

Hearing Unheard Moments...

Creating Common Understandings: *Exploration through Human Sculpture Activity*

This exercise can be adapted to suit the context, the type and size of the group. Everyone can participate in creating sculptures to begin with and/or you can have some individuals create the sculptures while others form the audience.

Step #1: Arrange the group in pairs and give the following instruction: “Tell each other a story when [something relevant to topic or purpose; e.g. when someone is not respected, or when you felt unheard or you saw someone “othered” or stereotyped or a micro-aggression]. Facilitate share back from the pairs and identify themes or trends (e.g. when the pillars were not used, or a specific context enabling microaggressions).

Step #2: Create groups who will create the sculptures. Ideally, these groups can be 4 to 5 individuals. That being said, this exercise has been successful with groups ranging from two to 20 individuals. Allow, 15 minutes for preparation of poses. Each group will be assigned a question, a concept, or scenario that highlight an issue in their community. Possible issues raised in the past: lack of understanding on gender-identity issues in schools, bullying leading to suicide, and exclusion of individuals due to favouritism. Each group then uses the 15 minutes to prepare a series of three “poses” that demonstrate their assignment.

Step #3: Groups meet back and present their three stages of “Human Sculpture.” They can explain the intent of the sculpture after they present. Audiences can guess what the sculptures mean and make suggestions on refinements to improve the communication of the ideas. Care should be taken that the suggestions are verbal only; no one should touch or move the body of another participant.

Step #4: The same groups are then tasked with preparing three new sculpture poses that highlight some changes proposed by the facilitators. For example: 1) changing the lens to issue, 2) adding a positive resolution to the issue 3) adding a negative resolution to the issue presented.

Iterative steps: The activity can be used in iterative steps, that continue to deepen the conversation and the exploration of the topic, as safety and understanding build in the process.



Tips:

Ask those who did not create the sculpture to guess what it is about. Facilitate dialogue about how to clarify. Explore the thoughts and feelings behind each character in the pose (inner monologue) in order to build up a flow of the scenes.

Small groups can build to larger groups in an audience giving suggestions: what if person A does this? It is important that suggestions NOT BE given in the form of physically touching or moving someone.

As groups become more comfortable you can explore more, and more difficult, questions by telling a story in 3 poses that helps explore each question. You can do them in the order that makes sense to you and your group.

Start easy, simple and build to more complex. The purpose is not to “teach” but to facilitate them to share what each of them knows, explore together and deepen each other’s understanding. If something is said that is not accurate or hurtful, do not correct it right away. Ask a question/s instead; ask others what they think, use open, affirming, reflective questions. Do internet searches on several phones and see what different results different people/ages receive. (Example: HUM Seattle search.

The underlying pedagogical structure looks like this and depending on your program time can be inserted into an ongoing program, organizational or school curriculum over months or used as standalone activities in one hour, two hour etc, , or day /s long activities.

1. Sharing stories: you can use existing narratives or support participants to tell their own.
2. Creating three human sculptures from shared stories.
3. Mobilizing the sculptures part 1: involves the group; youth can take turns 'directing' the changes
4. Mobilizing the sculptures part 2: inner monologue invites participants to embody motivations and feelings of figures.
5. Groups, that could be new re-formed groups devising more sophisticated sketches from the basic stories emerging in the first iterations
6. Showing the work and getting feedback, with group revision of the sketches following feedback
7. Practicing group interactions - turning spectators into spect-actors, role playing interventions
8. Creating communication vehicles for sharing their learning continuing the co-creative dialogue process via dramatic pieces, video reels, PSAs etc.



Funded by the
Government
of Canada

Canada