



The C
REVOLUTION

THE C

Revolution





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This handbook is designed for educators and youth workers who wish to explore the commedia dell'arte, circus pedagogy, and the Theatre of the Oppressed methodology as a creative and engaging tool for learning, social inclusion, reflection, and group development.

It offers practical guidance for those who have never tried the method, as well as ready-to-use activities and techniques to support inclusive and participatory learning.

The publication is especially valuable for professionals working with young people, migrants, and refugees, as it promotes communication, collaboration, and self-expression through play and hands-on creativity.

The C Project (number: 2023-1-PL01-KA220-YOU-000161028) is a dynamic initiative bringing together youth workers and young people across Europe to explore the performative arts - namely theatre (especially Commedia dell'Arte), Theatre of the Oppressed and social circus - as tools for social inclusion, empowerment and personal & professional development.

It consists of three international training mobilities held in Portugal, Poland and Slovenia, each with its own focus:

- Portugal: Theatre of the Oppressed & social inclusion
- Slovenia: Circus in social inclusion
- Poland: Commedia dell'Arte in social inclusion

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1.1 PURPOSE OF THE MANUAL

The purpose of this manual is to provide youth workers, trainers, educators, and community practitioners with a comprehensive, practical, and adaptable set of tools that use Commedia dell'Arte, Social Circus, and Theatre of the Oppressed to foster social inclusion among young people.

In the context of increasing migration, cultural diversity, and social fragmentation across Europe, there is a growing need for methodologies that can engage young people beyond language barriers, create shared experiences, and support the development of empathy, cooperation, and active citizenship. This manual responds to that need by offering creative, participatory, and human-centered methods that can be applied in a wide range of educational and intercultural settings.



The goals of the manual are to:

- Explain how each theatrical method can be used to strengthen social inclusion, self-expression, and group cohesion.
- Provide practical exercises, step-by-step activities, and adaptable workshop structures suitable for diverse youth groups.
- Support youth workers and trainers in developing competences in non-formal education, artistic facilitation, and inclusive practice.
- Encourage the use of performing arts as accessible first steps for engaging young people who may face social, linguistic, or cultural barriers.
- Promote creative approaches that help young people build confidence, communication skills, resilience, and a sense of belonging.



RELEVANCE TO YOUTH WORKERS, TRAINERS, AND EDUCATORS

This manual is designed specifically for professionals who work with young people in formal or non-formal contexts, including youth centers, NGOs, schools, community organisations, and intercultural programs.

It is relevant because:

- It provides ready-to-use, field-tested tools that can be immediately implemented in workshops and youth activities.
- The methods included are highly inclusive, requiring no prior artistic or linguistic skills from participants.
- It helps practitioners address urgent social challenges—such as exclusion, discrimination, and cultural misunderstanding—through creative, safe, and empowering techniques.
- It supports educators in integrating art-based learning, emotional intelligence, and participatory methods into their practice.
- It contributes to the professional development of youth workers by broadening their methodological toolkit and strengthening their capacity to create socially engaged, meaningful learning experiences.



TARGET AUDIENCE



This manual is designed for a broad spectrum of individuals and organisations engaged in youth work, education, and community development. It aims to serve those who seek creative, inclusive, and participatory methods to support young people from diverse social and cultural backgrounds. The target groups include:

Youth Workers

Those working directly with young people in non-formal education environments such as youth centres, NGOs, community organisations, and social inclusion programs. The manual provides them with practical tools for fostering engagement, cooperation, emotional expression, and intercultural dialogue among youth, especially those facing exclusion or linguistic barriers.

Trainers and Facilitators

Professionals delivering workshops, training courses, international mobilities, and capacity-building activities. The manual supports trainers in integrating theatre and circus methodologies into their educational practice, enabling them to design dynamic, inclusive, and impactful learning experiences.

TARGET

AUDIENCE

Educators

Teachers, pedagogues, counsellors, and specialists working in formal or semi-formal education settings. The manual offers accessible activities and methods that can complement traditional teaching approaches and help educators incorporate creativity, embodiment, and participatory learning into their classrooms or community projects.

Secondary and Higher Education Students

Young people studying pedagogy, social work, cultural studies, performing arts, psychology, physical education, or related fields. The manual serves as an introduction to applied theatre and circus methodologies, helping students develop practical competences, broaden their understanding of social inclusion, and prepare for future professional roles in education or youth work.

**TARGET
AUDIENCE**

1.3 CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

In today's Europe, youth face diverse social challenges, including migration, cultural diversity, social exclusion, and marginalization. Young people from minority, refugee, or disadvantaged backgrounds often encounter barriers to education, participation, and community engagement. Addressing these challenges requires inclusive, participatory, and creative approaches that foster understanding, empathy, and personal growth.

The performing arts—particularly theatre and circus—offer unique opportunities for promoting social inclusion, youth empowerment, and tolerance. By engaging participants in embodied, participatory experiences, these methods help young people:

- Express themselves across language and cultural barriers
- Develop confidence, resilience, and a sense of agency
- Collaborate and communicate in diverse social settings
- Explore social norms, values, and conflict resolution in a safe, creative environment

Theatre and circus activities enable youth to learn by doing, transforming abstract ideas about inclusion and citizenship into tangible, lived experiences. These approaches emphasize the human experience, emotional intelligence, and collective engagement, complementing traditional educational methods.

OVERVIEW OF THE THREE THEATRICAL APPROACHES

The manual draws on a synergy of three artistic methodologies, each offering distinct tools for social inclusion and youth engagement:

1. Commedia dell'Arte

Originating in 16th-century Italy, Commedia dell'Arte is a physical and improvisational theatre tradition. It relies on stock characters, masks, and expressive movement to convey stories humorously and dynamically. Commedia is especially effective in multicultural settings, as its visual and physical nature transcends language, encourages creativity, and fosters confidence and teamwork among participants.

2. Social Circus

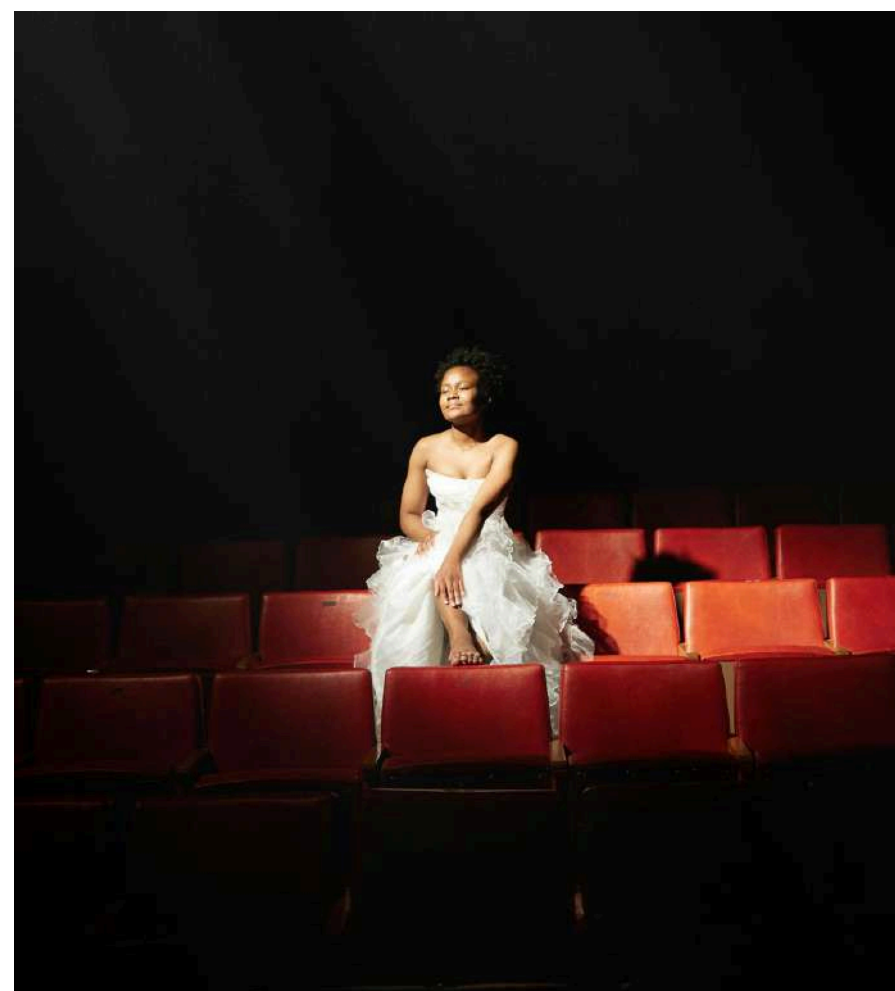
Social Circus uses circus arts such as juggling, acrobatics, clowning, and balance exercises as a medium for education and inclusion. It emphasizes non-competitive participation, trust-building, and personal achievement, making it an accessible tool for young people of all backgrounds. Social Circus strengthens group cohesion, encourages resilience, and provides a playful platform for self-expression and cooperation.

3. Theatre of the Oppressed

Developed by Augusto Boal, Theatre of the Oppressed is a participatory theatre methodology that empowers participants to explore social issues, power dynamics, and conflict resolution through performance. By transforming participants into “spect-actors”, it encourages critical thinking, empathy, and active problem-solving. Theatre of the Oppressed is particularly suited for engaging young people in discussions about social inclusion, justice, and community participation.



OBJECTIVES



■ The primary objective of this manual is to equip youth workers, trainers, educators, and young people with the knowledge, skills, and tools necessary to use theatre and circus methodologies to promote social inclusion, empowerment, and intercultural understanding.

01. Provide a comprehensive understanding of Commedia dell'Arte, Social Circus, and Theatre of the Oppressed.
02. Develop practical competences in designing, facilitating, and adapting workshops that use theatre and circus methods to engage diverse youth groups.
03. Enable practitioners to create inclusive, participatory activities that address issues such as social exclusion, marginalization, and intercultural communication.
04. Promote an approach that actively engages young people of all genders in the design, implementation, and evaluation of activities.
05. Encourage youth to co-create content, make decisions, and take ownership of their learning experiences, fostering a sense of responsibility, confidence, and civic engagement.
06. Provide guidance on defining learning outcomes, behavioural indicators, and qualitative measures of social impact.
07. Support youth workers in reflecting on the outcomes of workshops, ensuring continuous improvement and meaningful engagement with participants.

HOW TO USE THE MANUAL



Navigating the Manual

-The manual is structured in clear, thematic sections, beginning with the theoretical background of social inclusion and youth empowerment, followed by detailed descriptions of the three theatrical approaches: Commedia dell'Arte, Social Circus, and Theatre of the Oppressed.

-Each section contains practical exercises, step-by-step instructions, case examples, and guidance for facilitators, allowing readers to quickly locate relevant content for their activities.

-Supporting materials such as illustrations, diagrams, and reflection prompts are included to facilitate understanding and application.

Modular Structure

-The manual is modular, meaning that each exercise or methodology can be used independently or combined with others, depending on the objectives, time constraints, and group characteristics.

-Modules are designed to address specific goals such as team-building, self-expression, intercultural dialogue, conflict resolution, and empathy development.

-Facilitators can mix and match exercises from different sections to create customized workshops or multi-session programs tailored to the needs of their participants.

Adapting to Different Contexts

The manual encourages flexibility and creativity, allowing users to adjust activities according to:

-Group size (small or large groups)

-Participants' age and experience (youth, secondary or higher education students)

-Cultural and linguistic diversity

-Available space and resources (indoor or outdoor settings)

Facilitators are invited to modify scenarios, roles, and exercises to reflect local realities, challenges, and objectives, while maintaining the core principles of inclusion, participation, and empowerment.

COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE





Commedia dell'Arte is a form of improvisational theatre that originated in 16th-century Italy and quickly became one of the most influential theatrical traditions in Europe. It is distinguished by its physical expressiveness, humor, and use of stock characters, which allowed performers to tell stories that were both entertaining and socially insightful.

Traditionally, Commedia troupes were itinerant, performing in public squares, marketplaces, and open-air theatres, making the art form accessible to audiences of all social classes.

The term “Commedia dell’Arte” literally means “comedy of professional artists,” emphasizing not only the professional skill of the actors but also the spontaneity and creativity required in improvisation.

Historically, Commedia dell’Arte served as a mirror of society, offering playful commentary on social norms, hierarchies, and everyday conflicts. Through exaggerated gestures, expressive movement, and humorous scenarios, performers could critique authority, explore human behavior, and engage the public in shared reflection- all within a context of entertainment and accessibility. Its enduring appeal lies in the dynamic balance between structured character archetypes and improvisational freedom, allowing performers to respond creatively to each audience, context, or cultural setting.

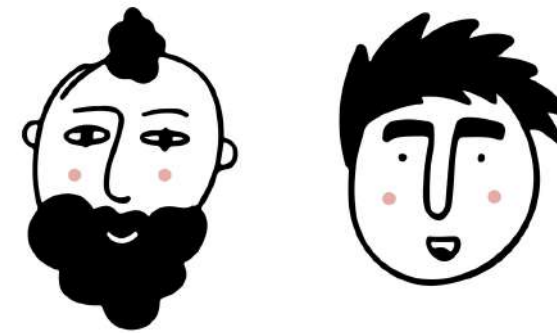
KEY FEATURES



01. Masks and Physical Expression



03. Improvisation



02. Character Types (Stock Characters)



In contemporary youth work, these qualities make Commedia dell'Arte a particularly effective tool for social inclusion and empowerment. The physical and visual nature of the performances transcends language barriers, enabling participants from diverse backgrounds to collaborate and communicate.

Improvisation encourages risk-taking, confidence-building, and active participation, while the archetypal characters provide a playful framework for exploring identity, relationships, and societal roles. In this way, Commedia dell'Arte not only entertains but also fosters empathy, intercultural understanding, and personal growth among young people.

1. **Masks and Physical Expression:** Masks are central to Commedia dell'Arte. They help exaggerate emotions, define characters, and allow performers to explore identity safely. Physical gestures, postures, and movement patterns are often highly stylized, making communication possible even across language barriers.
2. **Improvisation:** While the storylines are generally structured, the dialogue and interactions are improvised, giving performers freedom to respond to each other and to the audience. Improvisation develops creativity, quick thinking, and collaboration skills.
3. **Character Types (Stock Characters):** Characters are instantly recognizable archetypes, each with distinct personality traits, behaviors, and social roles, such as: Pantalone - the greedy old man, Arlecchino (Harlequin) - the clever, mischievous servant, Colombina - witty and resourceful female character, Il Dottore - the pompous, know-it-all figure. These characters serve as vehicles for humor, social critique, and reflection on human behavior.



Commedia dell'Arte is a highly inclusive and adaptable method for working with young people, particularly in multicultural or socially diverse groups. Its relevance includes:

- Cross-cultural accessibility: The emphasis on masks, gestures, and physical expression allows participants from different linguistic or cultural backgrounds to communicate and collaborate effectively.
- Empowerment through play: Improvisation and character exploration encourage youth to take risks, express themselves, and build confidence.
- Social learning: Characters and scenarios can be adapted to address social challenges, group dynamics, or conflict resolution, promoting empathy and understanding.
- Active participation: Every participant has a role, fostering ownership, engagement, and collaboration within the group.

By using Commedia dell'Arte in youth work, trainers and educators can create a safe, creative, and playful environment where young people develop personal and social competences while exploring diversity, inclusion, and social awareness.

THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED



2.2 THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED



The Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) is an innovative and interactive theatrical methodology that was developed by Brazilian director, writer, and political activist Augusto Boal (1931–2009).

This kind of theater aimed to fight against inequality, discrimination, and social exclusion. Working alongside Paulo Freire (1921–1997), Boal was inspired by Freire's critical pedagogy, particularly the “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, and he created techniques that address social and political oppression.

Both were based in Brazil at the time, and the social-political context of those days significantly influenced the development of these concepts, approaches, and methodologies. We will use TO as the abbreviation of the Theatre of the Oppressed in this Manual.



TO seeks to transform theater from a passive form of entertainment into an active tool for social change, where the audience becomes a performer, engages, and participates.

TO directly tackles societal issues like inequality, discrimination, oppression, and social and political injustice. It is motivated by the belief that using theater can be a powerful tool for social transformation. It helps individuals and communities confront and challenge oppressive systems.

One of the most revolutionary and innovative aspects of TO is the concept of the "spect-actor." In traditional theater, there is a clear division between the actors performing on stage and the audience watching passively. In Theatre of the Oppressed, however, this boundary is intentionally broken. The audience members become "spect-actors," as they are invited to the stage to act, change the play, and actively participate in the performance.

Through this process, participants are empowered to think about how they can take control of their circumstances and change, both personally and collectively. The methodology emphasizes collaboration and solidarity, creating an environment where individuals can share their stories, reflect on their struggles, and work together to imagine new possibilities for their futures.



02. Tackles real-life oppression in its various forms



03. Aims to bring about a change in the specific oppression by empowering the oppressed and the people around

01. Is an interactive type of theatre – the public will be engaged actively and can participate in the process and become “spect-actors”




THE MAIN FEATURES

TO is more than just a form of performance, it is a community-based practice that invites people to reflect critically on their own lives and situations.

TECHNIQUES: FORUM THEATRE, IMAGE THEATRE



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The Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) methodology includes various approaches such as Forum Theatre, Image Theatre, Invisible Theatre, Rainbow of Desire, Newspaper Theatre, and Legislative Theatre. In this manual, we focus on Forum Theatre and Image Theatre, as these are the primary methods from which the others have developed.

Forum Theatre: is one of the most popular types of TO. Often in a Forum theatre performance, we see a real-life case that reflects a situation of oppression and in which the public is invited to participate actively by coming on the stage to propose solutions to the exposed examples of oppression. Based on the proposals, ideas, and interventions of the public, a discussion (forum) will take place with the public; The process is facilitated, and moderated by a Joker who makes the connection between the stage (actors) and the public; Being so popular, it is also one method that is being applied in an extremely large number of approaches.

Image Theatre: The main characteristic of this method is that it works with body statues/postures to depict aspects related to oppression in certain forms. This technique can be used as a supporting exercise in the process of developing the other methods or as a separate technique for interaction with the public. Working with images also leads to various approaches, as it is very easy and leaves a lot of space for creativity and imagination.



APPLICATION TO UNDERSTANDING AND CHALLENGING SOCIAL EXCLUSION

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Theatre of the Oppressed techniques are highly effective tools for understanding and challenging social exclusion. They foster empathy, encourage dialogue, empower real-life action, and make them transformative by addressing systemic issues.

These techniques bring up scenarios of exclusion, inequalities, and power imbalances. By engaging participants and audiences, they create opportunities to experience and reflect on the emotions and struggles of marginalized individuals. Through discussions and visual representations, participants can identify the root causes of exclusion, such as prejudice, discrimination, and structural barriers.

TO provides a space where participants can propose and act for solutions to social exclusion. This method amplifies the voices of marginalized individuals, allowing them to actively reshape narratives and advocate for inclusion. It also serves as a rehearsal for life and change, enabling participants to practice addressing exclusion in real-life situations and to envision inclusive alternatives.

Through participatory and transformative approaches, Theatre of the Oppressed raises awareness, builds solidarity, and inspires action to create more inclusive societies. These techniques empower individuals and communities to challenge social exclusion and work collectively toward equity and inclusion.

CIRCUS ARTS



2.3 CIRCUS ARTS



Circus as an art form can be traced back 4000 years. Through its long history, it has evolved and changed. Modern circus or cirque nouveau started developing in the 70s and is characterized by a high degree of creativity and openness and the inclusion of new, non-traditional circus forms of expression, e.g. video installations, modern music, dance and theatre. With its emergence, circus arts emphasized the potential of people on the outskirts of society and accepted people whose talents would otherwise be overlooked because of their standing in society.

Today circus is not seen as just an art, performed for the audience, but also as a tool to empower people, bring out their creativity and teach them important lessons about life and themselves through learning circus skills. Circus is colorful, lively and challenging and in this way, it represents a counterbalance to monotonous everyday life. It offers a wide range of different disciplines so that everyone can find something that they like and in which they are successful. When we use circus acts as a method to work with people, we call it circus pedagogy.



Circus pedagogy is a form of pedagogical work with different groups of people and the promotion of autonomous activity among young people, based on elements of contemporary circus, drama and movement pedagogy and interactive games. It is about how and why we use the circus.

Circus can be used in different ways and for different purposes, so not every circus activity is also pedagogical. Circus activity needs to be observed in the context in which it is placed.

Circus pedagogy is very different from circus in different settings. Circus pedagogy is aimed at amateurs who practice circus as a hobby, with no pretension to be a professional artist. Participants are actively involved in the creation of the performances, and they contribute with their ideas and skills. The trainer does not impose his way of creating performances but is more of a coordinator and counsellor.

The participants are the ones who are in the foreground; they are the ones who are important. The audience is in the background. The process of creating the performance is more important than the performance itself. It is accessible to everyone, regardless of their origin, gender, social class, religion, or skills.




More than 25 years ago in Europe, Social circus emerged as an innovative tool for the education and social inclusion of children, young people and adults with fewer opportunities.

It spread fast and proved its value all over the world. Today in Europe, approximately 2,500 circus schools offer educational circus activities for people with fewer opportunities.

The main aim of social circus is the personal development of the participants, by developing personal skills such as open-mindedness, self-esteem, tolerance, respect, responsibility, autonomy, perseverance and self-confidence. Circus arts are used as a mediator to achieve true group cohesion by working on the inclusion of all participants.

UNDERSTANDING SOCIAL INCLUSION



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Social inclusion is the process of ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background, have the opportunity to participate fully in economic, social, cultural, and political life. It involves creating environments in which everyone feels respected, valued, and able to contribute meaningfully. Social inclusion is particularly important for youth, migrants, refugees, and marginalized communities, who often face barriers to education, employment, and social participation.

Conversely, social exclusion refers to the processes or conditions that limit access to opportunities, resources, and participation, leading to marginalization, inequality, and isolation. Social exclusion is not only an individual experience but also a systemic issue, shaped by social, economic, cultural, and institutional factors.

Key aspects of social exclusion include:

- Limited access to education, training, or employment
- Restricted participation in civic, cultural, or social activities
- Discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, religion, language, disability, or socio-economic status
- Weak social networks and lack of community support

Impact of Social Exclusion

Social exclusion can have profound effects on individuals and communities, including:

- Economic disadvantage, unemployment, and poverty
- Reduced self-esteem, confidence, and mental well-being
- Limited opportunities for skill development and personal growth
- Marginalization from decision-making and civic engagement

For youth, social exclusion can lead to increased vulnerability, disengagement, and susceptibility to risky behaviours, which in turn can perpetuate cycles of inequality and marginalization.

Common Indicators and Risk Factors

To identify social exclusion and target social inclusion efforts effectively, the following indicators and risk factors are commonly used:

Indicators:

- Low school attendance or educational attainment
- Unemployment or precarious employment
- Limited participation in cultural, sports, or community activities
- Social isolation or weak support networks
- Discrimination or unequal treatment in public services

Risk Factors:

- Migration status, refugee background, or minority ethnicity
- Low socio-economic status or poverty
- Disability or chronic illness
- Gender-based barriers or inequities
- Language barriers and cultural differences

Gender inequality remains a significant barrier to social inclusion, empowerment, and equal opportunities for young people and marginalized groups. It affects access to education, employment, decision-making, and participation in cultural, social, and civic life. Young women, non-binary individuals, and those from marginalized communities often face discrimination, harassment, and structural barriers that limit their full development and engagement.

Some of the key impacts of gender inequality include:

- Limited access to education and training, especially in STEM, leadership, or creative fields
- Economic disadvantage, such as wage gaps, precarious employment, or exclusion from entrepreneurship opportunities
- Social exclusion and underrepresentation in decision-making processes, cultural activities, and community initiatives
- Increased vulnerability to violence, exploitation, or mental health challenges

Gender inequality intersects with other forms of exclusion, including ethnic, cultural, or socioeconomic marginalization, compounding barriers for many young people.

GENDER INEQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Theatre-based methodologies, such as Commedia dell'Arte, Social Circus, and Theatre of the Oppressed, provide safe, participatory, and transformative spaces to explore and challenge gender norms and promote human rights. These approaches can be adapted to raise awareness, encourage dialogue, and empower participants:

1. Creating an Inclusive Environment
2. Gender-Sensitive Activities
3. Reflection and Critical Dialogue

ADDRESSING GENDER DYNAMICS IN THEATRE-BASED TRAINING

1. Creating an Inclusive Environment

- Establish ground rules for respect, equality, and safety at the beginning of workshops.
- Ensure equal participation of all genders in exercises, roles, and leadership opportunities.
- Monitor group dynamics to prevent dominance or exclusion based on gender.

2. Gender-Sensitive Activities

- Design scenarios, role-plays, and improvisations that explore gender stereotypes, power dynamics, and equality.
- Encourage participants to experiment with roles beyond traditional gender norms, fostering empathy and understanding.
- Use exercises that highlight shared experiences, collaboration, and solidarity, rather than competition.

3. Reflection and Critical Dialogue

- Include debriefing sessions where participants discuss gender-related observations, insights, and feelings.
- Facilitate conversations about human rights, equality, and social justice, linking the workshop experience to real-world contexts.
- Encourage participants to identify actions and strategies they can apply in their communities to promote gender equality.

Theatre is a powerful tool for fostering social inclusion, empowerment, and intercultural understanding. By engaging participants in active, participatory, and creative processes, theatre-based approaches create environments where everyone can contribute, express themselves, and develop key personal and social skills.

Some of the key benefits include:

- Enhanced Communication and Collaboration: Through improvisation, role-play, and group exercises, participants learn to listen, respond, and cooperate, building stronger interpersonal skills.
- Cross-Cultural Engagement: Theatre transcends language and cultural barriers, allowing youth from diverse backgrounds to connect and share experiences.
- Confidence and Self-Expression: Participants gain the courage to explore ideas, emotions, and perspectives, fostering self-esteem and empowerment.
- Critical Thinking and Empathy: Exercises encourage reflection on social issues, stereotypes, and power dynamics, helping participants understand and appreciate different perspectives.
- Safe Space for Dialogue: Theatre provides a structured yet flexible environment for discussing sensitive topics, such as inclusion, discrimination, gender equality, and human rights, in a non-threatening and participatory way.

By combining physicality, creativity, and storytelling, theatre allows young people to experience inclusion rather than just learn about it, making social and emotional learning tangible and impactful.

THE ROLE OF THEATRE IN PROMOTING INCLUSION

MODULE 1: SOCIAL INCLUSION



MODULE OVERVIEW

Module 1 provides participants with a foundational understanding of social inclusion, its key principles, and its practical relevance for youth work and community engagement. The module aims to build a shared language and awareness around inclusion, ensuring that all trainers, educators, and young participants begin their learning journey with a clear and holistic understanding of what inclusion means in theory and in practice. This module adopts a participatory, experiential, and arts-based approach, drawing on theatre methodologies to make abstract concepts tangible and accessible. By combining informational input, group dialogue, and embodied learning,

Module 1 helps participants explore how social dynamics, power relations, stereotypes, and structural barriers influence the lived experiences of youth, migrants, refugees, and marginalized groups. The module also provides a space to reflect on one's own identity, biases, and position within social systems, fostering self-awareness as a critical component of inclusive practice. Through discussion, role-play, collective reflection, and simple theatrical exercises, participants gain insight into how exclusion operates and how inclusive environments can be intentionally created.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By the end of this module, participants will be able to:

Knowledge Outcomes

- Understand key concepts related to social inclusion, social exclusion, equity, and human rights.
- Identify the main barriers to inclusion faced by youth, migrants, minorities, and marginalized groups.
- Recognize how arts-based and theatrical approaches contribute to empowerment, participation, and community building.

Skills Outcomes

- Facilitate inclusive discussions and activities with sensitivity to gender, culture, and personal background.
- Use selected theatre techniques (improvisation, physical expression, simple role-play) to address issues of inclusion.
- Apply basic tools for evaluating the impact of social inclusion initiatives.

Attitudinal Outcomes

- Develop openness, empathy, and awareness of diverse experiences.
- Foster positive group dynamics, trust, and respect.
- Encourage youth participation in shaping fairer and more inclusive environments

Understanding social inclusion requires grounding in several key theoretical perspectives that explain how individuals and groups participate—or are prevented from participating—fully in society. This section introduces the main frameworks that inform the design of the module’s activities and support youth workers, educators, and trainers in developing an informed, reflective, and rights-based practice.

1. Social Inclusion and Social Exclusion

Social inclusion refers to the active process of enabling all individuals—regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances—to participate fully in economic, social, cultural, and political life. It is not merely about physical presence but about ensuring equal access, belonging, and opportunity.

Social exclusion, on the other hand, describes processes that lead to the marginalization, isolation, or discrimination of individuals or groups. Exclusion may result from structural inequalities (such as poverty, racism, or gender discrimination) or from interpersonal dynamics (such as bullying, stereotyping, or language barriers).

Key principles of social inclusion include:

- Ensuring access to resources and opportunities
- Promoting participation in community and public life
- Strengthening empowerment and autonomy
- Upholding non-discrimination, equality, and human dignity

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS AND CONCEPTS

2. Intersectionality

Intersectionality explains how different aspects of identity—such as gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, disability, religion, sexuality, and migration background—interact to shape one’s experiences of inclusion or exclusion. A young migrant woman, for example, may face overlapping barriers related to gender, language, and cultural identity.

Adopting an intersectional approach helps trainers:

- Recognize diverse experiences within a group
- Avoid one-size-fits-all interpretations of exclusion
- Promote equitable participation by addressing multiple layers of identity and disadvantage
- Encourage empathy and understanding among participants

3. Human Rights–Based Approach

A human rights perspective places dignity, equality, and participation at the center of inclusion efforts. It recognizes young people not only as beneficiaries of support but as active rights-holders capable of shaping their own environments and communities.

Key elements relevant to theatre-based inclusion work include:

- Non-discrimination: ensuring equal opportunities regardless of identity or status
- Participation: creating opportunities for youth to express their voice and influence decisions
- Accountability: encouraging institutions and communities to create inclusive policies and practices
- Empowerment: enabling individuals to understand and claim their rights

4. Empowerment Theory

Empowerment theory focuses on strengthening individuals' and communities' ability to make decisions, take action, and influence their surroundings. It is particularly relevant for youth, who often feel excluded from formal decision-making spaces.

Theatre supports empowerment by:

- Enhancing communication and confidence
- Allowing exploration of identity, emotions, and experiences
- Encouraging collaborative problem-solving
- Making participants active creators rather than passive listeners

5. Participatory and Experiential Learning Approaches

This manual is grounded in participatory methodologies that place learners at the center of the process. Experiential learning—“learning by doing”—is especially valuable in youth work and theatre-based education.

The approach highlights:

- Engagement: participants actively shape the learning process
- Reflection: after each activity, time is dedicated to analyzing emotions, discoveries, and learning points
- Co-creation: participants and facilitators jointly build meaning and solutions
- Embodiment: understanding concepts through movement, expression, and interaction rather than abstract theory alone

6. Group Dynamics and Safe Spaces

Creating an inclusive environment requires understanding how group dynamics influence participation. Power relations, comfort levels, cultural differences, and communication styles all shape how people interact.

Key concepts include:

- Safe spaces: environments where participants feel respected, heard, and free to express themselves
- Trust-building: essential for authentic dialogue and creative exploration
- Boundaries and consent: ensuring all activities respect personal limits
- Facilitator neutrality: guiding the group without imposing personal beliefs

7. Relevance to Theatre-Based Approaches

All the theoretical frameworks above support the use of theatre as a tool for inclusion because theatre:

- Makes power dynamics visible
- Provides space to rehearse alternative choices and solutions
- Encourages empathy through role-taking
- Allows expression beyond language, benefiting multilingual or low-language-proficiency groups
- Supports emotional awareness and collective reflection

WORKSHOP 1
UNDERSTANDING
INCLUSION AND
EXCLUSION

Aim

To introduce participants to the foundational concepts of social inclusion and exclusion, using experiential and reflective theatre-based tools.

Objectives

- Define “inclusion” and “exclusion” in personal and collective terms.
- Recognize how social environments shape participation.
- Build trust and openness within the group.

1. Warm-Up: “Name & Gesture” – 10 min

Instructions:

- Stand in a circle.
- One by one, participants say their name and add a gesture that represents their mood or energy.
- Group repeats the name + gesture in unison.
- Facilitator notes:
- Encourage big movements to loosen physical tension and build group cohesion.

2. Mind Map Exercise: “What Is Inclusion?” – 15 min

Instructions:

- Participants pair up. Each pair lists 3 words for inclusion and 3 for exclusion.
- Facilitator gathers responses on a flipchart, creating two interconnected mind maps.
- Materials: Flipchart, markers.
- Learning purpose:
- Identify diverse understandings and introduce key vocabulary.

3. Movement Activity: “The Line of Belonging” – 20 min

Instructions:

-Place a rope/tape line across the room.

-Explain: “This line represents belonging. The closer you stand to it, the more you feel a sense of inclusion.”

-Read statements such as:

#“I feel confident speaking in groups.”

#“I have felt excluded at school/work.”

#“I know how to handle conflict.”

-Participants step closer or further away.

-Facilitator notes:

-Avoid emotionally sensitive statements early on unless trust is well established.

4. Small-Group Reflection – 10 min

Groups of 3 discuss:

-How did it feel to move in response to statements?

-Did you feel exposed or supported?

-What patterns did you notice?

Debriefing Questions – 15 min

-Which activity helped you best understand inclusion/exclusion? Why?

-What conditions help people feel safe and included?

-How can youth workers create inclusion intentionally?

WORKSHOP 2
IDENTITY &
INTERSECTIONALITY

Aim

To deepen understanding of identity layers and how they intersect to shape individual experiences of inclusion.

Objectives

- Explore personal identity dimensions.
- Recognize privilege and disadvantage.
- Reflect on how identity influences group dynamics.

1. Warm-Up: “Mirrors” – 10 min

Pairs take turns leading movements while the other mirrors.

Purpose: trust-building, sensitivity to others' cues.

2. Identity Wheel Activity – 20 min

Instructions:

- Distribute Identity Wheel worksheets (categories may include: gender, nationality, language, ability, religion, economic background, passions, etc.).
 - Participants fill them in individually.
- Invite volunteers to share one category they find important.
 - Learning purpose:
 - Highlight complexity of identity.

3. Activity: “Stand Up If...” – 20 min

Statements could include:

- “Stand up if you speak more than one language.”
- “Stand up if you have ever felt judged based on your appearance.”
- “Stand up if you have ever felt afraid to voice your opinion.”
- Facilitator notes:
 - Balance positive and challenging statements.

4. Theatre Tableaux: “Identity in Motion” – 30 min

Instructions:

- Divide into small groups.
- Each group selects a theme (e.g., belonging, stereotypes, cultural pride).
- Groups create 3 frozen images that transform into each other.
- Presentations and audience interpretation follow.
- Learning purpose:
 - Express identity visually and physically, enabling non-verbal insights.

Debriefing Questions – 10 min

- Which identities give you strength?
- Which have been sources of challenge?
- How can awareness of intersectionality support inclusion work?

WORKSHOP 3
POWER, STATUS, AND
SOCIAL HIERARCHIES

Aim

To explore how power and status manifest physically and socially.

Objectives

- Identify physical behaviors that signal power.
- Reflect on how status affects participation.
- Build awareness of how to adjust status to foster inclusion.

1. Warm-Up: “Energy Ball” – 10 min

Participants pass an imaginary ball with different weights, textures, speeds.

Purpose: activate imagination and body awareness.

2. Status Walks – 20 min

Instructions:

- Participants walk with “1” (very low status: looking down, small steps).
- Then “10” (extremely high status: upright, confident).
- Move through numbers 1–10 fluidly on cue.

Discussion:

- What body language changed?
- What felt comfortable or uncomfortable?

3. Paired Status Scenes – 25 min

Instructions:

- Give pairs a neutral prompt (ordering food, asking for directions).
- One plays high status, one low.
- Switch roles.
- Learning purpose:
- Understand how small behaviors shift power.

4. Mini-Forum Scene – 15 min

Two volunteers act out a brief exclusion scenario (e.g., newcomer ignored in a group).

Group analyzes visible power behaviors.

Debriefing Questions – 10 min

- How does status influence group dynamics?
- When do you tend to raise or lower your status?
- How can youth workers adjust status to empower others?

WORKSHOP 4 - BARRIERS TO INCLUSION

Aim

To identify real-life barriers to inclusion and collectively explore solutions.

Objectives

- Reflect on structural and interpersonal barriers.
- Use Forum Theatre to test alternative actions.
- Develop practical strategies for real-life situations.

1. Warm-Up: “Pass the Expression” – 10 min

Exaggerated expressions passed around the circle.
Helps release tension and build playfulness.

2. Brainstorm: “Our Barriers” – 15 min

Participants name inclusion barriers they have witnessed.
Facilitator groups them (e.g., communication, stereotypes, power, policies).

3. Creating Short Scenes – 25 min

Groups create 2–3 minute scenes showing a barrier (e.g., bullying, discrimination, language barriers).

4. Forum Theatre Interventions – 40 min

Instructions:

- One group presents their scene.
- Anyone from the audience can yell “STOP!” and replace a character to try a different solution.
- Facilitator (joker) ensures solutions are realistic and rooted in empowerment.

5. Strategy Harvest – 10 min

List all proposed solutions onto a flipchart.

Debriefing Questions – 15 min

- Which interventions shifted the situation most effectively?
- What made a solution empowering rather than controlling?
 - How can these strategies be used in daily youth work?

WORKSHOP 5
COMMUNICATION
BEYOND LANGUAGE

Aim

To strengthen non-verbal communication, especially in multilingual or mixed-ability groups.

Objectives

- Improve body communication and listening.
- Build trust and collaboration without verbal language.
- Explore universal storytelling tools.

1. Warm-Up: “Silent Countdown” – 10 min

Group tries to count from 1 to 20 without overlapping voices; if two speak, restart.

Purpose: group awareness and “reading the room.”

2. Mime Techniques – 20 min

Participants practice:

- Weight and resistance
 - Invisible objects
- Exaggerated emotions
- Pairs mime short actions while others guess.

4. Silent Conflict & Resolution Scenes – 20 min

Pairs create a silent conflict and show how it resolves using only gestures, levels, and space.

Debriefing Questions – 10 min

- What did you learn about communication without words?
- What emotions or intentions were easiest/hardest to express?
- How can non-verbal skills support e.g. migrant youth or shy participants?

WORKSHOP 6
EMPATHY THROUGH
ROLE REVERSAL

Aim

To foster emotional insight and empathy by exploring conflict from multiple perspectives.

Objectives

- Build understanding of others' experiences.
- Practice seeing conflict from the "other side."
- Promote emotional literacy in youth work.

1. Warm-Up: "Character Swap" – 10 min

Participants copy each other's gestures, stances, and movements.

2. Paired Role-Reversal Scenes – 30 min

Pairs choose a familiar conflict scenario (teacher/student, siblings, referee/player, peers).

They play it once.

Then switch roles completely.

Reflection in pairs (5 min):

How did switching roles alter your understanding?

3. Group Role-Rotation Scenario – 35 min

Groups create a more complex scene involving inclusion/exclusion (e.g., a new student enters a classroom).
Every participant rotates through all roles, even antagonistic ones.

4. Emotion Mapping – 10 min

After scene rotation, participants map emotions felt in each role on sticky notes.

Debriefing Questions – 5 min

- What was challenging about embodying the other role?
- What surprised you?
- How does empathy help prevent exclusion?

WORKSHOP 7
BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE
COMMUNITY

Aim

To foster emotional insight and empathy by exploring conflict from multiple perspectives.

Objectives

- Build understanding of others' experiences.
- Practice seeing conflict from the "other side."
- Promote emotional literacy in youth work.

1. Warm-Up: "Character Swap" – 10 min

Participants copy each other's gestures, stances, and movements.

2. Paired Role-Reversal Scenes – 30 min

Pairs choose a familiar conflict scenario (teacher/student, siblings, referee/player, peers).

They play it once.

Then switch roles completely.

Reflection in pairs (5 min):

How did switching roles alter your understanding?

1. Warm-Up: “Yes, And...” – 10 min

Participants add one line at a time to a collective, improvised story.
Encourages acceptance and creativity.

2. Brainstorm: “Our Ideal Inclusive Community” – 15 min

Participants propose qualities of an ideal community (fairness, safety, multilingual support, respect).
Facilitator groups ideas into themes.

3. Collective Sculpture – 25 min

Groups make a large physical sculpture representing their ideal community.
They animate it slowly (breathing, movement).

4. Scene Creation: “A Day in Our Community” – 40 min

Groups prepare 3–5 minute scenes showing everyday life in an inclusive environment.
Scenes must highlight at least one inclusive practice (peer support, democratic decision-making, accessibility).

5. Action Harvest – 10 min

Facilitator gathers all “practical actions” shown in scenes to create a group action list.

Debriefing Questions – 10 min

- What values were visible in the scenes?
- What actions can be implemented immediately in real settings?
- What obstacles might arise, and how can they be overcome?

WORKSHOP 8
PERSONAL ACTION PLAN
& REFLECTION

Aim

To consolidate learning from the module and translate insights into practical personal actions.

Objectives

- Reflect on individual growth.
- Define personal inclusion strategies.
- Commit to follow-up actions.

1. Warm-Up: “Emotion Walk” – 5 min

Participants walk around expressing different emotional states with their bodies.

2. Reflection Writing: “My Inclusion Journey” – 20 min

Participants receive a worksheet with questions:

- What did I learn about myself?
- What surprised me?
- What skills did I strengthen?
- Which workshops impacted me most?

3. Pair Dialogue – 10 min

Partners share 2–3 reflections and exchange supportive feedback.

4. Action Plan Development – 25 min

Participants fill out a structured Action Plan Template:

Goal (specific inclusion behavior).

Why it matters.

Steps (minimum 3).

Resources needed.

Timeline (short-, medium-, long-term).

Accountability buddy (optional).

5. Closing Circle – 10 min

Each person shares one word or sentence summarizing their commitment.

Debriefing Questions

-Which commitment feels most important for your personal or professional life?

-How will you track your progress?

-How can the group or trainer support your action plan?

MODULE 2: COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE



MODULE OVERVIEW

Module 2 introduces participants and youth workers to Commedia dell'Arte, a dynamic theatrical tradition rooted in improvisation, physical expression, and archetypal characters. This module explores how the form's playful and highly expressive techniques can be applied to youth-centered social inclusion, intercultural engagement, and creative empowerment.

Commedia dell'Arte, with its emphasis on physicality, humor, masks, and ensemble work, provides an accessible entry point for groups with diverse linguistic backgrounds, skill levels, and cultural experiences.

Because it relies less on spoken language and more on gesture, rhythm, and character interaction, it is particularly well-suited for working with migrants, refugees, and young people who may feel excluded in traditional verbal environments. The module creates a safe and engaging framework where participants can step into different roles, explore identity and status, build confidence, and engage in collective storytelling.

MODULE OVERVIEW

This module combines historical context, foundational techniques, and practical workshops to help youth workers:

- Understand the roots, principles, and social function of Commedia dell'Arte.
- Use stock characters, masks, and improvisation to explore social dynamics in a playful way.
- Facilitate activities that strengthen communication skills, trust, and emotional expression.
- Encourage young people to experiment with identity, behavior, and creativity.
- Create inclusive spaces where humor and movement help dissolve cultural barriers and power imbalances.

MODULE OVERVIEW

The module is structured into step-by-step workshops, each designed to progressively build skills in:

- Physical communication and expressive movement
- Understanding and embodying archetypal characters
- Improvisation and collaborative storytelling
- Using masks to explore new identities
- Translating theatrical insights into real-world social inclusion practices

Module 2 emphasizes the synergy between artistic expression and personal development, showing how young people can gain confidence, reclaim agency, and find their voice through physical theatre. It highlights how humor and exaggeration—central to Commedia dell'Arte—offer powerful tools for addressing sensitive themes such as identity, inequality, and social exclusion in ways that feel safe, creative, and empowering.

WORKSHOP 1
FOUNDATIONS OF
COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE

Total Duration:

90 minutes

Objectives

Introduce the origins and core features of Commedia dell'Arte.
Build awareness of physical expression and exaggerated movement.
Foster group cohesion through playful theatrical activities.

Materials

Open space
Flipchart & markers
Music (optional)

1. Warm-Up: “Elastic Body” – 10 min

Participants stretch and “inflate/deflate” their bodies to warm up muscles.
Facilitator guides: “Grow tall... shrink small... move like rubber...”
Purpose: awaken physical awareness central to Commedia.

2. Trainer Input: Introduction to Commedia dell'Arte – 10 min

Short, energetic explanation of:
Historical origin (16th-century Italy)
Traveling troupes
Improvisation & character archetypes
Masks and physicality
Use simple visuals or draw archetypes on a flipchart.

3. Exercise: Exaggerated Emotions – 15 min

Participants walk through the space; facilitator calls out emotions:

Joy, Fear, Disgust, Pride, Laziness, Overconfidence

Participants exaggerate emotion to 300%, using body, face, and posture.

Purpose: Commedia requires large, clear physical expression.

4. Physical Archetypes Exploration – 25 min

Introduce three archetypal postures/movements (no masks yet):

Zanni (servant): low center of gravity, curious, fast, bouncing steps

Capitano: wide chest, large strides, heroic gestures

Pantalone: bent back, clutching money pouch, sharp small steps

Participants practice walking patterns, stops, gestures, turns.

Pairs briefly improvise small interactions (e.g., Zanni annoying Pantalone).

5. Mini Improvisations – 20 min

Groups of 3–4 receive simple prompts:

Zanni wants food; Pantalone refuses.

Capitano brags but gets embarrassed.

Zanni delivers a message incorrectly.

Perform 1-minute improvised mini-scenes.

Debriefing – 10 min

What did physical exaggeration teach you?

How is this form accessible for mixed-language groups?

What was fun or challenging?

WORKSHOP 2

STOCK CHARACTERS AND

SOCIAL DYNAMICS

Total Duration: 100 minutes

Objectives

Understand key Commedia characters and their social roles.
Explore power, hierarchy, and relationships through movement.
Build improvisation skills using character status and motivation.

Materials

Character cards (printed or written)
Open space
Optional props (scarf, hat, stick)

1. Warm-Up: Status Walk Ladder – 10 min

Participants walk at status levels 1–10.

Connect to Commedia levels:

Zanni (low)

Pantalone/Capitano (high)

Purpose: prepare for character hierarchy.

2. Introduction to Character Families – 10 min

Facilitator presents:

Zanni (servants), **Vecchi** (old masters), **Innamorati** (lovers), **Capitano** (the braggart soldier), **Dolcezza** (serving women: often clever, agile)

3. Character Walks – 20 min

Participants receive a character card.

Facilitator guides each:

Zanni: nose leads the body, curious, jumps often

Arlecchino: chaotic, agile, rhythmic

Brighella: sly, smooth, scheming

Pantalone: pelvis forward, back bent, tiny steps

Dottore: big belly, pompous gestures

Capitano: chest out, long strides, coward under pressure

Lovers: elegant, floating, dramatic gestures

Participants practice for 2–3 minutes per character.

4. Character Interactions – 25 min

Pairs or trios improvise a short interaction:

Arlecchino wants money from Pantalone.

Capitano tries to impress the Lovers.

Zanni interrupts Dottore's monologue.

Focus on physical behavior, not speech.

5. Character Carousel – 25 min

Divide into 3 groups.

Each group rotates through stations:

Character entrance (dramatic entrance walk)

Character fixed gesture (signature gesture)

Lazzi (comic bits: tripping, mistaken identity, exaggerated bowing)

Each station lasts ~7 minutes.

Debriefing – 10 min

Which character felt natural? Which felt difficult?

How do characters reflect social status and power?

How can we use archetypes to explore real-life dynamics?

WORKSHOP 3
MASKS &
IMPROVISATION

Total Duration: 100 minutes

Objectives

Learn the function and technique of mask performance.

Practice clarity of physical communication.

Build improvisational confidence.

Materials

Neutral masks or simple half-masks

Mirror (optional)

Music

Props: scarves, sticks, simple objects

1. Warm-Up: “Face Off, Body On” – 10 min

Participants relax facial expression (since masks reduce face expression).

Move body in contrast to face.

Purpose: body becomes primary communication tool.

2. Introduction to Masks – 10 min

Trainer explains:

Masks amplify character traits.

Body must “speak” clearly.

Movement must be precise.

3. Mask Exploration – 25 min

Participants stand with masks facing the back wall.

Facilitator guides steps:

Turn slowly toward audience.

Find the mask's natural breath.

Explore levels: high, medium, low.

Test how mask reacts to stimuli (surprise, joy, fear). Work individually, then in pairs.

4. Mask Improvisations in Pairs – 20 min

Prompts:

Mask sees something beautiful but unreachable.

Mask tries to hide a secret.

Mask wants help but doesn't know how to ask.

Focus on body clarity and controlled movements.

5. Group Improvisations – 25 min

Groups of 3–4 choose:

A meeting in the marketplace, Argument over an object

Unexpected event (a letter, a lost item, a stranger arriving)

Scenes last 1–2 minutes, without verbal language or minimal gibberish.

Debriefing – 10 min

How did wearing a mask change your behavior?

What communication strategies became more important?

How can masks help youth explore identity safely?

WORKSHOP 4
CREATING COMMEDIA
SCENES
(STORYTELLING & LAZZI)

Total Duration: 110 minutes

Objectives

Combine character work, improvisation, and storytelling.
Create short Commedia-style scenes.
Learn how humor and physical play support inclusion.

Materials

Props (fabric, rope, stick, toy item)
Music
Flipchart
Character cards

1. Warm-Up: “Impulse Circle” – 10 min

Participants pass impulses (claps, gestures) around the circle in different patterns.
Encourages ensemble connection.

2. Introduction to Lazzi (Comic Bits) – 15 min

Trainer demonstrates 2–3 lazzi, such as:
Endless bowing
The falling-and-recovering lazzo
The chicken lazzo (silly walk imitation)
Participants try each.

3. Group Creative Process – 20 min

Groups choose:

Setting (market, kitchen, street, festival)

2–3 characters, One lazzo, One conflict, One resolution

Use flipchart to structure scene elements.

4. Rehearsal – 20 min

Groups rehearse using improvisation guidelines:

Clear physical objectives, Big gestures, Minimal verbal text, Strong entrances & exits

5. Performances – 25 min

Each group presents their 3–5 minute scene.

Facilitator encourages applause and supportive atmosphere.

6. Reflection Circle – 10 min

Participants share:

What role they played

What worked best

What the scene revealed about teamwork/inclusion

Debriefing – 10 min

How does humor create connection?

What moments felt inclusive or collaborative?

How can scene-creation be used with youth to explore social issues?

WORKSHOP 5

COMMEDIA FOR SOCIAL

INCLUSION

Total Duration: 2 hours

Aims

- To use Commedia dell'Arte archetypes to critically explore stereotypes and social exclusion.
- To help participants recognize how social roles and labels influence behaviour, opportunities, and relationships.
- To foster empowerment by reinterpreting traditional archetypes in inclusive ways.

Learning Objectives

- By the end of the workshop, participants will be able to:
 - Identify key Commedia archetypes and their exaggerated social functions.
 - Analyse how stereotypes operate in real life and how they influence social inclusion/exclusion.
 - Use improvisation to break, challenge, or transform stereotypical roles.
 - Apply Commedia tools to support empathy, creative expression, and social understanding.

1. Warm-Up: Status Walks

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: Introduce social roles, hierarchy, and body expression.

Instructions:

Ask participants to walk freely around the space.

Call out social “statuses” (1 = lowest, 10 = highest).

Participants adjust posture, speed, gestures, and eye contact.

Add prompts:

- “You are invisible.”, “Everyone admires you.”, “You are afraid of others.”, “You are better than everyone else.” Switch statuses rapidly to show how roles affect behaviour.

2. Introducing Archetypes

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: Understand archetypes as social commentaries.

Introduce 5–6 classic Commedia characters:

Zanni (servant, clever, survivor)

Il Dottore (know-it-all academic)

Pantalone (greedy merchant)

Colombina (sharp, resourceful woman)

Il Capitano (bragging coward soldier)

Arlecchino (chaotic trickster)

Show quick demos of posture, voice, and gestures.

3. Archetype Stations

Time: 20 minutes

Purpose: Embodied learning of stereotypes.

Instructions:

Create 5 “stations,” each representing a character with short instructions.

Divide participants into small groups.

Groups rotate every 3 minutes, practicing:

entering the space as the character

greeting others

performing a simple task (buying food, asking for help)

Encourage exaggeration and humour.

4. Stereotype Scenes (Small Groups)

Time: 30 minutes

Purpose: Connect theatrical archetypes to real-life exclusion.

Instructions:

Divide participants into groups of 4–5.

Each group chooses one stereotype/archetype (e.g., “the foreigner,” “the smart one,” “the troublemaker,” “the rich one”).

Create a short improvisation in which: One character is excluded based on a stereotype. The excluded person slowly gains agency. The group transforms into a supportive environment.

Encourage participants to mix Commedia physicality with real-world themes.

5. Forum Theatre Twist

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: Explore alternative solutions.

One group performs their stereotype scene. Other participants may shout “STOP!” and replace a character.

They propose nonviolent, inclusive alternatives. Repeat with other groups.

This enhances empowerment and participatory problem-solving.

Debriefing (Group Reflection)

Time: 15 minutes

Which archetypes felt empowering? Which felt limiting? Why?

How do stereotypes affect young people in real life?

What strategies can help us challenge stereotypes within our community?

How did humour help you explore difficult topics more safely?

What did you discover about your own biases or assumptions?

WORKSHOP 6
INTERCULTURAL
IMPROVISATION

Total Duration: 2 hours

Aims

To enhance communication and cooperation among participants from diverse cultural/linguistic backgrounds.

To develop skills in non-verbal expression, empathy, and mutual understanding.

To show how Commedia dell'Arte tools can break language barriers and foster inclusion.

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

Practice non-verbal communication strategies.

Understand physical storytelling as a universal tool.

Learn to create group cohesion in multicultural settings.

Experience the power of gesture, rhythm, and emotion to convey meaning.

1. Warm-Up: Sound & Movement Circle

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: Build trust and collective rhythm.

Instructions:

Participants stand in a circle.

One person performs a simple sound-movement gesture (e.g., clap-jump).

The circle repeats it together.

Next participant creates a new gesture.

Repeat until everyone contributes.

2. Gibberish Language Play

Time: 15 minutes

Purpose: Free the participants from linguistic expectations.

Introduce a nonsense language (“gibberish”).

Participants walk around, greeting each other in gibberish.

Introduce different emotional tones:

friendly, angry, shy, exaggeratedly polite, excited

Participants form pairs and hold a “conversation” using only gibberish, gestures, and facial expressions.

3. Cross-Cultural Gestures

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: Recognize cultural differences and similarities.

Ask participants to show a gesture of:

greeting, refusal, gratitude, confusion

Show how gestures differ culturally.

Discuss misunderstandings that may occur.

4. Non-Verbal Story Trios

Time: 25 minutes

Purpose: Build collaborative storytelling without words.

Form groups of 3.

Give each trio a simple scenario:

“A newcomer arrives in the village.”, “Someone loses an important object.”, “Two people need to cooperate to solve a problem.”

No spoken language allowed—only:
body movements, spatial relations, facial expression, Commedia-inspired postures
Groups perform a 1–2 minute improvisation. Audience guesses the story.

5. Masked Improvisation

Time: 20 minutes

Purpose: Encourage expressive physicality and reduce fear of judgment.

Distribute neutral or half-masks (or imaginary masks if unavailable).

Participants experiment with:

new body centres, walking patterns, emotional states

In pairs or trios, create short mask scenes involving: meeting, misunderstanding, resolution. Perform for the group.

6. Collective Silent Story

Time: 20 minutes

Purpose: Build group cohesion and shared meaning.

Instructions:

Whole group gathers in the space.

Facilitator starts a story silently with a gesture.

Each participant adds a movement, forming a sequence.

Together, the group “performs” the story beginning to end.

Repeat with a different theme (e.g., migration, celebration, teamwork).

Debriefing

Time: 15 minutes

How did it feel to communicate without words?

What challenges did you face when relying only on gestures and movement?

Which moments of misunderstanding occurred? How were they resolved?

How can non-verbal communication support inclusion in multicultural groups?

What did you learn about your own body language or communication style?

WORKSHOP 7
MASK & IDENTITY
EXPLORATION

Total Duration: 2 hours

Aims

To use Commedia masks as tools for exploring identity, social roles, and personal expression.
To help participants understand how “masks” (literal and metaphorical) influence behaviour.
To promote empowerment by experimenting with new, liberating identities.

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

Understand the historical and social symbolism of Commedia masks.
Explore how physicality changes when identity changes.
Practice mask improvisation and character creation.
Reflect on links between “performed” and real-life identities.

1. Warm-Up: The Neutral Body

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: Prepare body awareness before adding mask influence.

Participants stand in a circle.

Ask them to breathe deeply and settle into a neutral posture.

Guide a brief body scan (head, shoulders, chest, spine, hands, legs).

Invite them to walk neutrally around the room, noticing tension or patterns.

2. Introducing the Mask

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: Build respect and clarity about mask rules.

Instructions:

Introduce the idea of the mask as an amplifier of character.

Explain key principles:

The mask leads the body.

The wearer must remain visible and expressive.

No speaking at first — physicality carries meaning.

Demonstrate “mask discovery”: slowly lifting the mask and letting it “attach” to the face.

3. Mask Activation Exercises

Time: 20 minutes

Purpose: Develop physical transformation.

In small groups, distribute masks (or use imaginary ones).

Participants put on the mask in slow motion (“discover the character”).

Explore:

Character centre (nose, chest, hips), Tempo, Social status, Typical gesture

Walk through the space and interact silently with others.

4. Identity Contrasts

Time: 20 minutes

Purpose: Explore the difference between real self and masked identity.

Ask participants to think of:

“A role I often play in real life.” “A role I never get to play but would like to try.”

With masks on:

Play the role they “often play.” Play the opposite role.

Reflect briefly in pairs on emotional impact.

5. Mask Scenarios (Improvisations)

Time: 30 minutes

Purpose: Build confidence and explore social themes.

Groups of 3–5 create short non-verbal scenes using masks.

Suggested scenarios:

“A newcomer challenges the established hierarchy.”

“An unexpected hero emerges.”

“A community welcomes an outsider.”

“Two masked identities confront a problem together.”

Scenes last 1–2 minutes.

Encourage exaggeration and distinct physical choices.

Debriefing

Time: 10 minutes

What did you learn about how identity is performed?

Did the mask liberate you or restrict you? Why?

How does society assign “masks” (roles, expectations) to individuals?

How can this awareness support inclusion and empowerment?

WORKSHOP 8
CHARACTER
TRANSFORMATION &
EMPOWERMENT

Total Duration: 2 hours

Aims

To explore how stereotypical roles can be transformed into empowering identities.
To encourage creativity in adapting Commedia characters for modern social challenges.
To connect theatre skills with real-life resilience and agency.

Learning Objectives

Participants will:

Identify strengths and weaknesses in classic Commedia archetypes.
Transform fixed stereotypes into inclusive, empowering characters.
Practice improvisation based on character growth and change.
Apply theatre as a tool for reflection and personal development.

1. Warm-Up: Exaggeration Scale

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: Prepare for dynamic character work.

Ask participants to walk normally.

Call out a character quality (e.g., proud, shy, clumsy, brave).

Participants exaggerate the quality from level 1 (subtle) to level 10 (extreme).

Switch qualities frequently.

2. Revisiting Key Archetypes

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: Refresh knowledge & prepare for transformation.

Quickly review:

Pantalone (fearful, greedy)

Il Capitano (boastful coward)

Arlecchino (chaotic, playful)

Colombina (clever problem-solver)

Zanni (survivor, creative)

Focus: What human strengths are hidden under each stereotype?

3. Character Deconstruction

Time: 20 minutes

Purpose: Understand how stereotypes are built.

In pairs, choose one archetype.

Write or discuss three things:

What society expects from this character.

What limitations this creates.

What hidden potential or strength exists inside them.

Share insights with the group.

4. Character Rebuild: The Empowered Archetype

Time: 20 minutes

Purpose: Create modern, positive versions.

Each participant transforms their archetype into a new empowered version:

Arlecchino → a creative problem-solver

Pantalone → a financial mentor

Il Capitano → a community protector

Colombina → an educator and mediator

Create: A new walk, A new gesture, A new voice (if using speech)

A brief personal motto, Present new characters in a “catwalk parade.”

5. Empowerment Improvisations

Time: 30 minutes

Purpose: Put new identities into action.

Groups of 3–5 perform scenes such as: “The empowered character helps someone excluded feel welcome.”

“The group must solve a problem using each transformed character’s strengths.”

“A conflict arises and the new identities work to resolve it peacefully.” “The newcomer in town changes everything.”

Scenes 1–3 minutes each.

Encourage: Creativity, Cooperation, Positive reframing

Debriefing

Time: 10 minutes

How did it feel to transform a stereotype into a strength?

Which new identities felt right or useful?

What parallels do you see with real life?

How can empowerment through role-play support youth inclusion and confidence?

What did you learn about your own potential?

MODULE 3: THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED



MODULE OVERVIEW

This module invites participants to explore the transformative potential of the Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) as a creative tool for social change and empowerment.

It combines practical and theoretical information to emphasize two key techniques: Forum Theatre and Image Theatre, and encourages participants to critically revise social issues, confront barriers, and envision new possibilities for community engagement.

Through interactive workshops, participants will develop empathy, problem-solving, and collaborative action skills while fostering strategies for building inclusive environments. The integration of preparatory exercises, reflection, and artistic expression empowers learners to become advocates for positive change and facilitates meaningful conversations about equity, justice, and inclusion.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

By completing this module, participants will be able to:

Understand Theatre of the Oppressed concepts: grasp the principles and philosophy behind Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) as a tool for empowerment and social transformation.

Apply Forum Theatre techniques: facilitate and participate in interactive performances that explore real-world social issues and collaborate with audiences to propose, enact, and evaluate solutions to challenges depicted on stage.

Utilize Image Theatre approaches: communicate complex emotions, experiences, and social realities using non-verbal techniques and foster reflection and interpretation through visual storytelling and body language.

Develop key skills for social engagement: enhance empathy, active listening, and communication through participatory theatre activities. Strengthen problem-solving and critical thinking by analyzing societal dynamics and exploring solutions.

Promote inclusion and social change: use theatre as a platform to amplify marginalized voices and foster community dialogue. Identify strategies for integrating TO techniques in educational, community, and advocacy settings to inspire social transformation.

TECHNIQUES AND APPROACHES

Forum Theatre

Forum Theatre is one of the most widely practiced techniques within the Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) framework, developed by Augusto Boal. It is recognized for its participatory approach to addressing social issues through interactive performances that invite audience members to become "spect-actors." The goal is to explore solutions to real-life oppression through dialogue and collective action.

Forum Theatre focuses on concrete, real-life situations where oppression/power imbalances exist between identifiable individuals (e.g., colleagues, neighbors, and family members). These plays are rooted in lived experiences or community insights, avoiding fictionalized or assumed scenarios.

The core structure and key elements

Scenario development: Forum Theatre focuses on one specific example of oppression. The play includes one oppressed character, one oppressor, 1-2 allies per side, and 1-2 neutral characters. The minimum number of actors is 5: oppressed, oppressor, an ally of the oppressed, an ally of the oppressor, and neutral. The story unfolds in 3 or 4 scenes, showcasing a process of oppression leading to a negative outcome where the oppressed person makes a wrong decision.

Performance process: In the first performance, the audience observes the full play to understand the context and conflict. Then the performance will be repeated a second time. In this phase, the audience (spectators) suggest and enact changes to the oppressed character's choices to alter the outcome and reduce oppression.

Joker's role: The Joker acts as a neutral facilitator, engaging the audience in reflection and critical analysis of proposed changes. The Joker ensures discussions remain constructive and guides voting on whether to keep or adjust audience interventions.

Methodological and technical guidelines

Actors and roles: It is better to work with non-professional actors to prioritize social change over artistic expression. Each actor plays a single role, avoiding multiple character assignments or cross-gender portrayals unless addressing specifically related themes.

Performance rules:

- Physical violence is not shown on stage to avoid desensitization, fear, or unintended reinforcement of violent behavior.
- No special effects, microphones (where possible), or music to maintain authenticity.
- Public performances should be accessible without cost to maximize impact.

Audience engagement: It is important to choose an audience that is connected to the topic, and what you show is relevant to them. It is also recommended that the audience size be limited to 50-60 for deeper discussions.

It is necessary to inform participants about any recording or photography in advance.

Public intervention guidelines:

The oppressor cannot be changed; all other characters can be adjusted through audience interventions.

Interventions require clapping to freeze the scene and suggest changes.

Proposals must be realistic, non-violent, and contextually appropriate.

Changes are evaluated through public voting, and actors improvise to realistically reflect the proposed adjustments.

Outcome and process closure

The process continues until an acceptable resolution is found, symbolizing the audience's efforts to achieve meaningful change. By maintaining this positive closure, the performance empowers participants, reinforcing the possibility of real-world transformation through collective action.

Image Theatre

Image Theatre is a key method within the Theatre of the Oppressed framework, using body postures and static "statues" to depict oppression and related social dynamics. While primarily a supporting technique for methods like Forum Theatre, Legislative Theatre, and Rainbow of Desire, it also stands as an independent method for community interventions.

The image-based approach allows practitioners greater flexibility and creativity. It requires shorter preparation and implementation phases than Forum Theatre while achieving a comparable impact. Best suited for groups of 30-40 participants for effective discussion and engagement.

Actors use static body postures to express emotions, thoughts, and relationships, requiring a clear and simple statue "image".

Comparison with Forum Theatre

-Forum Theatre depicts a continuous process of oppression, showing its evolution and shifting power dynamics.

-Image Theatre presents a single "image" of this process, at a critical point of imbalance.

-The number of actors is the same as in forum theatre, with a minimum of 5: oppressor, oppressed, an ally of the oppressor, an ally of the oppressed, and neutral.

-In Forum Theatre, people from the audience come to the stage to act, in Image Theatre, they come to show how actors should change postures.

Performance structure

1. Image creation: volunteers create a frozen scene representing oppression, typically involving 5-8 characters (oppressor, oppressed, allies, neutrals).
 2. Joker role: The facilitator (Joker) introduces the session, prepares the audience (asking them to close their eyes till the image is ready), and then invites the audience to come and see the image, without touching it and after he/she guides discussions.
 3. Audience interaction: The audience explores the image, proposes changes, and imagines solutions by physically adjusting the actors' positions to represent positive transformations.
- The oppressor's posture cannot be changed.
 - No physical violence as a solution is allowed.
 - Changes are demonstrated by audience members taking on roles and showing new postures, which actors replicate.

Guidelines for change-making

- Participants can add extra characters as needed.
- Interventions must be made one person at a time.
- The Joker encourages reflection on how changes might impact the situation if the image were not frozen.

After completing the change-making process, the Joker facilitates discussions on lessons learned, community relevance, and possible real-life applications of the outcomes.

Joker role guideline

The Joker is the facilitator in Forum Theatre and Image Theatre, guiding the audience through an interactive process to analyze and transform a social issue presented in a performance or statue. Josker's role is crucial in ensuring the audience understands the problem, engages in discussions, and actively participates in finding realistic solutions.

Structure of the Joker role

1.Introduction

The Joker briefly welcomes the audience, introduces the actors and the play/image, and sets the atmosphere without revealing the issue being addressed. The aim is to engage the public without influencing their perception.

2.The problem discussion

After the performance/showing image, the Joker leads a conversation about the story/image, encouraging the audience to identify the main problem.

3.Character analysis

The Joker helps the audience analyze the characters and their roles in the conflict. He guides the discussion to determine the person most affected and explore how different characters contribute to the situation.

4.Change-making process in Forum Theatre

Before replaying the performance, the Joker motivates the audience to intervene and show alternative actions. They explain the rules:

- Audience members can clap to stop the scene and step in to replace a character (except the oppressor).
- No physical violence or unrealistic solutions.
- One intervention at a time to maintain clarity.

5. Managing interventions

The Joker ensures each intervention is discussed, analyzing the impact of the proposed change. The process continues until the oppression is reduced, and the story reaches a more positive resolution.

6. Summary and transfer

The Joker synthesizes the discussion, highlighting key points and proposed solutions. Then, he/she guides the audience to reflect on how these ideas can be applied in reality.

7. Closure

The event ends with a conclusion based on audience reflections, encouraging them to take action in their communities.

**ENGAGING PARTICIPANTS
IN PROBLEM-SOLVING
THROUGH THEATRE.**

Image Theatre workshop

Name ball toss

Time: 15 minutes

Aim: getting to know each other, warming up exercise

Instructions:

Form a circle: Participants stand in a circle, facing each other.

First round (introduction): A ball is introduced into the circle. The first participant says their name aloud and then passes the ball to another participant while saying the recipient's name. This continues until everyone has passed and received the ball once.

Second round (name recall): The game rule changes. Now, when a participant receives the ball, he/she must say the name of the person who passed it to him/her before passing it to the next person.

Optional variations:

Speed up the game to increase focus.

Introduce multiple balls to add complexity and fun.

Encourage participants to pass to a different person each time to strengthen group memory.

EMOTION WALK

Time: 20 minutes

Aim: to prepare participants for acting

The facilitator forms a safe space and asks participants to spread out in the room, ensuring everyone has enough space for movement. Participants will walk around the space in silence.

First participants start walking slowly, then the facilitator says to walk a bit faster and then very fast, then he/she asks participants to walk backward and after this warming up phase, at the facilitator's signal, call out different emotions (e.g., joy, anger, sadness, happiness, pride, shyness, confusion, nervousness, excitement and so on).

Participants must embody each emotion through their walk, using body language and facial expressions.

**EXAMPLES OF
OPPRESSION IN OUR
COMMUNITY**

Aim:

To foster awareness and discussion about power dynamics and oppression through creative expression, while encouraging empathy and teamwork.

Time: 25 minutes

Instructions:

Introduction (5 minutes):

The facilitator explains the activity, emphasizing the importance of understanding and identifying real-life examples of oppression within the participants' community. Clarify that the goal is to promote reflection and empathy, not judgment or blame.

Group division: Divide participants into three groups.

Group discussion (10 minutes):

Each group discusses examples of oppression they have observed or experienced in their community (e.g., based on gender, age, ability, socioeconomic status, etc.). The group chooses one example to depict.

Statue creation (5 minutes):

The group collaboratively creates a “statue” that represents their chosen example. They should clearly show the roles of both the oppressor and the oppressed in the statue. Encourage participants to adopt comfortable positions that they can hold for a few moments without strain.

Presentations (5 minutes):

Each group takes turns presenting their statue to the larger group. The facilitator may ask the observers:

What do you see in this statue?

What feelings or thoughts does this evoke?

What are possible solutions or ways to challenge this form of oppression?

Facilitator tips:

Ensure a safe, respectful environment for sharing sensitive topics.

Allow time for debriefing if strong emotions arise.

Emphasize the need to be non-judgmental and compassionate during discussions.

IMAGES OF OPPRESSION

Time: 40 minutes (plus 20 minutes for debriefing)

Aim: To deepen understanding of power dynamics and oppression by embodying roles and fostering discussion and reflection.

Instructions:

1. Introduction (5 minutes)

The facilitator explains the purpose of the activity:

To explore the roles within a situation of oppression (oppressor, oppressed, helpers, and neutral).

To reflect on how these dynamics manifest in the participants' lives or communities.

Group preparation (15 minutes)

Form a statue: Each group revisits the statue they created earlier and adapts it, ensuring five distinct roles:

Oppressor: The individual who exerts power.

Oppressed: The individual subjected to oppression.

Helper of the Oppressor: Someone who reinforces the oppressive behavior.

Helper of the Oppressed: Someone who supports or tries to alleviate the oppression.

Neutral Person: A bystander who neither helps nor hinders.

The facilitator reminds everyone to adopt comfortable postures that can be held for a few minutes.

The image/statue should focus on a single issue for clarity.

3. Presentation (20 minutes)

Representative's role (joker) guide:

Instruct the audience to close their eyes as the statue gets into position.

Once ready, invite the audience to open their eyes and silently observe the statue.

Encourage the audience to move around and view the statue from different angles, but no touching or interacting.

Discussion:

Ask the audience:

What do you see in this statue?

Where could this situation happen?

What do you think the problem is?

Have you experienced or witnessed something similar in your life or community?

Invite the audience to suggest changes to the statue that might represent solutions or actions to challenge oppression. If someone suggests a change, they can step in and adjust a participant's posture or position.

Conclusions:

The representative closes the discussion, thanks the audience, and invites applause for the performers.

Debriefing (20 minutes)

After all groups have presented, everyone gathers in a circle to reflect.

The facilitator guides the discussion using the following questions:

How are you feeling after the activity?

What did you learn or take away from this experience?

Did anything surprise you?

Do you have any additional observations or comments?

Facilitator tips:

Ensure that a safe and respectful environment is maintained.

Encourage empathy and active listening during discussions.

Be mindful of emotional responses and provide space for participants to express feelings.

FORUM THEATRE WORKSHOP

Total time: 2 hours

Aim:

To explore real-life challenges through Forum Theatre, promoting empathy, problem-solving, and community dialogue. Participants will step into different roles to examine problems and practice solutions for social or interpersonal issues.

Workshop Structure:

1. Introduction to Forum Theatre (15 minutes)

Overview: The facilitator introduces Forum Theatre as a tool for exploring and resolving real-life challenges.
Forum Theatre: A form of interactive theatre where spectators can intervene in a performance to change the outcome.

Roles:

Actors: performers who present the problem scene.

Spect-actors: Audience members who observe and later participate by stepping into the scene to offer alternative actions.

Joker: The facilitator who moderates, asks questions, and ensures the space remains safe and inclusive.

Examples: Share stories of how Forum Theatre has been used effectively in addressing workplace conflicts, family issues, or social injustice.

2. Problem brainstorm (15 minutes)

Group discussion: Participants form small groups and brainstorm real-life challenges they face or observe in their communities. These could include:

Interpersonal conflicts (e.g., bullying, discrimination, family disputes)

Broader social issues (e.g., poverty, environmental degradation, inequality)

After the discussion, they need to choose one problem they will work with.

3. Building the problem scene (30 minutes)

Scene creation:

Each group creates a short scene (3-5 minutes) depicting the chosen problem.

The scene should illustrate the problem escalating and leave it unresolved, creating an opportunity for intervention.

Scene Performance: Groups perform their scenes for the rest of the participants.

4. Forum Theatre in action (40 minutes)

First performance: Each group presents its scene without interruption, allowing the audience to observe the problem in its entirety.

Spect-actor interventions:

The facilitator invites the audience to reflect on what went wrong or what could have been done differently.

The scene is performed again, but this time, any audience member (spect-actor) can step in to replace any character except the oppressor.

Spect-actors improvise alternative actions to change the outcome of the scene.

After each intervention, the group discusses the effectiveness of the new action:
Did it shift the power dynamic?
Did it offer a resolution or lead to further complications?
The facilitator guides the discussion to explore multiple perspectives and solutions.

5. Reflection and discussion (20 minutes)

Group circle: The participants gather in a circle to reflect on the experience.

Facilitator-led questions:

What did you learn about the challenge from this process?

How did stepping into someone else's role change your perspective?

Which solutions seemed most effective, and why?

How can we apply what we've learned to similar real-world situations?

Facilitator Tips:

Safety first: Ensure a supportive and respectful environment where all participants feel comfortable sharing and experimenting.

Encourage participation: Emphasize that there are no wrong answers - every intervention is a learning opportunity.

Guide reflection: Help participants connect what they experienced in the workshop to real-life actions and attitudes they can adopt.

THE LABELS AND SOCIAL PERCEPTION GAME

Duration: 30 minutes

Objective: This activity helps participants experience and reflect on the impact of stereotypes, labels, and social assumptions on interactions and self-perception. It fosters empathy and critical thinking about how societal labels shape behavior and relationships.

Materials needed: Sticky labels with the following words: leader, invisible, outsider, respected, tape and markers

Preparation:

The facilitator prepares labels in advance, ensuring that each participant receives one. Without revealing the content, the facilitator attaches a label to each participant's back. Participants should not know their label, but they can see others'.

Instructions:

Step 1: Interaction phase (10 minutes)

- Participants are instructed to walk around the room and interact freely.
- The facilitator explains that they should treat others according to the label they see on their backs - without revealing what it says.

Example behaviors:

Leader: Engage with them confidently, seek their opinions, follow their lead.

Invisible: Ignore them, avoid eye contact, exclude them from conversations.

Outsider: Treat them as if they don't belong, and show hesitation in engaging with them.

Respected: Show admiration, listen attentively, give them importance.

Step 2: Reflection and guessing (5 minutes)

After 10 minutes, participants stop interacting.

Each participant takes a turn guessing what their label was based on how they were treated.

The facilitator encourages them to explain why they think they had a certain label.

Step 3: Group discussion (15-20 minutes)

How did it feel to be treated that way?

Did you feel included, excluded, valued, or ignored?

Did your behavior change based on how others treated you?

Did anyone feel frustrated, confused, or empowered?

How do these experiences relate to real-life social dynamics?

Where do we see labeling and stereotyping in daily life?

How do labels shape people's opportunities, self-esteem, and interactions?

What can we do to challenge stereotypes and foster inclusive behaviors?

Debriefing key takeaways:

Labels influence not only how others treat us but also how we behave.

Assumptions can lead to unfair treatment, exclusion, or privilege.

Stereotypes can be both visible (based on race, gender, social class) and invisible (based on perception, bias).

Awareness of these biases can help us foster more inclusive, respectful environments.

**FORUM THEATRE -
ADDRESSING EXCLUSION**

Duration: 1.30 h

Objective: This interactive drama-based activity allows participants to explore real-life scenarios of exclusion and discrimination. Through role-playing and audience intervention, they identify solutions, promote empathy, and develop strategies for social change.

Materials needed: Open space for performances, simple props (optional), paper and markers for brainstorming scenarios

Preparation:

The facilitator explains the concept of Forum Theatre, a participatory method where audiences engage in changing the outcome of a scene depicting social injustice or exclusion.

Participants are divided into small groups of 5 people each.

Each group brainstorms a real-life exclusion scenario they want to depict (or the facilitator provides pre-prepared situations).

Instructions:

Step 1: Scene creation (20 minutes)

Each group develops a short scene, 2-5 minutes, showcasing a situation of exclusion, such as:

Workplace discrimination (e.g., a qualified woman being ignored in a male-dominated office)

Bullying (e.g., a student being mocked for their appearance or abilities)

Lack of access (e.g., a person with a disability unable to participate in an event due to poor accessibility)

The scene should end negatively, showing the problem without resolution.

Step 2: Performances (5 minutes per group)

Each group performs their scene while the rest of the participants act as the audience. The audience watches without interrupting, absorbing the situation.

Step 3: Audience intervention & replay 15-30 minutes, (depending on group size)

After the first performance, the facilitator invites the audience to reflect on what they saw:

How did the situation make you feel?

What could have been done differently?

Who had the power to change the outcome?

The scene is replayed, but this time, audience members can intervene by pausing the action and suggesting different approaches

Stepping into the scene to replace a character and act out a solution

Giving an alternative dialogue to change the interaction

The scene is repeated with multiple interventions, exploring different solutions.

Step 4: Group discussion & debriefing (20 minutes)

The facilitator leads a reflection, discussing:

How did different interventions change the outcome?

What made certain solutions more effective than others?

How do these situations reflect real-life dynamics?

What actions can we take in everyday life to challenge exclusion?

**EMPOWERMENT TREE -
GROWING INCLUSION &
CHANGE**

Duration: 40 minutes

Objective: This reflective and collaborative activity encourages participants to identify concrete actions they can take to promote inclusion and empowerment in their communities. The final visual representation - a tree filled with positive commitments - reinforces collective responsibility for social change.

Materials needed:

Large poster or board with a tree trunk and branches drawn on it

Green paper cut into leaf shapes (or colored sticky notes)

Markers or pens

Tape or glue (if using a paper tree)

Preparation:

Set up the tree:

Draw a large tree with bare branches on a poster or whiteboard.

Prepare leaf cutouts:

Cut green paper into leaf shapes (one per participant).

Instructions:

Step 1: Introduction (5 minutes)

The facilitator introduces the concept of the Empowerment Tree, explaining:

The trunk and branches represent the shared goal of fostering inclusion.

The leaves represent individual actions that contribute to this goal.

The tree grows stronger and more vibrant with each participant's commitment.

The facilitator asks participants:

“What small or big actions can you take to create a more inclusive and empowering environment?”

Examples:

“I will listen and support people who feel excluded.”

“I will challenge discrimination when I see it.”

“I will organize community events that include marginalized voices.”

Step 2: Writing commitments (10 minutes)

Each participant receives a paper leaf and writes down one specific actionable step they can take. Encourage them to be realistic and specific (not just “be inclusive” but “invite diverse perspectives in group discussions”).

Step 3: Adding leaves to the tree (10 minutes)

One by one, participants come forward and attach their leaves to the tree, reading them aloud if they feel comfortable.

As the tree fills up, it visually symbolizes collective commitment and responsibility.

Step 4: Group reflection & discussion (15 minutes)

The facilitator leads a discussion, asking:

How did it feel to contribute to the tree?

What patterns or themes do we see in the actions written?

How can we hold ourselves and each other accountable for these commitments?

What support do we need to turn these words into reality?

HEY YOU - WHO, ME?

Duration: 20 minutes

Objective:

To explore emotional expression and different attitudes in communication.

To reflect on responsibility and how people often blame others rather than taking action in their communities.

To enhance group dynamics, responsiveness, and engagement.

Materials needed:

No materials required – just an open space for participants to form a circle.

Instructions:

Form a circle:

The group stands close together in a circle.

Facilitator initiates the game:

The facilitator picks one person, looks directly at them, and says loudly:

“It’s YOU!”

Group response:

The entire group points at that person and loudly says:

“HEY YOU!”

Person’s response:

The chosen participant responds with:

“WHO, ME?”

Group’s confirmation:

The group continues pointing and says:

“YES, YOU!”

Person denies responsibility:

The chosen participant responds:

“NO, NOT ME!”

Group questions who it is then:

The group asks:

“THEN WHO?”

Passing responsibility:

The participant points at another person in the circle and says:

“It’s HIM/HER!”

Cycle continues:

The new person is now the focus, and the cycle repeats until everyone has been pointed at least once.

After the group understands the sequence, the facilitator can add variations by asking them to act out different emotional tones, such as:

- Loud & energetic
- Tired & slow
- Whispering & mysterious
- Angry & confrontational
- Laughing & playful
- Sad & disappointed

This variation helps participants explore emotional expression and group dynamics in different situations.

Group reflection & discussion (10 min)

After the exercise, the facilitator leads a discussion using questions like:

How did it feel to be accused?

What emotions did you experience when blaming someone else?

Did you feel a sense of responsibility at any point? Why or why not?

How does this reflect real life? Do people tend to blame others instead of taking responsibility?

What can we do to take more ownership of challenges in our communities rather than just shifting blame?

Debriefing key takeaways:

People often deflect responsibility instead of taking action.

The way we deliver and receive messages impacts how we react emotionally.

Our attitude and tone can change the meaning of an interaction.

Taking responsibility can be uncomfortable, but it is necessary for change in society

**THE CANDY - EXPLORING
POWER AND SOCIAL
INCLUSION**

Duration: 1 hour

Objectives:

To reflect on the concept of power and its influence on social inclusion.
To critically examine personal behavior when holding power.
To enhance critical thinking about societal rules, privileges, and fairness.

Materials needed:

Around 60 wrapped candies (or another small item to symbolize power).
An open space where participants can move freely.

Preparation:

Set the tone – Begin by emphasizing the seriousness and importance of the exercise.
Explain that some participants will receive something very significant, but do not reveal the meaning behind it.
Encourage full involvement and commitment from the group.
Selection of initial participants
Ask participants born between June and August (or another period) to stand up.
Give one candy to each standing participant, stating:
“Whoever gets candy has power.”
Do not explain what the candy represents yet.

Step 1: Candy distribution & decision-making

Announce that there are more candies available, but only the participants who already have candies can decide how to distribute them.

They have three options:

Keep them all among themselves.

Distribute to those without candies using their criteria.

Give to everyone, but in different amounts if they choose.

Facilitator role: Observe how participants make their decisions. Take note of how they justify their choices, who speaks the most, and whether power is concentrated or redistributed.

Step 2: Additional power redistribution

- If some participants now have two or more candies, announce that there are ten more candies available.
- Again, only participants with two or more candies get to decide how to distribute them.
- Observe if power is further concentrated or if fairness is considered.

Step 3: The power struggle – forming circles

Now, divide participants into two groups:

Participants with candies → Form a tight protective circle.

Participants without candies → Discuss among themselves how to obtain candies (power).

Step 4: Group discussion & reflection (30-40 min)

After stopping the game, gather participants for a deep reflection and debriefing session.

Personal reflection questions:

What feelings did you experience throughout the activity?

How did your behavior change based on the role you had (with or without candy)?

Did you feel powerful, excluded, privileged, or frustrated? Why?

What made you behave the way you did in this game?

Understanding power & privilege:

Who received candies first, and why? What does this randomness represent in real life?

How did the second round of candies get distributed?

What happened when participants without power were asked to find ways to gain power?

What could have happened, but didn't?

Real-world connections:

What does this game mirror in real life? Can you think of concrete examples?

What can the candies represent? (e.g., money, social status, education, opportunities)

What can the criteria for the first distribution represent? (One key answer: privilege.)

Who are the real-life power holders in society, and how do they decide things?

Who is losing out in our society due to power concentration? Any examples?

How can power be used justly and in solidarity with those who have less power?

How can power (or what power is associated with) be distributed fairly?

How much power do you personally think you have in society?

What actions can you take to influence how power is used in your society?

AGREE-DISAGREE

Duration: 1 hour

Objectives:

Encourage critical thinking about social inclusion and related issues.
Help participants express and reflect on their personal perspectives.
Foster respectful discussion and an openness to different viewpoints.
Allow participants to recognize biases and explore diverse opinions.

Materials needed:

Two signs: One labeled "Agree", the other "Disagree" (placed on opposite sides of the room).
A neutral zone in the middle of the room.
List of prepared statements (see below).

Instructions:

1. Setup:

Arrange the room so that there is a clear space for participants to move between the “Agree” and “Disagree” signs, with a neutral zone in the middle.

2. Introduce the activity:

Explain that this is a non-judgmental exercise meant to explore different perspectives on social inclusion.
Participants will hear a statement and move to the position that best reflects their opinion.
There are no right or wrong answers - the goal is discussion and understanding.

3. Read the statements:

The facilitator reads a statement out loud.

Participants take a few moments to decide, then move to the “Agree,” “Disagree,” or Neutral” position.

4. Discussion & debate:

The facilitator invites volunteers from each position to explain their reasoning.

Encourage participants to engage with opposing viewpoints in a respectful and open-minded way.

If someone’s perspective shifts during the discussion, they are invited to move to a different position and explain why.

Repeat the process with the next statement.

Sample statements:

1. Affirmative action is always necessary to achieve true equality.
2. Everyone is treated equally by the law.
3. Privilege always goes unnoticed by those who have it.
4. Young people today are more inclusive than previous generations.
5. In a society, minorities must adapt to the majority.
6. Media representation of diverse groups promotes social inclusion.
7. Some people don’t want to integrate.
8. Schools should always prioritize inclusive education for students with disabilities.
9. Social inclusion efforts unfairly prioritize minority groups over the majority.

MODULE 4: CIRCUS ARTS



MODULE OVERVIEW

In this module, you will learn about how circus as a methodology promotes different positive outcomes in individuals and groups and learn about three versatile techniques that you can use when working with people from different backgrounds.

In the module you can find 8 different workshops to help promote social inclusion through learning social skills.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

The advantage of the circus is that anyone can take part, regardless of age, gender, cultural background, physical constitution, physical condition, physical ability, or previous movement experience. It is a place where we can find the centre between seriousness and fun.

Circus activity promotes various positive effects on the participants:

Increase self-confidence. Even the people who think that they can't do many things right in their lives find themselves surprised by the number of things they can do in a circus setting, from making great pyramids, walking on rope, using different objects ... We must start with easy levels of exercise, to give the participants a sense of accomplishment and then help them to improve.

Exploring your limits. When trying new circus disciplines and learning new skills, we quickly find our own limits; we are free to explore them and to expand them.

Encouraging cooperation instead of competition. Fairness, a willingness to help others, consideration and responsibility develop naturally when participants realise that this is the only way to make a successful performance or to be able to do a specific exercise. This aspect is particularly present in group and partner acrobatics, in the setting up of group pyramids and in acrobatic figures in pairs.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Gaining new sensory experiences. Through some circus disciplines, we can experience completely new sensory experiences that we couldn't get in other sports or activities. In this way, we get to know our bodies in a different light, which promotes better expression with the body. A good example would be clowning, where physical expressiveness is important, especially strong facial expressions.

Opportunity to express yourself. In the circus, we can experiment with our identity, put ourselves in different and new roles and achieve different results.

Interculturality and acceptance of people who are different from us. In circus, hatred of foreigners is unthinkable, because the circus is traditionally multicultural, and its appeal is also a consequence of its internationality.

Circus also promotes the following:

- improving your ability to focus and concentrate,
- improving fine motor skills,
- boosting their self-confidence by doing something they always thought was out of their reach,
- developing balance, rhythm, and reflexes,
- stimulating imagination and developing higher level problem-solving thinking,
- creating something from nothing and experiencing joy in the process,
- mastering skills through trial and error and lots of practice,
- helping to develop patience and perseverance,
- the knowledge that challenges can be fun.

TECHNIQUES AND APPROACHES

Circus offers a whole plethora of different techniques, each specific and possible to bring different positive effects. In this manual, we will present how you can use three of the many versatile techniques - juggling, acrobatics and clowning. First, let's look at why they are good for fostering social inclusion.

Acrobalance

Group or partner acrobatics are a wonderful technique in circus that doesn't require a lot of equipment, just enough space and some mats. However, it is a technique that has potential for being risky and if we don't take care of the necessary safety measures, it can lead to injuries. Always make sure that the person facilitating has enough knowledge about this technique and that all the participants are aware of the safety measures and are complying with them.

Acrobalance can lead to some great benefits, physical, as well as social. With group and partner acrobatics, we can improve **body strength** and **muscle (physical) tension**, improve **balance** and enhance **sensitivity**. In addition to this, it helps us improve our **problem-solving capacity and creativity**.

The social aspects of acrobalance are what make this technique so good when we're preparing activities to promote inclusion. First, it helps develop mutual trust and self-confidence. During the acrobalance activities, you depend on others; you must trust that they will not let you go when you are high in the air. Trust must be built; it is a process. Secondly, through acrobalance, participants are developing their ability to persevere, resilience. Sometimes when we are doing a pyramid, it can be uncomfortable; however, we can't just let go and leave, as this could hurt others. So, you need to endure the uncomfortable feeling at least as long as everyone steps down and is safe. Acrobatics also promotes healthy body contact, which allows you to set your own boundaries and respect other people's boundaries. There is a lot of very close physical contact, which can sometimes be somewhat intimate (e.g. holding the behind of your partner, skin-to-skin contact). The safety zone we have around us in everyday life is broken.

We must be aware of other people's boundaries when it comes to touching and expressing ours. The activities can also help you to overcome your own boundaries. Thirdly, acrobalance encourages mutual support, responsibility, and reliability and promotes cooperation. Lastly, acrobalance is great for promoting social inclusion, as it transforms and rearranges the group hierarchy amongst participants.

Often youngsters who have nothing to do with each other come in contact. Stronger and bigger youngsters are important as a stable base on which a pyramid is built, and through that they get the desired confirmation. Younger and lighter people climb to the top of the pyramid. Suddenly, they are the biggest, and everybody claps for them. Everybody can use their physical particularities and contribute them to the common goal of building a pyramid. Acrobatics show us that it is good that we are different sizes, shapes, we can work better together.

Clowning

Clowning is a form of performance art that uses humor, play, and exaggerated physical expression to entertain and connect with audiences. It goes beyond just wearing a red nose and acting silly—it's a deeply expressive and often improvisational art form that taps into human emotions, vulnerability, and social interactions.

It can be a powerful technique for social inclusion because it breaks down barriers and fosters connection in a playful, nonjudgmental way. Clowning technique can work in two ways - as a medium through which we communicate with people and act pedagogically or even therapeutically, and as a character in which the groups and individuals we work with, whether they be children, teenagers, pensioners, company employees, addicts, hospital patients, parents, prisoners, teachers, students or the homeless.

Why does it help with fostering social inclusion?

·**It Encourages Emotional Expression.** It allows people to express emotions freely, helping those who might struggle with communication (e.g., neurodiverse individuals, people with disabilities, or marginalized groups). It creates a space where mistakes are embraced rather than judged.

Reduces Social Hierarchies. Clowns operate outside traditional power structures, making interactions feel more equal. Laughter and play put people on the same level, regardless of background, ability, or status.

Fosters Empathy and Connection. Clowns use humor and exaggerated emotions to create shared experiences. This helps people relate to each other and break down stereotypes or prejudices.

Supports Nonverbal Communication. Clowning relies heavily on body language, gestures, and facial expressions. This makes it inclusive for people who have language barriers or difficulties with verbal communication.

Encourages Risk-Taking in a Safe Space. Many people fear failure or being judged, but clowning turns "failure" into something funny and endearing. This helps participants build confidence and try new ways of interacting with others.

Brings Joy and Playfulness into Serious Settings. In hospitals, refugee camps, or community centers, clowning can lighten difficult situations and promote mental well-being.

Juggling

The most individual technique of the three represented can be used well for promoting inclusion and teamwork if we choose the exercises by juggling in a group or in pairs. While trying to juggle for the first time alone can be frustrating, teaching this technique step by step and with the help of other people can provide participants with quick rewards and keep them involved and motivated. When we are juggling in pairs or groups, it is about a different type of cooperation than in acrobatics. We are not searching for balance but for the right timing. We think about when it is our turn, when our partner speeds up, we must speed up, we must find the same rhythm. We must perceive others, think about what is not working and better it. We must give and accept feedback from others.

Juggling helps break barriers, as it is non-verbal, making it inclusive for people who speak different languages or have communication challenges. It can bring together people from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities. It helps build confidence and self-esteem, it encourages teamwork and cooperation, can help reduce social anxiety, because it provides a structured activity that helps people engage socially in a non-threatening way. Adaptive juggling techniques can also be tailored to different physical and cognitive abilities. This makes it an inclusive activity that anyone can participate in.

And lastly, it encourages persistence and resilience. Learning to juggle requires patience and perseverance, teaching valuable life skills.

The beauty of juggling is that you can use multiple objects to juggle. The most common one is of course, juggling balls; however, you can use other objects. You can also make balls yourselves from common objects like flower, rice, balloons, or even socks. In the workshop sessions, you can find an example of a workshop with scarves, which helps to make juggling learning easier.

**TRUST AND
INTRODUCTION TO
ACROBALANCE**

AIM & OBJECTIVES

To build trust

To familiarise the group with the safety rules of acrobalance

To give the participants first try of acrobalance

Time needed

1.5 h

Max 20 people (teenagers and up, there must be a certain level of understanding and obeying the rules for safety reasons)

Learning outcomes for participants

Participants understand the safety measures needed for doing partner and group acrobatics

Participants try to do basic acrobalance poses

Participants will develop teamwork, trust, and communication skills through shared physical exercises.

Participants will learn to apply safety principles and mutual responsibility in a supportive group setting.

Participants will strengthen their confidence, adaptability, and cooperation while working towards common goals.

1. Warm up in a circle

Stand in a circle. Each participant shows one exercise for warm-up, everyone does the exercises.

2. (optional) Trust exercise

Make an obstacle course of your choice. Separate the participants into pairs. One partner has a blindfold, the other guides there through the course with verbal instructions or by holding their hands.

3. Introduction to acrobalance

Acrobatics in pairs can be a fun activity that helps you get in touch with your bodies, build trust with the partners and explore your boundaries. In most exercises we have people, who are on the bottom – base and people on the top – flyers. The person who is standing beside them and making sure to catch the flyer is called the spotter.

Even though some exercises may seem complicated or hard, everyone can do acrobalance! Today we will start with the basics. But first, there are some important rules to know and follow:

1. Always warm-up before starting (we did that already).
3. There should always be a spotter (safety person) at all time next to the one trying, ready to hold and catch in case of a fall!! This is very important!! It doesn't need to be the trainer, but the rules are strict: No fooling around when being the spotter, stay focused. If not, we will change the person or stop the activity.
4. There needs to be a clear communication: If the bottom of the pyramid screams 'down!', everybody must go down IMMEDIATELY.
5. If any of the participants feel that they are going to fall, they must tell the others by screaming loudly 'I'm falling'. This way the upper persons can prepare for the fall.

6. When you step on a person, verify whether it hurts and adjust the position of your legs, arms, knees ... so it will be painless (participant should not confuse pain with effort though).
7. Never stand on someone's spine! You should place your foot on the pelvis, above the legs, not higher up the body.
8. This will sound like evident but at the end of a figure, people should climb down in the reverse order in which they climbed up. First the top person climbs down then the middle ones and finally the bottom one.

4. Beginning pair exercises

- split the participants in groups of at least three, so each group has a spotter. Have them do each exercise multiple times, so they can reverse roles.
- Searching for balance, basic v: In a pair stand face to face, feet together. Grab each other's forearms and lean back, extend your arms, and your feet stay together. When you feel balanced, let go on one hand and open up to one side.
- Base training: learning the correct position of the spine – everyone tries, the facilitator goes around and checks everyone! The spine has to be straight, arms and legs parallel on the floor, 45° angle to the body.

Debriefing

- How was the session for you?
 - What surprised you?
- How did you feel in different roles? Was it harder for you to be the flyer or base and why? How was it being the spotter?
 - Did you manage to do all the exercises? What came up if you couldn't? What did you do then?
- You can talk about trust, letting go of fears, what helps you being comfortable, responsibility and accountability, boundaries, ... or anything else that comes up.



Tunnel



Base training: learning the correct position of the spine – everyone tries, the facilitator goes around and checks everyone! The spine has to be straight, arms and legs parallel on the floor, 45° angle to the body.



Surfer

Plane



Chair

ACROBALANCE SESSION

2

Time needed

1.5 h

AIM & OBJECTIVES

Demonstrate safe and correct execution of basic acrobalance figures.

Apply clear communication and teamwork in group exercises.

Reflect on cooperation, body awareness, and personal boundaries during the activity.

Learning outcomes for participants

Participants will develop teamwork, trust, and communication skills through shared physical exercises.

Participants will learn to apply safety principles and mutual responsibility in a supportive group setting.

Participants will strengthen their confidence, adaptability, and cooperation while working towards common goals.

Participants will develop teamwork, trust, and communication skills through shared physical exercise.

1. Warm up in a circle (10 min)

Stand in a circle. Each participant shows one exercise for warm-up, everyone does the exercises.

2. Reminder about safety rules (5 min):

Ask the participants:

What are the roles in acrobalance (base, spotter, flyer)

Show me the proper base stance.

What are the safety rules?

1. Always warm-up before starting (we did that already).
2. There should always be a spotter (safety person) at all time next to the one trying, ready to hold and catch in case of a fall!! This is very important!! It doesn't need to be the trainer, but the rules are strict: No fooling around when being the spotter, stay focused. If not, we will change the person or stop the activity.
3. There needs to be a clear communication: If the bottom of the pyramid screams 'down!', everybody must go down IMMEDIATELY.
4. If any of the participants feel that they are going to fall, they must tell the others by screaming loudly 'I'm falling'. This way the upper persons can prepare for the fall.
5. When you step on a person, verify whether it hurts and adjust the position of your legs, arms, knees ... so it will be painless (participant should not confuse pain with effort though).
6. Never stand on someone's spine! You should place your foot on the pelvis, above the legs, not higher up the body.
7. This will sound like evident but at the end of a figure, people should climb down in the reverse order in which they climbed up. First the top person climbs down then the middle ones and finally the bottom one.

Acro exercises (60 min):

Split the participants in groups according to the amount of people needed for a certain exercise. Make sure there are enough people to be the spotters in each group. Have them do each exercise multiple times, so they can reverse roles. You can encourage them to not always be the base or always the flyer.

Debriefing (20 min)

- How was the session for you? What surprised you? What was easy, what was hard? Was anything different for you from the last time? Was anything uncomfortable?
- What did we need to succeed in making the pyramids? How did we communicate? What would happen if one person didn't want to do the exercise/didn't follow the rules

You can talk about trust, letting go of fears, responsibility and accountability, boundaries, teamwork, communication, resilience, or anything that you want to put emphasis on/anything that comes up.



Simple pyramid with three people



The flag with three people



The tower



Fan with 5 people



The flower

CLOWNING

Time needed 90 minutes

AIM & OBJECTIVES

Use clowning techniques to develop confident communication, emotional literacy, and cooperative risk-taking in a safe, playful environment.

Build active listening and clear nonverbal expressiveness.

Expand emotional vocabulary and regulation through embodied play.

Practice resilience by intentionally experiencing and recovering from small failures.

Strengthen cooperation, turn-taking, and shared creative ownership.

Learning outcomes for participants

Demonstrate improved eye contact, mirroring, and physical clarity in short improvised scenes.

Name and embody at least three emotional states and show two strategies to regulate emotions in-play.

Use "accept and transform" to recover from a staged mistake with a peer-supported strategy.

Collaborate to create a short group scene with equitable turn-taking and visible role-sharing.

Report increased willingness to take social risks in constructive ways.

Arrival and Agreements (10 minutes)

For participants: Sit in a circle. Say your name and show one small movement that says your name without words. Listen while others share.

Grounding and Warm-up (10 minutes)

For participants: Breathe together (3 slow breaths). Pair up for a 1-minute mirroring: one leads, the other follows exact movements. Swap. Then vocal warm-up: sigh-to-sound, extend a single vowel, release.

Exaggerated Walks and Neutral Face (15 minutes)

For participants: Explore four walks: small/fast, big/slow, curious, confident. Walk across the space and return. Then stand neutral: freeze face, let subtle changes appear, notice reactions. Facilitator can demonstrate each walk.

Slow-Motion Object Pass (10 minutes)

For participants: In a circle, pass an imaginary or real small object in exaggerated slow motion; emphasise attention to weight, intention, and exit cues.

"Yes, And" Improvisation in Trios (20 minutes)

For participants: Form trios. Play rounds where person A offers an action or line; B accepts with “Yes, and...” and adds; C integrates and closes. Rotate roles every 3 minutes. Keep scenes 1–2 minutes. Facilitator can start with safe prompts (e.g., “we are on a tiny boat”).

Failure-and-Recovery Micro-Exercise (10 minutes)

For participants: Each pair plans a simple scene and intentionally introduces a small “mistake” (drop, missed cue). Practice two recoveries: (a) accept and transform the mistake into a new offer; (b) pause and reframe with a clear gesture. Perform to another pair.

Shared Scene Creation and Performance (15 minutes)

For participants: In groups of 3–5, choose one prop and one emotion cue. Build a 2–3 minute clown scene that uses the prop and the cue; assign simple roles and a visible turn-taking signal. Rehearse briefly and perform

Reflection and Transfer Debrief (10 minutes)

For participants: Sit in circle. One-sentence round: "One moment I noticed something new was..." Then answer a transfer prompt: "Where will you try this listening or recovery technique this week?"

Facilitator hint: Use a flipchart to capture three key insights. Close with positive recognition for courage and creativity.

Debriefing

What surprised you about how you listened or reacted?

When did you feel most supported by the group?

Describe a moment you tried to recover from something that didn't go as planned — what did you do?

How did nonverbal signals change a scene more than words?

Where outside this room could you use the "accept and transform" strategy?

What one small step will you practise before our next meeting?

Variations

Short version (60 minutes): Remove slow-motion pass; shorten shared scenes to 90 seconds.

Sensory-sensitive format: Replace intense eye-contact with hand-mirroring; reduce vocal volume; provide quiet corner.

Large groups (25+): Run in parallel small groups with 1 facilitator per group; finish with a representative from each group sharing a highlight.

Refugee or multilingual groups: Use bilingual prompts; rely more on physical cues and reduced verbal complexity.

CLOWNING WORKSHOP

Time needed: 90 min

Aim:

Use clowning techniques to surface, practice and transform everyday conflict dynamics into cooperative outcomes through embodied play.

Objectives:

Recognise personal triggers and status behaviours that escalate conflicts.

Practise de-escalation using nonverbal cues and gentle humour.

Develop shared repair strategies after a breakdown.

Increase confidence using play to reframe disagreements.

Learning outcomes for participants:

Identify at least two nonverbal escalation signs in themselves and others.

Demonstrate a three-step repair sequence after a staged breakdown.

Use humour to pause escalation without invalidating feelings.

Report increased readiness to apply a de-escalation move in real situations.

Opening Agreement and Brief Grounding 5 minutes

For participants: Sit in a circle. Read and agree to three safety rules: opt-out gesture, pause signal, respect.

Breathe together for 3 slow breaths.

Status Walks to Surface Power Cues 10 minutes

For participants: Walk across the room in pairs. One walks as high status, the other as low status. Swap. Notice posture, pace, gaze.

Slow-Motion Escalation and Freeze 20 minutes

For participants: In trios, start a neutral scene. Gradually escalate emotion and status in slow motion for 45 seconds then freeze. Hold the frozen moment.

Repair Toolkit Practice 20 minutes

For participants: In pairs, practice a three-step repair sequence: A) Pause gesture; B) Acknowledge feeling with a simple line or gesture; C) Offer playful reframe or concrete fix. Role-play both sides, 5 minutes each.

Short Scenes with Humour Pause 15 minutes

For participants: Create 90-second scenes where a conflict emerges; use a humour-pause technique when stuck to de-escalate (a silly sound or exaggerated freeze). Rotate pairs.

Reflection and Transfer 20 minutes

For participants: One-sentence round: "One nonverbal cue I will watch for is..." Then share one place you will practise the repair sequence this week.

Debriefing

What small physical cue changed the tone of a scene for you?

Which repair step felt easiest and which felt harder?

How did using a humour pause shift the emotional energy?

When could the repair toolkit be unhelpful or risky in real life?

What will you try first when you notice escalation outside this room?

MATERIALS NEEDED

Clear movement space and chairs.

Flipchart and markers to write repair steps.

Optional small props to trigger scene ideas (cup, scarf, keys).

Timer.

Variations

Deep listening variant: add a round where listeners must reflect back emotions verbatim before repairing.

Trauma-informed adaptation: shorten intensity, provide private check-ins, allow role as observer with reflection prompts.

Large group: run parallel stations focused separately on status, repair and humour pause.

CLOWNING WORKSHOP

2

Time needed: 90 minutes

Aim:

Use clowning to explore identity, reduce exclusion, and celebrate difference through playful embodiment and perspective-taking.

Objectives:

Increase empathy by stepping into amplified, nonjudgemental clown characters.
Practice listening and representation when working across cultural and identity differences.
Co-create inclusive rituals and micro-practices to carry back into participants' communities.

Learning outcomes for participants:

Create a simple clown character that highlights one aspect of identity without mockery.
Demonstrate at least two perspective-taking moves to shift assumptions.
Co-design a short inclusive ritual or greeting to use in group settings.
Express increased empathy and willingness to adapt language or behaviour.

Welcome Agreements and Cultural Safety Framing 10 minutes

For participants: Read a cultural safety statement and agree to boundaries about personal stories. Offer an opt-out for personal disclosures.

Creating a Clown Character that Amplifies One Trait 20 minutes

For participants: Choose one trait to amplify (curiosity, stubbornness, shyness, pride). Use a physical choice and one signature gesture. Name your character with a playful single-word title.

Character Walks and Exchange 10 minutes

For participants: Walk the space as your character. When you meet someone, exchange a nonverbal greeting that shows your trait. Practice with 6 different partners.

Perspective Switch Scenes 10 minutes

For participants: In pairs, perform a short scene where each person first plays their own character, then switches to the partner's character and repeats the scene. Debrief immediate reactions.

Co-creating Inclusive Ritual 10 minutes

For participants: In small groups design a 30-second inclusive ritual or greeting that signals welcome and consent for the whole group. Test and refine with peer feedback.

Reflection Circle 10 minutes

For participants: Share one insight from switching perspectives and one aspect of the ritual you liked. Commit to one small change you will try.

Debriefing

What surprised you when you played your partner's character?

How easy or hard was it to avoid stereotypes when amplifying a trait?

Which ritual element felt most accessible for your community?

How might power differences show up when using these playful techniques?

What boundary will you put in place when using clowning to explore identity?

CLOWNING WORKSHOP

3

Time needed: 60 minutes

Aim:

Use clowning to unlock spontaneous creativity and collaborative problem solving by lowering stakes and amplifying playful risk-taking.

Objectives:

Generate rapid, embodied ideation using improvisation constraints.

Practice divergent thinking through physical exaggeration and forced limitations.

Build rapid prototyping skills in performance form and translate them into group problem-solving steps

Learning outcomes for participants

Produce at least five distinct physical ideas for a single challenge in a timed round.

Demonstrate transforming an apparent failure into a new idea in-play.

Work in small teams to prototype and present a 60-second performative solution.

Report greater comfort with quick creative risk-taking.

Quick Agreements and Warm-up 5 minutes

For participants: Agree to rapid pace and one-line rule: no critique during idea generation. Do 2 minutes of physical shaking and loose articulation.

Challenge Presentation and Physical Brainstorm 10 minutes

For participants: Receive a challenge prompt (e.g., "make waiting at a bus stop delightful"). In pairs, create as many physical micro-ideas as possible in 90-second bursts, alternating partners. Use exaggerated gestures and sounds.

Forced Limitations Round 10 minutes

For participants: In small groups, pick one idea and rework it under a forced limitation (silent only; only one move allowed; use one small prop). Rehearse a 30-second sketch.

Failure-to-Idea Flip 10 minutes

For participants: Each individual intentionally performs a small 'botch' of their sketch. Then instantly turns it into a new offer and continues. Share quick peer applause for creative flips.

Prototyping and Presentation 10 minutes

For participants: Groups refine a 60-second performative prototype of a solution and present to the whole group. Audience gives two specific positive observations and one suggestion.

Facilitator hint: Keep feedback structured and time-limited to maintain momentum.

Rapid Reflection 5 minutes

For participants: Two-word round: "One word to describe risk" and "One word to describe what you learned".

Debriefing

Which constraint produced the most surprising idea?

How did intentional failure help you discover a new direction?

Which group prototype felt most transferable to a real problem?

How will you adapt rapid, playful prototyping to your daily work or study?

INTRODUCTION TO JUGGLING

Time needed: 60 minutes

AIM & OBJECTIVES

Get familiar with juggling technique

Improve hand-eye coordination

Build confidence in their abilities

Learning outcomes for participants

Participants get familiar with the scarves, learn about their usability and how to correctly throw them.

Participants will use the scarves in creative ways.

Participants will get familiar with the basic cascade with three scarves.

1. Get familiar with the scarf (10 min)

Every participant gets a scarf. First, explain why scarves are useful for learning juggling (slow movement, easy to track).

familiarize the participants with the object:

Toss and catch: everyone tries to toss and catch their scarf, first with one hand and then with the other.

Make a rainbow: Throw the scarf with one extended arm over our hand into your other extended arm so the scarf makes a »rainbow« over your head.

Throw the scarf over your head, blow in it and catch it with one hand.

2. Bust a move (10 min)

In a circle, each participant says their name and shows a different, new move with the scarf. The other people repeat after the participant (name and move). Here the participants can be really creative.

3. Pair work (10 min)

In a pair, stand face to face pass the scarf by blowing on it as many times as you can before it falls on the ground.

Pass the scarf with one hand across to your partner. Take turns in catching and throwing with left or right hand.

Pass the scarfs by kicking.

4. Basic Juggling Technique (15 min)

One Scarf: Throw from one hand to the other in an arc

Two Scarves: Throw one, then the other before catching (establishing rhythm)

Three Scarves: Introduce cascade pattern step by step:

Start with two scarves, adding the third when comfortable

Emphasize throwing over catching, maintaining a smooth motion

5. Debriefing (15 min)

How was the session?

What did you feel?

What was hard or easy for you?

Were you surprised by anything?

TEAMWORK WITH JUGGLING BALLS

Time needed: 30 min

AIM & OBJECTIVES

Understand the value of collective effort and mutual support.
Practice sharing responsibilities, negotiating roles, and co-creating outcomes.
Develop trust and cohesion within the group through joint physical and creative tasks.
Experience how collaboration enhances problem-solving and group creativity.

Learning outcomes for participants

Participants will work in a group towards a clear and common goal.
Participants will get familiar with throwing and catching juggling balls in a rhythmic manner.
Participants will get a chance of working on their juggling frustrations.

1. Group juggling (introduction - 5 min)

This is a great introduction to juggling, as well as good teamwork exercise. – the group has a clear goal – juggle 10 (or as many you think they will be able to in the beginning – you can start small and then progress), they need to communicate how to do it, they have to be mindful of each other, not hurry ...

What do you need?

- Around 10 balls depending on the number of participants

First round of group juggling (5 min)

- Arrange participants in a circle, not too close, not too far from each other

- The trainer is included in the circle

- The first participant calls the name of someone and throws a ball to her/him/them.

The next person calls someone else and throws her/him/them the ball and so on.
Everybody gets the ball once and at the end of the circle the ball comes back to the first participant.

Second round of group juggling (5 min)

Try again to do the same circle. Follow the same order as before and keep calling the name of the next person.
Keep going like this but try to do it as quickly as possible.

Third round of group juggling: add more balls (5 min)

Again, let's start in the same order
When the first ball comes to the third participant, add another ball.
If it works, slowly add more balls

The game can finish when a certain number of balls are rotating nicely or you can keep adding more and more balls until the participants can no longer handle it.

The beginning of this exercise is a bit slow and requires quite a bit of concentration from the group but as soon as the energy starts to rise, it is very fun and gives a taste of what it feels to be juggling to the participants.

Debriefing 10 min.

How was the session? What did you feel? What did we need to succeed in this task? What would happen if just one person wasn't focused?

You can focus the debriefing on the teamwork needed to complete this task, the patience, how we reacted when the mistakes happened, what our nervousness levels were, what kind of communication helps with this exercise.

**JUGGLING IN PAIRS AND
BY YOURSELF**

Time needed: 1.5h

AIM & OBJECTIVES

To explore the process of learning juggling as a metaphor for dealing with mistakes, frustration, and resilience.

To create a playful and supportive environment where participants can learn through trial and error.

To strengthen concentration, coordination, and patience while developing a positive attitude toward failure and persistence

Learning outcomes for participants

Participants try the basic juggling exercises with balls.

Participants think about their relationship towards their mistakes and think about their resources that can help them learn new things.

1. Big fish, small fish

Energiser exercise from improv about accepting your mistakes. You split the group in two parts, so you have 2 circles. In a circle, participants pass a fish randomly to other participants – whoever has the fish, looks at the player they want to pass to and: say small fish and show a big distance with their hands spreading apart, or say big fish and show a small distance. The passing of the fish should be quick. Whenever someone makes a mistake, everyone claps and the person who made the mistake goes to the other circle, where they play the same game.

After this exercise, make a quick debriefing.

Today we're going to try different exercises in pairs and by ourselves that can help us learn how to juggle. Juggling can be very fun but to learn it is sometimes frustrating. Many mistakes will happen so we can give ourselves the opportunity in this session and be mindful about our attitude towards our mistakes.

2. Juggling in pairs

Juggling the ball face to face

Each pair gets 3 balls.

The goal is to pass three balls between the 2 participants in a special pattern: One participant will pass his balls in a straight line to the opposite hand of the other participant, and the other participant will pass his balls across to the other.

Here is how to do it:

The participants stand facing each other, one of them has one ball in each hand, the other, only one ball in one of his hand.

They agree which one will pass straight and which one will pass across

The participant that has two balls starts first: He passes the first ball to the other person aiming for the only hand that is empty. The second person does the same and so on.

At first the passes are very slow. Participants should concentrate on throwing the balls at eye level and focus on accuracy rather than speed. Once the participants integrate the movement, they can try to accelerate the rhythm, increasing the distance between them...

The main mistake beginners do during this exercise is that they pass the ball to themselves. They tend to exchange the ball from one of their hands to the other but they must not! They must pass only to the other participant's free hand.

For the younger participants, you can try the same exercise but instead of throwing the ball in the air, you can seat down and roll the balls on the floor.

Passing the balls face to face with one hand

The goal of the second passing exercise is to understand the basic principle of juggling with three balls: there is always one ball in the air while the other two are in the hand of the juggler.

Here is how to do it:

The 2 participants face each other. One has 1 ball in her/his/their dominant hand, the other has 2. They will work only with one hand. They can bring the hand that is not working behind their back to avoid using it. Participant 1 who has two balls in her/his/their start by throwing one ball to participant 2. When it reaches the middle of the trajectory, participant 2 throws his ball and catches the first incoming ball.

The movement continues so that at any given time there is always one ball in the air, one in the hand of participant 1 and the other in the hand of participant 2. The participants should not pass the balls at the same time but rather alternate the throw. It helps to count out loud: 1-2-1-2-1-2...

Passing 5 balls face to face

The pattern of the fourth exercise is the same as exercise 2, passing 3 balls face to face, except that it is twice as fast. The speed of juggling is very close to juggling 3 balls alone.

Here is how to do it:

The position of the participants is the same as exercise 2 but now participant 1 has two balls in the dominant hand and one in the other hand and participant 2 has one ball in each hand. Participants agree which one will pass straight and which one will pass across

The movement starts with the hand that has 2 balls. Just as the previous exercise number 3, Participant 1 who has two balls in her/his/their start by throwing one ball to participant 2. When it reaches the middle of the trajectory, participant 2 throws his ball and catches the first incoming ball and so on.

At first participants will only manage 2 or 3 throw but soon, once they understand the logic and find a common rhythm, they will manage more throws. The accuracy of the throw and the catch is now more important than before but the feeling for the participant when they succeed to keep up the rhythm is very satisfying and motivating.

Passing three balls face to face vertically

The fifth passing exercise in pairs mimics the basic juggling pattern with three balls, the cascade. The objective is to understand the pattern using a partner to slow down the movement.

Here is how to do it:

The participants stand facing each other very close. The helping participant stand on a step or a bench so as to be higher than the other one and the working participant stands on the floor.

This time, the working participant has all three balls: two in the dominant hand and one in the other. The pattern is the same as exercise 2 but this time it is done vertically.

The movement starts from the working participant's hand with 2 balls and the passes are always across.

The working participants throw the first ball vertically and across to the hand of the helping participant who catches it.

The working participants throw the second ball from her/his/their other hand vertically and across to the other hand of the helping participant who also catches it.

The helping participant then lowers the first ball in the free hand that is directly under her/his/theirs.

The participants slowly continue the pattern until they get comfortable and can increase the speed.

The participants then exchange roles.

Solo juggling

This is the ultimate goal of this workshop. At this point, each of the participants gets 3 balls and is going to practice alone.

We start with one ball. At first, we just pass it from one hand to the other making sure it flies to about eye level before it falls back in the hand. It is possible to play a bit and try to pass the ball under the leg or behind the back before catching it. Be creative! You can invent as many throws as you like.

Then each participant gets two balls. Spontaneously the participant will want to throw one ball up and simply pass the other to their free hand.

They should not do that! Both balls have to be thrown up in the air, even if you don't catch them at first. First, throw the first ball, and when it comes to the highest position throw the other. Try this for a while until you get it right.

Only then participants can get their third ball in hand. On one side they have 2, on the other only one. They must start with the hand that has two: first one fly, come to its highest point, then second one fly and so on...

During this exercise you will notice that some participants will get it faster than others.

As they practice individually you will have to pay attention and adapt the pace to each participant. To help participants visualise the pattern, the trainer can mention the square method: tell the participant to imagine a square that is in front of them and get them to throw the balls aiming at the corners of this imaginary square.

Debriefing

How was this exercise for you? What did you notice? How did you feel when making a mistake? Why? Is our relationship to our mistakes the same in real life? Why (not)? Is punishing us for our mistakes helping us or constraining us?

This exercise and the debriefing are meant to help participants deal with the failures when juggling and better their resilience.

After juggling:

How was it? What did you find difficult? What helped you? How did you feel when the balls were falling on the ground?

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