

Forum Theatre

The goal of Forum Theatre is to foster productive conversations among young individuals, promoting the emergence of innovative and collaborative exploration of solutions related to the addressed theme.



Inclusion And Diversity



Forum theatre, Improvisation



13-30



20 - 30 participants divided in small groups (4/5)



You can choose the online videoconference platform that better suits your group, it's important that the platform allow the creation of breakout rooms. E.g. Google meet, Zoom, Microsoft Teams, etc.



- #1 step: 10 minutes instructions
- #2 step: 30 min creation of different stories from participants
- #3 step: 20 minutes restitution of all the scenes prepared
- #4 step: 30 min - 1 hour working on one scene
- #5 step: 15 minutes final debriefing



YOU.TH. Manual for youth workers
3.3 Theatre Methodologies -
Forum Theatre

<https://youth-theatre.eu/>



<https://youth-theatre.eu/>



It is an activity that can be performed both outdoors and indoors depending on the needs of your group.

You can distribute chairs in a circle or decide to sit on the ground. During the small group work, participants can move around freely and find a place to focus their attention.

When participants restate the scenes or work one specific scene it's good to identify one part of the room as the stage and put the chairs for the other participants in semicircle.

If you run it online be sure to have the possibility of creating breakout rooms to work in small groups, and give instructions to the participants to focus especially on dialogues since they can't interact physically.

Implementation:

#1 step - Giving instructions - 10 minutes

Explain the flow of the activity to the participants but do not anticipate the mechanism of the forum theatre before the preparation of the scenes. It's important that the participants focus on the first step in preparing the scenes without thinking already to the possible solutions.

Divide participants in little groups and ask them to prepare their scene representing the problem addressed.

The narrative must adhere to the following criteria:

- It should depict a situation closely mirroring reality.
- The story must present a clear conflict.
- Its duration should not exceed 3 minutes.
- Characters, including at least a Perpetrator (exerting power and inflicting violence), Oppressed (subjected to violence), and Witness (observing without intervening), should be distinguishable.
- Roles, desires, and fears of each character should be evident.
- The scene should culminate with the oppressed character succumbing in the conflict, reaching the climax of the conflict/violence. Participants are not required to resolve the situation but merely portray the problem.

#2 step - Creation of different stories from participants - 30 min

Participants can now work in their small groups, creating the story and having time for rehearsals. After this 30 minutes they have to be ready to restate it in front of the others.

#3 step - Restitution of all the scenes prepared - 20 minutes

Once the groups finish to prepare their scenes they act them in front of the group.

It's important to give everybody the possibility to present their story.

The facilitator then chooses one, explaining the criteria of the selection: it's not the most beautiful, it's the scene that is more suitable to be worked in forum theatre.

Refer to the criteria in the first step.

The audience is inquired about the play's theme to ensure a collective understanding of the observed events.

Implementation:

#4 step - Working on the scene - 30 min/1 hour

The facilitator informs the group that they will be watching the chosen play again. However, during the second viewing and subsequent ones, participants have the opportunity to halt the action and replace one of the actors or actresses in an attempt to alter the story's conclusion. It's important to note that the oppressor character is the only one exempt from substitution. To interrupt the play, participants must clap their hands and shout "STOP!" whenever they believe a different action or dialogue could be introduced.

The facilitator demonstrates the use of the "STOP!" rule collectively with the audience. Following this, the group involved in the selected scene is encouraged to perform it once more for the audience, with a reminder about the use of "STOP!" This time, the audience is invited to stop the action, step onto the stage, and explore alternative solutions by substituting an actor or actress.

After each audience intervention, the facilitator seeks feedback about the intervention, aiming to initiate a dialogue focused on delving deeper into the theme. The scene can be repeated multiple times, allowing participants to substitute different characters and explore various solutions, depending on the available time.

#5 step - Final debriefing - 15 minutes

Concluding all suggested interventions, when the dialogue has advanced significantly, the facilitator prompts the audience to create a collective summary of the entire experience.

Instructions for debriefing:

This facilitator should revisit key moments in the dialogue that have provided insights for the group. Possible scripted questions may include:

- What observations can we draw from what we've witnessed?
- How does this connect to your personal experiences?
- In your view, how can these insights be applied in real-life situations?
- Do you perceive the implementation as easy or challenging, and what factors contribute to your perspective?

Closing Thoughts:

End the debriefing session by summarizing the key points discussed and thanking participants for their contributions.

Remember to foster a supportive and non-judgmental atmosphere during the debriefing, allowing participants to share their thoughts and feelings openly. The goal is to help participants gain deeper awareness and insights that they can carry forward in their life.

Tips and notes to the facilitator:

1. Engaging young participants, the technic employs body movement and improvisation to enhance the dynamism of the activity. If conducted online, the emphasis shifts to dialogues.
2. The presentation of diverse perspectives within the group can be clarified through the enactment of varied thoughts among participants.
3. To establish an effective space for dialogue, it is advisable to have a group of at least 10 participants.
4. Once an audience member takes on a character replacement, remind to the audience to await the conclusion of the proposal before trying out new solutions. One change at a time is less confusing.
5. If the audience strongly desires to replace the oppressive character, transforming their attitude, the facilitator can guide the audience with questions such as: What real-life circumstances would prompt this person to exhibit such behavior? How did they develop this behavior initially?
6. If no one volunteers to step forward and assume character roles, the facilitator can inquire with the audience about their thoughts on the challenges in real life when attempting to alter events resembling those portrayed on stage.