

Training Programme

Exploring the different dimensions and definitions of diversity

Day (2)

9 20 answers

Activity

40 min

Useful for:

Exploring how we categorise and understand ourselves and others. What is useful categorisation? What is a counter-productive categorisation?

Resources needed:

Flip chart sheets (one for every participant), marker pens, post-it stripes in different colours

Room layout:

Participants will work individually with big sheets of flip chart paper. Some will want to work at tables, others to work on the floor. The room should be arranged so that all these options are available. Some participants might also want to leave the main training space to do this, and this should also be an option.

What Happens?

Participants write on the flipchart paper: I am

They then write 20 statements about themselves starting “I am”. The 20 statements, between them, should make up the 20 most important things about them. In explaining the activity to participants, it should be made clear that people will see what they have written, although we do not intend to get everyone to present themselves. It is hoped by this point in the training, trust has

started to be built up between participants and that they will be prepared to be honest and make themselves vulnerable. Participants should spend 20 – 30 minutes completing this part of the activity.

Participants are then asked to divide their statements into four different categories. The categories are:

- Physical traits (blond, tall)
- Social roles (doctor, artist, member of a choir)
- Personal traits (impatient, collaborative)
- Abstract existential statements (nationality, human)

To differentiate the different statements, they should mark each category with a different colour. They can do this by using small pieces of different coloured post-it notes or four different coloured marker pens. The facilitator should put up a sheet indicating what colours should be used for which category, like so:

- Physical traits – Yellow
- Social Roles – Green
- Personal traits – Blue
- Abstract – Red

It is important to ensure that everyone is using the same colour categorisations.

Then working in pairs, they should look at each other's sheets and consider the differences and similarities.

Once they have done this, there should be a whole group reflection. The questions they should consider are:

- What categories predominate in the statements? Why are these most important?
- Having looked at some else's sheet are there changes that you would make?
- Would you have made the same statements 20 – 30 years ago?
- Do you think you will be making the same statements in 20 years' time?
- Did your personal or professional life pre-dominate in your answers, or was it fairly holistic?
- How easy was it to come up with 20 statements?
- Are 20 statements enough to cover the most important aspects of your identity?
- How limiting of your identity is this activity?
- How do you know these statements are true about you?
- Are there important things you deliberately did not put down?
- Are you happy with what you have written?
- Did you use one category of answer more than others?
- Are you surprised to see the category you most used to describe yourself?

Notes for facilitators:

This can be a difficult activity for many participants. They find it very exposing and don't like being made to feel vulnerable in this way. However, it is important to see it from the perspective of children and young people. Most people feel that 20 statements of this kind is a very limiting way of expressing or defining our identity and yet we know far less about the children and young people we work with, and are happy to think we know them based on very little information. We put labels on them quickly, which are limiting. There is also evidence that they grow into those labels and become reduced as a result. The work of Carol Dweck is extremely important here.

Make sure that the sheets with the statements are kept, you will need them for another exercise the next day.

»When I did this exercise for the first time in 2017 it started a process in me. Having to 'map' yourself in 20 statements about yourself seems to be a relatively easy thing to do. But after the first 10, pretty obvious, statements it really forced me to think: what do I want other people to see about me? What will I reveal of the not so nice aspects of being me? How do people interpret this list? What do other people tell me about me that should be on the list? Even after the training I thought about this a lot. In my opinion it takes 'to know yourself' first to be able to 'know the other'. So, this exercise really forced me to think about who I am.«

Ben Hekkema, Mocca Amsterdam, Netherlands

»The exercise seems easy, but it is challenging. Don't be surprised, that after giving seven to nine answers some participants are blocked. It is part of the experience as well! So don't try to help them, just give them some time.«

Piotr Idziak, MIK, Poland





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