lower their pelvis to a comfortable but grounded posture. Each time they exhale, they make a sound. You can suggest a different sound every 3-4 breaths. Here is a basic sequence of sounds that is usually suggested:

“sssss” -> “zzzzz” -> “mmmmm” -> “mmmooommm” -> “mmaaamm” ->
“mmmeemmm” -> “mmiiimm” -> “mmmoaaaeeeiiiiimm”

TIP: It is always good to create a climax during a vocal exercise. Towards the end you can intensify the process and ask the participants to raise the volume of their voices even more.

Step 3 – Looking into the eyes ~ 20 minutes ~ soft rhythmic music

Music starts playing, people walk around the room looking at each other. When the music stops, they freeze and look someone in the eye. When the music starts again, they start walking around the room again. Repeat this process a few times.

Step 3 – Looking into the eyes ~ 20 minutes ~ soft rhythmic music

Then, while they are frozen and looking into each other's eyes, tell them that the person they are now looking at is their partner. When the music starts again, they must maintain eye contact with their partner as they walk around.

TIP: Feel free to suggest ways to make it more playful, e.g. "Let's try to create as much distance as possible while maintaining eye contact", etc.

At the end of the exercise, ask the participants to talk to their partners about their experiences and then share them with the rest of the group.

TIP: If you think it would be useful, remind participants to include the exercises they have already learnt: breathing, grounding and voice exercises.

Step 4 – Individual text practice ~ 15 minutes ~ soft rhythmic music

Ask participants to remember their presentation. When the music starts, they start walking around the room whispering (parts of) their presentation.

During the exercise, ask them to slowly raise the volume of their voices until they can clearly hear what they are saying.

Then ask them to form a circle again without stopping what they are saying.

When you stop the music, say the name of one participant. While the others are silent, this person must continue to speak their text. When the music starts again, everyone continues to speak.

Step 5 – Dialogue while walking around ~ 15 minutes ~ soft rhythmic music

Participants walk around the room looking into each other's eyes.

When they make eye contact with someone, they start speaking their text at the same time.

When they feel like it, they stop the interaction and move on to look for an interaction with another participant.

Step 6 – Dialogues presented ~ 20 minutes

The participants form pairs and prepare a presentation in the form of a dialogue, using only the words of their texts.

They can imagine a setting where their dialogue will take place.

Setting means: place, time, who they are, what their relationship is like, etc.

The aim is not for the dialogue to make sense, but for the participants to feel comfortable with their texts.

Step 7 – Sharing circle ~ 20 minutes

After all the presentations have been made, form a sharing circle where people can talk about how they felt throughout the process.

~~~~ At least half an hour break ~~~~

Session B

Step 1 – Group discussion ~ 15 minutes

Discuss the topics of their presentations with the participants. Keep it short, but make sure that everyone gets time to speak.

TIP: If you have a large group, consider breaking it up into smaller groups of no more than 16 people.

Step 2 – Automatic writing ~ 5 minutes

Provide participants with A4 paper and pencils. Give them 5 minutes to write down their thoughts on the topics of their presentations. They should write about why the topic is important to them and what message they want to convey. They should write whatever comes to mind without thinking too much about it.

Set a clock. When the time starts, all participants start writing at the same time. Once they start writing, they can only stop when the page is full.

Step 3 – Preparing the presentations in small groups ~ 45 minutes

Divide the participants into small groups of 4-5 people. In the groups, discuss what they have written. They help each other to clarify why their topic is important and what message they want to convey. They then have 10 minutes to prepare and practise their presentation individually.

Then they go back to their groups and present to each other.

After each presentation, they give feedback to the presenter.

Step 4 – Presenting in front of a large crowd ~ 45 minutes

The participants work in their groups to prepare their group presentation. You can define the conditions of the presentations according to your needs. The groups present in turn to the other participants. After each presentation, take some time to give constructive feedback.

TIPS FOR THE FACILITATORS

- The times and breaks are indicative, feel free to adapt them to your needs, you can give more time to certain moments of the activity and add more breaks to the whole process.
- What is diaphragmatic breathing:

The diaphragm is a large muscle that sits at the base of the lungs. When a person inhales, their diaphragm contracts and flattens, and the chest cavity expands. This contraction creates a vacuum that draws air into the lungs.

When a person exhales, the diaphragm relaxes and returns to its normal shape and air is pushed out of the lungs. Diaphragmatic or 'abdominal' breathing involves using the diaphragm, intercostal muscles, abdominal muscles and pelvic floor muscles.

This means that the diaphragm is actively pulled down with each inhalation. In this way, diaphragmatic breathing helps the lungs fill more efficiently.

Breathing is a natural process that usually happens without conscious effort. However, the average breath tends to be shallow and does not involve the diaphragm very much.

With diaphragmatic breathing, a person consciously engages their diaphragm to take deeper breaths. A person will notice their stomach rising and falling. They will also feel an expanding or stretching sensation in their stomach, rather than just in their chest and shoulders.



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