

Innovative Delivery of Debating and «Fair Arguing» Skills  
in Adult Education Settings

# CONTROVERSE

## EXPERIENCE BOX „Fair disputes“

# Tools

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### Project

**CONTROVERSE – Innovative Vermittlung von Kompetenzen zum Debattieren und „fair streiten“ in Settings der Erwachsenenbildung**

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## Preface

This is one of the products of our CONTROVERSE project, conducted from 1.1.2022 - 30.8.2023. The background to this is the following observation: Professionals in adult education, regardless of whether they work in general or vocational further education, increasingly find themselves in situations where polarised positions on political, social or personal events or topics trigger massive disruptions and negatively influence group dynamics to such an extent that a return to the actual learning topic becomes almost impossible. Discussing, debating or arguing in the original sense seems to have become very difficult in this area. From this we conclude that many participants do not have the willingness and competence to enter into an interaction with space for different opinions, perspectives and convictions.

Against this background, we have thought about the preparation of a concept of political basic skills to deal with controversies by practical approaches. With the action patterns of debating and fair disputes, we want to make it possible in adult education practice to gain experience of verbal or non-verbal exchange with opinions and positions other than one's own. We hope that adult education can contribute to a change in the awareness of the participants towards more acceptance of being different, the acceptance and, if necessary, the acceptance of other opinions or even - ideally - to reach a kind of consensus or constructive agreement - as a contribution to a functioning society.

Our conception of political basic skills to deal with controversies through debating and arguing fairly is reflected in products that are written for adult education practitioners. Basically, they are intended to serve for the professionalisation of adult education as a concept of activity-integrated and lifeworld-oriented political basic skills.

### **CONTROVERSE experience box "fair disputes", consisting of a textbook and a toolbox.**

**The textbook** is the conceptual introduction to the idea of CONTROVERSE, which is presented in a well-founded way and made concrete via didactic-methodological considerations. The question of what challenges arise for adult education and what institutional and programmatic support is desirable also plays a role.

**The toolbox** presents 18 didactic-methodical units that are oriented towards the world of life and offer concrete suggestions for implementation. On the one hand, these are tools that take up typically controversial topics (e.g. corona vaccination or life models), and, on the other hand, tools in which educators can find methodological examples of 'real' (conflict) situations that (frequently) occur in everyday education (e.g. brainstorming of arguments or paradoxical intervention).

### **CONTROVERSE Showcases "fair disputes", consisting of illustrated case studies from practice.**

In three countries (Germany, Austria, Norway), examples of methodical work from educational work have been created on the basis of pilots of the experience box, which provide insights into real implementations in the form of images, film and sound. Through their media presentation, the showcases aim to illustrate the handling of controversies by vivid examples and invite people to adapt them.

We would be pleased if the results of our project could help you deal with controversies in your everyday adult education and give you ideas on how to develop a culture of conflict that allows controversy to be understood as dialogue.

The CONTROVERSE project steering group

Rosemarie Klein, Helmut Kronika, Gerhard Reutter, Peri-Ilka Tinçmann

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## Introduction

### Statements of the CONTROVERSE project partnership

"Dealing with controversies means dealing with positions of others in an unprejudiced way."

"Fair dispute is possible when you are not focused on being right."

"Debating is a good way of creating understanding and solution on a factual level."



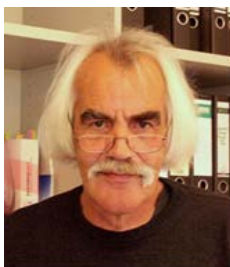
"Different opinions are normal and enriching in our life together.

"With a good culture of debate, the exchange of opinions is fair and objective.  
- and the participants remain in dialogue.

"Dealing with controversies means being aware of one's own opinion and confronting the opinion of the opponent on a factual level."

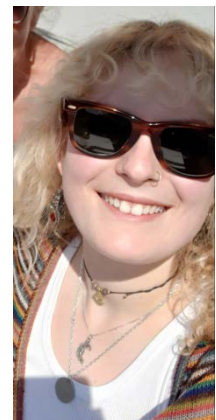
" Fair dispute works when, for example, "rules of the game" are used to control a discussion",

"Debating is a good way to broaden your horizons by active listening."



„Dealing with controversies means to also deal with people whose ideas and opinions seem absurd to us."

"Fair dispute requires the willingness to question one's own positions."



"Debating is difficult when the participants have very different ideas about the rules of the game of debate."

## „Fair disputes“ as part of a lifeworld-oriented basic political education - Practical experiences

Trainers in adult education today experience time and again that there are massive disturbances in their group or individual settings which are triggered by contentious topics and the positions taken on political, social or personal events. These disruptions have such a negative impact on the learning climate in general and the group dynamics that a simple return to the actual learning topic or a fruitful togetherness is not possible.

An erosion of the culture of debate is a topic in the media throughout the Western hemisphere and is further fuelled by the so-called social media. These contribute significantly to the fact that camp thinking and the inability to engage in dialogue prevail in many areas, which leads to the fact that only positions that confirm and reinforce one's own are taken note of (cf. textbook).

We can observe several levels of the decline of a culture of debating or arguing: in politics itself, in society through the increasing polarisation on topics such as migration, religious beliefs and conspiracy theories. Young people in particular often seem "speechless" and have no or insufficient resources for dealing with controversial opinions or resolving conflicts.

The competence and disposition to enter into an interaction in which different opinions, perspectives and convictions have a space and are articulated verbally does not seem to be sufficiently given by many participants in the courses and measures. In an increasingly complex world, it is a key democratic competence to consciously deal with other opinions and perspectives and to accept diversity instead of reacting to an unpleasant situation with resignation or aggression.

With this publication, our Controverse experience box "fair disputes" offers practice-tested tools for adult educators as a methodological resource. The tools are based on experiences and authentic situations and cases of participants in which debating would be pertinent for comprehension. The tools can be related to group settings (for trainers, teachers e.g.) or to individual settings (in counselling situations).

We have developed the experiential tools for proactive and situational use; in practice, these two areas overlap on a case-by-case basis, for example when an exercise is carried out spontaneously due to a current situation.

## 1. Life-world oriented tools from adult education - proactive tools

## American Debate: To convince through controversial argumentation

Discussion not only promotes a critical and multi-perspective view of contents and issues, but also active listening, considering and arguing - in other words, interacting. The "Advocatus Diaboli" method stimulates argumentation and helps to look at ideas in a controversial way; the perspective of a topic is to be broadened by deliberately voicing counter-arguments.

### **Experiences**

Trainer at BEST

As a trainer, I am repeatedly confronted with the issue that participants in the target group of "disadvantaged young adults" are "speechless" in controversial topics or "lack the words" to represent their own opinions objectively in a discussion. The reason for this is that they have not learned to do so or that it is not common in their social environment and could possibly be interpreted as weakness. In addition, this target group often has the feeling that they "don't have anything to say anyway". The following activity has been very successful in heterogeneous groups, as it gives the participants the experience of arguing and dealing with counter-arguments on a factual level.

### **Didactics**

- Question positions that have not yet been discussed
- Critically examine and review content-related positions
- Motivating participants to engage with a topic
- Getting into the mindset of a topic

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

With this method, one's own position becomes more sharply defined with regard to possible counter-arguments. For this purpose, the learners are asked to consciously change their own position. Thus, positions that have not yet been discussed are to be elaborated, and substantive positions are to be critically examined and reviewed. The aim of this method is also to motivate the learners to deal with a topic in depth.

### **Implementation**

From a selection of current controversial topics such as Covid-19 measures, climate protection, values, political positions, one is chosen either by the trainer or by voting in the group. At least two people are nominated to lead an exchange in question and answer, thesis and counter thesis, in which one person takes on the role of the "Advocatus Diaboli" and contradicts another position, thereby taking a stand for the critical side.

Before the debate, the representatives of the controversial positions prepare for about 10 minutes by collecting counter-arguments; they can research on the internet, write down or reflect on their thoughts and ideas about their role.



In the debate, the participants try to convince the other participants of a position by means of argumentation and counter-argumentation. In this way, topics can be discussed intensively and controversially. Often, taking a position makes it easier to express ideas that one would not dare to express oneself.

After the debate, the group discusses which arguments were convincing and which were not.

#### ***Tips for implementation***

Number of participants: 5 to 15

Duration: approx. 30 Min,

Facility: depending on the number of participants

Equipment/materials: possibly PC/laptop with internet access, worksheets for preparation

The roles of the debaters should be clearly distinguishable as "performed "

#### ***Video «Advocatus Diaboli»***



#### ***What needs to be considered with this method?***

It is recommended to do this activity with groups that already know each other.

#### ***Sources:***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFYdxNg60EA>

<https://erwachsenenbildung.at/aktuell/nachrichten/7242-advocatus-diaboli-durch-kontroverse-argumentation-ueberzeugen.php>

## Fish Bowl / Aquarium

A debate or discussion is not only about the content, but also about the way it is conducted. An appropriate debate culture gives space for arguments, ideas, facts and perspectives that have been developed as well as for personal opinions on a topic. This includes active listening, letting others finish, using understandable and appropriate language, and respecting the other participants and their opinions. The "Fish Bowl/Aquarium" method helps participants to reflect on and, if necessary, improve their debate culture.

### **Erfahrungen**

Trainer at BEST:

This method develops the communication skills needed for a fair debate in a diverse group. The setting allows for immediate feedback and suggestions for improvement and is also a good exercise for the observers; if they are assigned certain aspects to observe, this also raises their awareness of non-verbal communication (e.g. posture, gestures, facial expressions, micro facial expressions, voice pitch...). Thus, this activity can serve as a "training of appropriate discussion behaviour" for all participants. The facilitators also have the opportunity to try out "elementary forms of discussion facilitation". The observers also have the opportunity to get to know and evaluate discussion strategies (fairness, credibility, persuasiveness). The method is usually very well accepted, as all group members are involved and current topics relevant to the participants are discussed.

### **Didactics**

- Debating a topic, problem, etc. with as much commitment as possible for a certain period of time.
- Develop communication and observation skills

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

With this method, the debate culture is practised and improved. The participants learn to discuss with each other and to respect the basic rules of communication such as active listening, letting people finish, opinions, and have the opportunity to reflect on their way of discussing through the feedback of the observers.

### **Implementation**

In the American debate ("fishbowl method"), a group of about five to eight participants discusses the topic for about 15 to 20 minutes on behalf of a whole group (e.g. 15 to 20 participants). The small group forms a small circle of chairs (inner circle), the others place themselves on the outside (outer circle). The method is called "fishbowl" because the discussants are observed comparable to fish in an aquarium. The most important rule is that people are only allowed to speak within the discussion group! A participant can also take on the role of moderator. The questions for the discussion should be open so that they can lead in different directions. It can also

be targeted at expressions of opinion (e.g.: What do you think about... according to the latest media reports?), which allow for the inclusion of what has been worked out. It is also helpful if the observers assume their roles under the following aspects: Do the speakers look at the interlocutors? Do they speak intelligibly? Do they let others finish? Do they respond to the arguments of the others? Do they stay on topic? Do they respect other opinions?

### **Reflection**

The moderators, as uninvolved third parties, briefly summarise the results. The outer circle observes the discussants and gives them feedback on facts, arguments, opinions and discussion behaviour at the end of the discussion.

### **Variation:**

A variation of this method is to leave a chair free in the inner circle. The empty seat can be taken by someone from the observer group to ask questions or contribute his/her opinion to the discussion. The rule that one chair must always remain free means that one participant must always leave the discussion when an observer joins the group.

### ***Tips for implementation***

Number of participants: 15 bis 20

Duration: 15 to 20 Min,

Facility: depending on the number of participants, sufficient chairs.

The participants should discuss a topic, problem, etc. for a certain period of time with as much commitment as possible and thus contribute their own (prior) knowledge or opinion and justify it objectively.

The choice of topics can either be made through brainstorming at the beginning of the exercise, or the trainers can specify them, e.g. current topics that concern the participants.

### ***More infos on the Fish Bowl method***



### ***What needs to be considered with this method?***

The moderators ensure that the engaged discussion remains structured if different sub-topics are pursued in parallel during the discussion, if the participants stray from the topic or if the observers become involved in the discussion. For the feedback round, it is advisable to repeat or explain the feedback rules at the beginning of the exercise to ensure that the feedback remains objective and constructive and is not answered with explanations or justifications.

**Sources:**

[https://media.wifi.at/presentationen/LENA\\_Trainerunterlagen/Serie1B/7618\\_Aquarium.html](https://media.wifi.at/presentationen/LENA_Trainerunterlagen/Serie1B/7618_Aquarium.html)

<https://www.projektmagazin.de/methoden/fishbowl-diskussion-innenkreis-aussenkreis>

<https://www.teacheconomy.de/unterrichtsmaterial/methoden/#alphabet=alphabet-group-F&accordion=method-6>

## Conflict as an opportunity - dealing with gender role stereotypes

Conflicts are unavoidable, they are part of our daily (working) life, inhibit work motivation, productivity, continuity of daily goal- and task-related actions and are energy thieves. Very few people have learned to resolve them in a socially acceptable way. Facing differences of opinion means meeting other people with their values, expectations, interests and wishes, taking them seriously and working out solutions together. When we make a mistake, it shows us our opportunities for growth.

### **Experiences**

Trainer at BEST:

Today we know that in communication the "sender" of a message speaks with four tongues and the "receiver" of the message hears with four ears ("The four sides of a message", Friedemann Schulz von Thun communication model). This means that in addition to the purely factual information, three other aspects of a message are sent by the sender and three others are received by the recipient. It is comprehensible that considerable misunderstandings and even initial conflicts can arise at this point.

### **Didactics**

- Recognising role stereotypes and conflicts at an early stage and counteract them
- Raising awareness of one's own share and behaviour with one's own guideline
- Developing situation-appropriate solution strategies

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

The aim of this activity is to role-play the factual and emotional level of messages, the "four-sided model", and to give learners the opportunity to recognise their own behaviour and patterns as well as their effects and to develop other strategies in communication.

### **Implementation**

Gender stereotypes are portrayed in a role play: The woman sits at the steering wheel, the man as passenger says to her: " Hey, there's a green light ahead" and she replies stropky: "Are you driving or am I driving?".

The example is acted out by the participants (two people sitting next to each other as in a car). Afterwards, the possibilities of the communication model are discussed according to the 4-Ears-Model (Friedemann Schulz von Thun). It makes a difference whether one is part of the conflict oneself or also has to "mediate" as a conflict partner.

How strong are these emotions and how much of a burden are they? Strong negative emotions hinder the constructive resolution of a conflict!

It is also important to address one's own feelings. As Schulz von Thun's 4-sided model shows, the conflict partner does not automatically know how the other person thinks and feels, and speaking openly can lead to a surprising resolution of misunderstandings.

By formulating I-messages, a conversation at eye level is made possible ("I am angry", "That really annoyed me").

***Tips for implementation***

Number of participants: min. 12 participants

Duration: approx. 60 min.

Facility: depending on the number of participants, room with 3-4 tables with 3-4 chairs each.

Equipment/material: Nothing special



With the right approach, new opportunities can emerge. © DDRockstar - Fotolia.com

***What needs to be considered with this method?***

All information required for the sample is compiled. Often, possible solutions or compromises are already identified when the facts are compiled. Goals and wishes regarding the solution are formulated and arguments are considered. A common thread is to be created for the discussion.

***Sources:***

<https://www.handwerk.com/konflikte-als-chance-begreifen>

## Circle of Opinion

Influence by the media, social media and the private environment is an important issue in the opinion formation of young adults. Many are not aware that they adopt and reproduce preconceived opinions without having questioned them. With this background, controversial opinions are difficult to discuss objectively, leading to hardened positions and the tendency to perceive one's own opinion as right and all others as wrong, bad. Dealing with the origins of one's own opinion, its relevance and different, opposing opinions is an important step towards fair argumentation, as this is the only way to achieve objective argumentation instead of tunnel thinking when expressing one's own opinion.

### **Experiences**

Trainer at BEST:

In my trainings with heterogeneous groups of young adults, I repeatedly experience that participants neither question nor objectively justify their own opinions and points of view. As one participant once expressed his opinion about migrants: "They are taking away our jobs". Asked for examples and arguments, the answer was: "I don't know any personally, but that's certainly true, my uncle said so". Against this background, this exercise is a good first step to make the participants aware of where they get their information and opinions from and whether they have really dealt with them and know factual arguments for them.

This method can also be used to make preconceived opinions, prejudices and stereotypes visible.

### **Didactics**

- Recognising one's own political positions and placing them in context
- Addressing influences and being influenced
- Motivation to deal objectively with the topic of politics

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

This method helps participants to recognise which influences are effective in shaping their opinions and whether they view them critically. The aim is to recognise different sources of information and opinion-forming processes and to be encouraged to "think outside the box". It is also very suitable for countering spontaneously arising differences of opinion.

### **Implementation:**

Participants draw a circle on a flipchart or a piece of paper to represent their political opinion. Then they reflect on what influences their political opinion (e.g. internet posts, newspaper articles, TV reports, private environment, peer group...).

Depending on what they see as a major influence on their opinion, they draw areas in their circle. Finally, the circle of opinion should be filled by certain media or persons who occupy different sized fields within the circle.

### Reflection

The sheets are attached to a flipchart and discussed in plenary. The trainers ask the participants why they think certain media or persons have a particularly strong or weak influence on them. Together, the different circles of opinion should be compared and discussed.

### Tips for implementation

Number of participants: 2 to 12

Duration: approx. 60 Min,

Facility: depending on the number of participants

Equipment/materials: flipchart, flipchart sheets, pence



<https://www.demokratiezentrum.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Meinungskreis-480x477.jpg>

### What needs to be considered with this method?

In very heterogeneous groups, the trainer should take on a facilitation role to ensure that other opinions are respected and discussed objectively, since personal beliefs, values and often individual perceptions are at stake.

The choice of topics should rather not include hot topics of the day, since it involves the analysis of opinion-forming factors from different sources.

### Sources:

<https://www.demokratiezentrum.org/bildung/methodisch-didaktisch/moeglichkeiten-der-vermittlung/methoden-in-der-politischen-bildung/meinungskreis/>



## Psychodrama and sociodrama

Special role-play methods for political adult education help to understand social processes and make abstract topics tangible. Jakob Moreno's psychodrama enables learners to reflect on social processes and access abstract issues through spontaneous role-play. This can have a positive influence on their ability to argue fairly, as they put themselves in other roles and thus develop a better understanding of points of view and attitudes that differ from their own.

### **Experiences**

Trainer at BEST:

In role play, the interaction of the group members is stimulated when it comes to making different points of view of social conflicts and dynamics visible and thus being able to better judge one's own. With the method of psycho or socio-drama, the participants are directly confronted with the different ideas and can thus experience in a realistic way that their own opinions do not have to be the only valid ones. From my experience, the participants usually succeed in becoming active in their roles, making decisions, etc. They receive new impulses through play. In a playful way, they get new impulses for dealing with abstract topics and a broader view of social needs.

### **Didactics**

- Abstract topics are made tangible and linked to one's own experiences.
- Cognitive and emotional, conscious and unconscious, verbal and non-verbal, physical, psychological and social dimensions of the theme are incorporated

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

This method is aimed at supporting learners to deal with abstract topics through their own experience. In role play, they can also take the exact opposite position to the usual thinking and experience how it feels.

In a group setting, this method is very suitable for a change of perspective and for promoting dialogue on controversial topics.

### **Implementation**

For a given topic, different roles are assigned that are relevant to the topic (e.g. for the topic of repealing all Corona measures, health minister/virologist/corona denier/vaccination opponent/reporter/concerned person). Part of the course room is set up as a stage, clearly separated from an audience area. Some voluntary participants choose one of the prepared roles. The trainer helps them to put themselves in the role as well as possible using interview techniques. The rest of the group acts as observers.

The actors spontaneously play improvised scenes on the topic in their roles. In the role, they can also take an exact opposite position to their usual thinking. The different roles interact with each other and enter into a discussion on the given topic.

### Reflection

This is followed by role feedback: the experiences of all players and observers are first compiled. This is followed by the process of "sharing" - the participants are asked to look for connections between what they experienced in the role play and the reality they experienced outside the game.

In the next step, the "thematic evaluation", these connections are discussed, exchanged and debated. Concrete questions can now be worked on in small groups.

### Tips for implementation

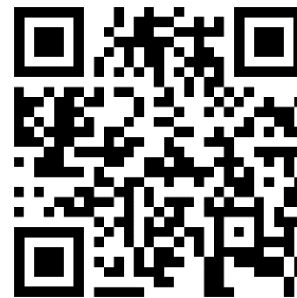
Number of participants: 10 to 20

Duration: approx. 120 min,

Facility: depending on the number of participants, with enough space for a separated area of the stage

Equipment/materials: No special requirement

### Video «Example of a psychodrama»



<https://youtu.be/zvgnOVfLn4k>

### What needs to be considered with this method?

The trainer can guide the exercise by asking questions or setting limits.

After the exercise, make sure that the roles can be completely taken off again, for example through rituals of "unrolling", e.g. by stripping off the role symbolically on one's own body and naming the true name; this is to prevent "sticking to the role". This is especially important with stressed roles.

A warm-up is recommended before the actual role play.

**Sources:** <https://erwachsenenbildung.at/aktuell/nachrichten/9956-psychodrama-und-soziodrama.php>

## What are Human Rights?

A basic competence in civic education is the knowledge and recognition of human rights and the awareness that discrimination of any kind is a violation of human rights. People are excluded on the basis of individual or group characteristics, which also includes controversial viewpoints. Dealing with the topic of human rights contributes to questioning and re-evaluating one's own viewpoints, which, especially in heterogeneous groups, leads to an improvement in dialogue and mutual understanding (or at least mutual acceptance) and the willingness to give space to different opinions, perspectives, convictions.

### **Experiences**

Trainerin at BEST:

Especially in heterogeneous groups, we often notice that there is a "tunnel vision" when it comes to different views and points of view and that there is no willingness to deal with other points of view and ways of life. The study of human rights is a very good exercise to broaden this narrow horizon, because I notice again and again that young people lack political education and do not think about whether and what other points of view there are on topics such as migration or sexual orientation and how entrenched opinions encourage discrimination and prejudice..

### **Didactics**

- Joint exploration of a topic
- Questioning one's own positions
- Motivating participants to engage with a topic

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

The method "What are Human Rights" aims to raise the participants' awareness of the issues of discrimination, prejudice and exclusion. For this purpose, the learners are asked to deal with the topic of human rights and to critically question their own approach to the topic. The aim of this method is also to initiate a group discussion and to reach a common result on a question in heterogeneous groups.

### **Implementation**

1. Group work: The group is asked to think together and spontaneously about what they think "universal human rights" are:

The group is asked to think together and spontaneously about what they think "universal human rights" are. "What do you think are among the basic rights of every human being on earth, child or adult, rich or poor, dark-skinned or light-skinned?" This brainstorming is taken down on a flipchart.

2. Brief knowledge input by the trainers: "What - When - Why - Who?"

3. Comparison of individual results on the flipchart with the Basic Charter of Human Rights. Distribution the "Basic Charter of Human Rights" as it can be found, for example, at [www.youthforhumanrights.org](http://www.youthforhumanrights.org) in a simple format.

4. Group discussion:

- Have the most essential rights been considered by the group?
- Which important fundamental rights have not been considered? - Why?
- Did the participants know that they have all these rights that were talked about? Which ones were unknown?
- Does an important right not appear in the Charter?
- Do you experience violations of these human rights, personally, in your environment?
- What can be done against human rights violations

#### ***Tips for implementation***

Number of participants: 5 to 15

Duration: approx. 60 min

Facility: depending on the number of participants

Equipment/materials: possibly PC/Laptop with internet access, flipchart, pens

***Video «[https://www.jugend-fuer-menschenrechte.de/de/getvideo2/yhri\\_psa1?quality=std](https://www.jugend-fuer-menschenrechte.de/de/getvideo2/yhri_psa1?quality=std)»***



#### ***What needs to be considered with this method?***

It is recommended to do this activity with groups that already know each other and to stimulate a discussion at the end that allows for a transfer into the participants' everyday life.

#### ***Sources:***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nFYdxNg60EA>

## Card puzzle: An activity that promotes mutual understanding

Anyone who wants to communicate successfully needs not only to send messages, but also to be able to receive them. But that only works if you listen attentively. Concentrate and listen carefully to what the other person has to say - even if it is sometimes difficult.

### **Experiences**

Trainer at BEST:

Communication is absolutely essential. Whether professionally or privately, life runs more smoothly when we communicate well with each other. But communication is a problem for many people. Even leaders sometimes struggle to make themselves understood. In fact, the better we think we communicate, the worse it often is. George Bernard Shaw was right when he said, "The greatest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."

Poor communication has real consequences. It can be as harmless as missing a movie with a friend or more serious, such as missing a deadline at work. There are negative consequences when we don't know all the necessary facts or express or consider them appropriately.

### **Didactics**

Empathy helps to see things from a different perspective

- Strengthening communicative competence
- Making contact with others
- Turning towards each other when speaking and listening
- Understand, develop and apply rules of conversation
- Reasonably agree or disagree with opinions
- Conduct conversations increasingly independently

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

The activity promotes negotiation skills and empathy - THE key skills for effective communication. Empathy helps us to see things from a different perspective and make our communication more effective. Not everyone communicates the same way, so it is important to understand the communication style of others and adapt if necessary.

### **Implementation**

In this activity, the participants are divided into groups of 3 or 4 people in at least 3 teams. Each team is given an envelope with shuffled, cut cards with different terms/statements on them. For a set time, the teams have the opportunity to swap and trade among themselves to complete their cards. The team with the most completed cards wins. After the activity, the strategies used by the teams are

discussed and analysed using the following questions:

- Which negotiation strategies worked?
- Which did not?
- What could we have done better?
- What other skills, such as active listening or empathy, could have been better used?

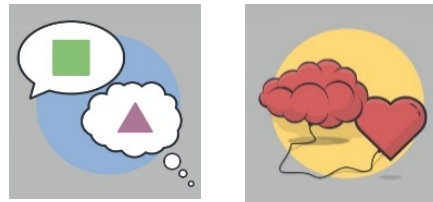
### **Tips for implementation**

Number of participants: min. 12

Duration: approx. 60 min.

Facility: depending on the number of participants, room with 3-4 tables each with 3-4 chairs

Equipment/material: Cards cut into pieces (e.g. moderation cards) on which different terms/statements have been written.



<https://d2vrvpw63099lz.cloudfront.net/kommunikation-spiele/hirn-und-herz.png>

<https://d2vrvpw63099lz.cloudfront.net/kommunikation-spiele/sprechblasen.png>

### **What needs to be considered with this method?**

With very heterogeneous groups, the competitive character of the exercise should not be in the foreground, but rather the shared experience and teamwork; in this way, a strong sense of competition between members can be avoided. With such groups, it is also advisable to put together teams that are as balanced as possible (e.g. gender, origin).

### **Sources:**

<https://www.userlike.com/de/blog/kommunikation-spiele>

## Who shares my opinion?

A prerequisite for a fair culture of debate is, among other things, a basic political education that is close to the life-world, which, as a component of "empowerment" in adult education, takes into account questions of politics and political participation and enables the participants to feel that they are active members of civil society through basic political education and to improve their view of opinion-forming and having a say even in controversial topics. The activity "Who is of my opinion" is suitable as an introduction to the topic, in that the participants deal with their own life worlds as well as the formation and differentiation of opinions.

### **Experiences**

Trainer at BEST:

The target group of young disadvantaged adults very often lacks access to basic political education. Activities such as "Who agrees with me", which deal with argumentation, opinion formation and also implementation, are helpful in introducing the topic of political education; it is important to introduce the young learners slowly and help them to establish a connection to their individual situation. In addition, this activity provides space for group encounters and exchange of opinions, which improves rhetorical skills.

### **Didactics**

- Rhetoric, argumentation, group behaviour
- Opinion forming

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

The aim of this activity is to introduce young adults to the topic of civic education, to encourage them to form, articulate and subsequently translate their opinions into action, and to be able to differentiate political attitudes.

### **Implementation**

A political keyword is written on the flipchart ("unconditional basic income", "compulsory vaccination", "climate change",...). The participants go around the room and briefly exchange their opinions with the others. All those who think similarly come together in groups. Soon, "cliques" emerge that represent one opinion. Participants who do not have a preconceived opinion on a topic move between the groups and finally stay with a clique with whose opinion they can most readily identify.

The participants of each "clique" write a slogan on a banner with which they position themselves in the room. The slogan should be short and concise and reflect the opinion of the group. (e.g. unconditional basic income - personal realisation).

### Reflection

The different slogans are finally discussed in plenary, with the trainers asking moderation questions:  
Did you find it easy to express your opinion?

- Did you find your "clique" immediately or did you have to search first?
- What convinced them, were they opinions or people they represented?
- Do you completely agree with your "clique" or would you rather stand alone?
- Do you understand all the slogans? What would you counter?

### Tips for implementation

Number of participants: 4 to 10

Duration: in 3 subsequent training sessions, each approx. 60 min.

Facility: depending on the number of participants, with enough space to walk around

Equipment/materials: Large sheets of paper, markers.

It is advisable to choose keywords that are familiar to the participants.



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### What needs to be considered with this method?

If there has already been tension within a group over a controversial topic, the choice of topics should be made taking into account the group's behaviour.

The separation of the activity allows for a deepening of the tasks of opinion formation, argumentation and development of slogans.

### Sources:

<https://erwachsenenbildung.at/basisbildung-pdfs/in-bewegung-handbuch-politische-bildung.pdf>



## Deliver a Speech

In order to be able to represent our own values and opinions objectively, we need to be aware of them in order to be able to present them. This exercise is designed to make each participant aware of his/her own values. What is most important to you? What issues would you focus on if you knew your words would get a lot of attention?

### **Experiences**

Trainer at LoPe:

As a counsellor for migrants and people with a minority background, I often find that my course participants have a lot on their minds but do not dare to express their opinions freely. This is partly because they lack the language skills and partly because they are afraid of being discriminated against for their opinions. Often their issues are also emotionally based. With the following exercise, the participants can become aware of their opinions and learn to present them in a factual and well-founded way.

### **Didactics**

- Reflecting on one's own values
- Speaking "in public" / giving a speech
- Giving constructive feedback

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

People like to think that if they were in a position of power or had great influence, they would stand up for others and fight injustice. This task is an opportunity to find out what really occupies one's heart and consciousness

### **Implementation**

Imagine you are famous and you have to give an important speech on TV. Everyone who lives in your country will listen to what you have to say. You can speak for 3 minutes. What will you focus on? (3 minutes to convince)

Participants should be completely open, saying as little as possible about why they have been given the task. If they end up talking about taxes or vegan lunches in canteens, that's perfectly fine. There is nothing right or wrong.

Preparations:

To add some realism to the exercise situation and to change the typical classroom style, it can help to set up a lectern. 1) The trainer explains the task. 2) Learners prepare their presentation (30-45 minutes). 3) Internet research can be used to find rhetorical stylistic devices, e.g.: how do I give a speech (see Mediabox). 4) Learners give their speeches in front of the rest of the group. Thank them for their courage and contribution and give positive feedback. Ask the other learners to give feedback as well, from which the presenters can derive tips and hints for possible improvement.

***Tips for implementation***

Number of participants: 8 to 20

Duration: approx. 1-2 hours

Facility: training room, outdoor, seated circle

Equipment/materials: PC/laptop with internet access, Worksheets for preparation (to shorten the internet research, the trainer can present the national laws already printed out)

***Media***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ActKR5cHx1g>

<https://www.starting-up.de/praxis/soft-skills/8-tipps-fuer-die-perfekte-rede.html>

***What needs to be considered with this method?***

For some, speaking in front of a group of people is very scary. It is important to emphasise that giving a speech in front of the rest of the group is completely voluntary. Alternatively, the trainer or one of the other participants can read out the speech. Experience shows that when one or two of the group give a speech, it inspires more people to find the courage to read out loud.

As an alternative to researching rhetorical stylistic devices on the internet, the trainer can also give tips at the beginning of the activity (e.g. visualised as a checklist) on what the participants need to pay attention to in order to give a good/authentic speech.

***Source:***

LoPe

## 2. Life-world oriented tools from adult education - situational tools

## Perpetrator-victim-witness - making discrimination tangible

To discriminate stands for "to separate", "to make distinctions", "to exclude". Those who discriminate feel strong - strong enough to degrade others. They are not strong enough to tolerate otherness, a difference from what they are used to and from their own experience. They thus miss the chance to find what connects them and focus exclusively on what they believe separates them from others. In order to dissolve this perception, it is necessary to sensitise, inform and put oneself in the shoes of others involved.

### **Experiences**

Trainer at BEST:

In our work with young adults from very different cultures and social backgrounds, we are constantly confronted with different types of discrimination, which can also lead to conflicts. With this activity, which in most cases is seen very positively by the participants, the sensitivity and understanding for other life worlds can be increased by looking at discrimination events from different sides and the participants dealing with how it feels to be in the respective roles.

### **Didactics**

- Reflexion über eigene Erfahrungen mit Vorurteilen und Diskriminierung
- Empathie entwickeln- sich in andere hineinversetzen können

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

Eigene Erfahrungen zum Thema von verschiedenen Seiten beleuchten, Verständnis für schwierige Situationen entwickeln, Lösungsmöglichkeiten erarbeiten.

### **Implementation**

Alle Teilnehmer\*innen erhalten ein Arbeitsblatt, auf dem sich 3 gleich große Felder befinden. Wichtig: darüber informieren, dass das Blatt bei ihnen bleibt und niemand es kontrollieren, anschauen oder bewerten wird. In den Feldern stehen die Arbeitsanleitungen:

- Describe with keywords a situation in which you yourself have been a victim of prejudice or discrimination.
- Describe with keywords a situation in which you encountered someone with prejudice or discriminated against.
- Describe in keywords a situation in which you witnessed prejudice or discrimination and what you did or did not do about it.

Afterwards, the participants should discuss in groups of 3 or 4 what they wrote in each of the 3 fields (approx. 20 min.), how they felt in the respective situation and what it would have taken to avoid such a situation/reaction. It is important that personal experiences are taken seriously and that respectful

listening is made possible. The point is that the emotions (anger, helplessness, being at the mercy of others, etc.) are given a place.

In a further step, the results of the small group work are presented and discussed in plenary, with a focus on empathising with others.

#### ***Tips for implementation***

Number of participants: 5 to 15

Duration: in 3 subsequent training sessions, 1.5 - 2.5 hours depending on the size of the group.

Facility: training room

Equipment/materials: Worksheets, pens, flipchart/white board



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#### ***What needs to be considered with this method?***

Some participants may already have had stressful discriminatory experiences that cannot be resolved within the framework of this activity. Therefore, in the final phase, it is particularly helpful to give them options on how they can work on these experiences and possibly resolve them. Participation is voluntary; if a group member decides not to participate, he or she can take an observer position.

#### ***Sources:***

BEST, <https://www.zara.or.at/de>

## Communicating through body language

In order to be able to represent individual values and opinions objectively, we need to be aware of them in order to be able to present them. This exercise is designed to make each participant aware of his/her own values. What is most important to you? What issues would you focus on if you knew your words would get a lot of attention?

### **Experiences**

Trainer at BEST:

With heterogeneous groups, there are often language problems in the training that lead to a certain impatience or even subliminal aggression that adversely affects the group dynamics. I use this exercise to make it clear that learning a foreign language or being able to express oneself in it can be a major obstacle to communicating with the other group members in such a way that what is said is understood.

### **Didactics**

- Experiencing non-verbal communication
- Using body language purposefully
- Highlighting the difference between verbal and non-verbal messages
- Observation and reflection of own non-verbal communication

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

Diese Übung hilft den Teilnehm\*innen, Körpersprache zu entschlüsseln bzw. sich der Bedeutung bewusst zu werden – WAS gesagt wird ist eine Sache, WIE es gesagt wird eine ganz andere.

### **Implementation**

A moderation card is prepared for each participant, on which a feeling is written: Angry, in love, ashamed, scared, friendly, indifferent, nervous, impatient, surprised, excited, happy, disappointed, sad, disgusted and afraid....

The participants each draw a card in turn and pantomime the feeling on it.

The others act as observers and write down the feeling they have recognised from their facial expressions and gestures (it is also possible to write down two terms for a recognised feeling). This is followed by an evaluation in the plenary.

***Tips for implementation***

Number of participants: 5 to 15

Facility: training room

Equipment/materials: Moderation cards,  
paper and pens for taking notes

Duration: approx. 1 hour

**Video «Body language against  
misunderstandings»**



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JzWNigpq-WM>

***What needs to be considered with this method?***

In intercultural communication there are also culturally determined differences in body language, even if the basic emotions are expressed in the same way everywhere. This exercise is very suitable for putting the unifying aspects of this topic before the dividing aspects (basic emotions are recognised despite different socialisation).

***Source:***

BEST

## «We speak foreign" - Intercultural exchange and foreign language

Language problems are often the reason for not communicating, because one's own thoughts cannot be put into words or expressed in an understandable way. Understanding and being aware of how this affects discussions is an important prerequisite for a fair culture of debate, in which people with a different mother tongue are also given the chance to contribute their thoughts on a topic.

### **Experiences**

Trainer at BEST:

With heterogeneous groups, there are often language problems in the training that lead to a certain impatience or even subliminal aggression that adversely affects the group dynamics. I use this exercise to make it clear that learning a foreign language or being able to express oneself in it can be a major obstacle to communicating with the other group members in such a way that what is said is understood.

### **Didactics**

- Intercultural exchange
- Developing sensitivity to issues of intercultural communication and multilingual situations.
- Dealing with problems and frustrations related to communication difficulties.

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

This activity is designed to help participants develop sensitivity to issues of intercultural communication and multilingual situations. It is particularly suitable for groups with different migrant backgrounds.

### **Implementation**

1. Divide the participants into groups of three and ask them to work in separate areas of the room and not to mix with other groups.
2. Explain that each group will create their own language.
3. Ask each group to create four words in an imaginary language, which should include a greeting, a noun, a verb and an adjective.
4. The members of each group should practise their new language until they are all familiar with the four words they have made up.
5. the three groups line up in three parallel rows. Form new groups with the first person in each row, the second and third, etc. Ask one person to be the trainer and blindfold the other two people in the new groups. Instruct the members of each new group to take turns teaching the others in their new language, without using words in German or other languages that the participants normally speak. normally spoken by the participants. They are not even allowed to say "yes" or "no"!
6. Swap places so that each member of the new groups has a chance to become a trainer. Give each trainer five minutes.
7. Have the groups do the exercise again, this time without blindfolds. 8. Ask the participants to put



their blindfolds back on and then find the other people in their original group by calling out the first word in their language (the greeting).

9. Finish the exercise and ask the participants to come back to the plenary to discuss and share their feelings as teachers and as students. Were they frustrated by their inability to communicate the language to others? - What happened in the first round when they were blindfolded? What teaching tools were used? Did the voices get louder? Was there repetition? Did this help or hinder the teaching process? - Compare the second round with the first. Was it easier? What teaching aids were used? - Draw comparisons with reality. To what extent is the game realistic? In what way is it not realistic? What parallels do blindfolds have to real learning situations?

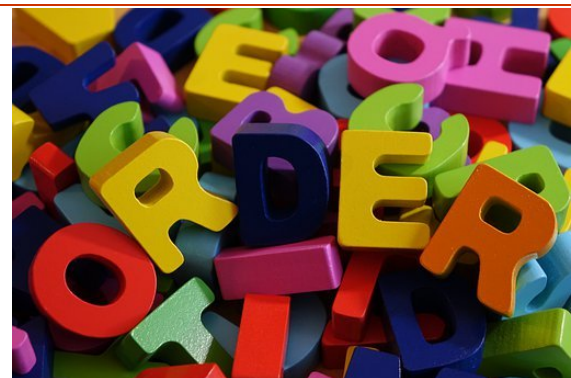
***Tips for implementation***

Number of participants: 5 to 15

Duration: approx. 1 hour

Facility: training room

Equipment/materials: Blindfolds for every participant



[https://cdn.pixabay.com/photo/2020/05/12/06/34/letters-5161496\\_\\_340.jpg](https://cdn.pixabay.com/photo/2020/05/12/06/34/letters-5161496__340.jpg)

***What needs to be considered with this method?***

When "learning" and passing on a "new" language together, the focus is on what unites us, because regardless of the languages actually spoken, everyone experiences what it is like to have to deal with foreign languages.

***Sources:***

BEST, <http://nogaps.eu/>

## The five «Whys»

When we present arguments, it is particularly important to justify our arguments. This makes the logical conclusion from fact to conclusion (cf. argumentation scheme according to Toulmin) clearly comprehensible for the audience. This also applies to seemingly obvious connections, because they become more convincing through verbalisation. The question of reasons and relevance enables a greater depth of argumentation in the preparation of the debate.

### **Experiences**

Trainer at BEST:

This method is easy to carry out and very efficient when it comes to questioning points of view, opinions, values, etc. It is also very effective when it comes to the questioning of the person's own position. What at first sight looks like "tedious questions" actually has the purpose - just like with small children - of questioning an assertion until it is completely clear - both to the person making it and to the person questioning it. The exercise is also very suitable when there are different views on current issues in the group.

### **Didactics**

- Making clearly comprehensible statements
- Pointing out factual connections
- Practise argumentation in debates
- Possibly reflect on personal attitudes/positions

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

This method is particularly suitable for developing participants' rhetorical skills and increasing their awareness and ability to engage in factual discussions by explaining assertions and checking their objectivity and accuracy through questioning.

### **Implementation**

To start this activity, a short discussion can be held with the participants on the key question: "What advantages do we have if we give good reasons for our claims? The participants' answers to this question can themselves be questioned according to the scheme of the exercise. In this way, the procedure for the exercise is demonstrated immediately.

The participants work together in teams of 2. One participant makes an assertion, e.g.

"Legalising marijuana will lead to less drug-related crime." "Education is the responsibility of the state alone."

"As a citizen, you should vote."

"If you say A, you have to say B."

The team partner questions the statement with a "why?" question, e.g. - Why is it like that? - Why

should we do this?- Why is this relevant?

The participant tries to answer this question. His/her team partner also questions this reasoning, etc. In total, the statement is questioned five times.

### Reflection

With these guiding questions, the participants can then discuss the transfer into practice:

"What kinds of justifications did you use?"

"How does our speech change when we give better reasons for our arguments?"

### *Tips for implementation*

Number of participants: min. 2, Also suitable for very large groups

Duration: approx. 20-30 min per team

Facility: depending on the number of participants

Equipment/materials: Paper and pens for preparation



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### *What needs to be considered with this method?*

A time limit can be set for the rationale, e.g. 3 minutes. This makes it easier to adjust the duration of the activity

### *Source:*

<https://debate-consult.de/debattier-uebung-das-warum-spiel/>

## Active listening - facts, feelings, associations

An important part of communication is active listening. Especially with controversial topics, the participants in adult education sometimes do not manage to listen to arguments properly or to accept them. This makes it difficult to have a factual debate because everyone stays in their own topics or ideas and no real exchange can take place. The lack of active listening skills can lead to misunderstandings and conflictual situations.

### **Experiences**

Trainer at BEST:

Instead of having a structured and factual dialogue or discourse, people in training groups often talk at cross-purposes and it can be observed that there is no real interest in the arguments of others, but rather to present one's own opinion. An exercise in active listening raises awareness of how important it is for successful communication and subsequently for factual debates.

### **Didactics**

- Understand and integrate active listening
- - Observing and distinguishing between facts, feelings and associations
- - Focusing

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

The aim of this activity is to familiarise the participants with the principle of active listening and to enable them to focus on what others are saying. The activity is well-suited for de-escalating emerging conflicts

### **Implementation**

This activity consists of 3 rounds:

Round 1 - listening to facts;

Round 2 - listening to feelings;

Round 3 - listening to associations.

The trainer takes the role of a speaker who tells an interesting and topical story that is on his/her mind. Participants are asked to go through different types of listening while the story is being told, as indicated by the titles of the rounds.

Participants are asked to write down the most important facts they notice in the story during the first 3 minutes of the story. Afterwards, a short reflection round is held to check which facts they have recognised.

In the second round of 3 minutes, participants are invited to focus on capturing all the emotions emanating from the story and the speaker. This is followed by another short reflection round to check which emotions have been perceived.

Now the participants are asked to try to listen beyond the facts and emotions in the last 3 minutes of

the story and see what free associations surface in the form of words, images and body sensations. Encourage them to choose one such association that they think is important to share with the speaker.

In the final reflection session, record which associations have emerged.

To conclude the activity, invite participants to experiment with different ways of listening in their daily lives.

### ***Tips for implementation***

Number of participants: 5 to 15

Facility: Training room with sufficient space and seating

Equipment/materials: Writing material for notes

Duration: approx. 1 hour



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### ***What needs to be considered with this method?***

If participants find it difficult to follow the story or to express their feelings and associations, they can instead be given tasks such as observing body language so as not to feel excluded.

### ***Sources:***

BEST, <http://www.apel-project.eu/>

## The "Hello Exercise»

People perceive themselves and their environment from their own perspective and react according to their characteristics and abilities. These are shaped by temperament, origin and experience. Some characteristics are innate and unchangeable, such as eye colour or skin colour, and to a certain extent temperament. However, many characteristics can be changed, new experiences bring new possibilities. To do this, you have to give yourself and others the chance to change. We are quickly pigeonholed into thinking that he or she or I "are just like that". Often, roles are assigned in systems that are difficult for individuals to find their way out of.

### **Experiences**

Trainer at BEST:

Conflict prevention works very well through empathy exercises. By putting themselves in other roles, participants can experience how it feels to be in an uncomfortable situation that could lead to conflict in the group - through bullying, prejudice, discrimination. This experience helps to better empathise with other people and their motivations for actions, and subsequently to better understand different patterns of behaviour, attitudes and expressions, but also sensitivities.

### **Didactics**

- Strengthening the ability to empathise
- - Raising awareness of group dynamics

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

The aim of this activity is to provide an "aha" experience and to strengthen understanding for others by experiencing an unpleasant situation with conflict potential..

### **Implementation**

One member of the group is sent out the door without giving him or her any information. The rest of the participants are asked to greet each other, only to completely ignore the participant in front of the door.

The person is invited back into the room. All participants go around the room, greet each other in a friendly way and ask about the well-being, what the family or friends are doing, how it was last night when they went out, ..... They express obvious friendliness. They show obvious friendliness.

The outsider is ignored, he/she is air and does not exist, his/her questions are not answered. The role is changed several times.

Evaluation:

Reflection in the whole group: How did the outsiders feel? What was it like for the other participants to "cut" others like this? Did this experience hurt or hurt?

### ***Tips for implementation***

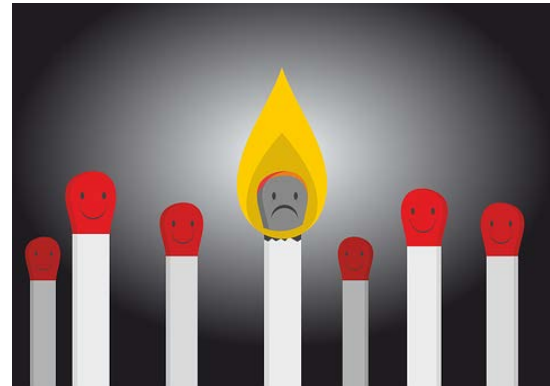
Number of participants: 10 to 20

Duration: approx. 20 minn,

Facility: training room

Equipment/materials: No special equipment required

### ***Media***



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### ***What needs to be considered with this method?***

In this exercise, care should be taken that real "outsiders" do not take on these roles. Rather, those who are well integrated into the group should take on the roles so as not to solidify an outsider role.

### ***Sources:***

<https://www.dguv-lug.de/berufsbildende-schulen/psychische-belastungen/gewalt-von-innen/>

## Where does freedom of expression end and discrimination begin?

When working around the issue of freedom of expression, it is important to look at one's own role in society. We hope to create a desire to contribute to our local community, as well as an interest in current issues and knowledge about politics. The trainer needs to ensure that learners are equipped with knowledge about the different channels of influence they can use to make their voices heard.

### **Experiences**

As the head of the integration association LoPe, I notice time and again that in public debates the dividing line between freedom of expression and discrimination (or the feeling of having been discriminated against and offended) is razor-thin. In the spring of 2022, around Ramadan, the Scandinavian countries experienced a turbulent time: a Danish politician had announced in Sweden that he wanted to burn the Koran in public (imitators followed in Norway).

This led to violent backlash among young Muslims in Sweden. Controversial debates ensued in public about who was to blame. There is no question that violence is criminal, but lawyers must now also consider whether burning a religious book is also a criminal act (Scandinavia does not have a "re-incidentment" paragraph - but it does have an anti-discrimination law).

In the following weeks, we in our organisation were confronted with the situation of being caught up in angry discussions with our Muslim participants. Here we got into the controversy of wanting to defend the rule of law on the one hand and condemning discrimination on the other.

### **Didactics**

- Raising awareness about one's role in society
- - Raise awareness about the role of laws and paragraphs (country-specific) in relation to freedom of expression and discrimination.

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

With this tool we want to motivate learners to think about common values such as human rights and freedom of speech. It is important to provide a basic insight into and understanding of the mechanisms of our democratic political system. Where does freedom of expression end and discrimination begin? Why is it so important to express one's own opinion in a factual and non-violent way?

### **Implementation**

- 1) The trainer gives a topic that often leads to different opinions, e.g. lock-down, Corona vaccination, etc.
- 2) Each participant is asked to do a 15-20 minute internet research on national free speech laws and possible anti-discrimination laws. Based on this knowledge, the following training discussion will take



place. The participants in the discussion are asked to present their personal opinions as objectively as possible.

3) Then two thirds of the participants choose a side of the discussion (pro-contra). The last third of the group serves as neutral observers and later gives feedback on the dynamics of the discussion and possible unobjectivity or slights etc.

4) The trainer moderates the discussion neutrally so that all participants get the same amount of speaking time. It is decided in advance how long the discussion should last - e.g.. 20-30 minutes (depending on the size of the group and the number of participants).

5) After the feedback round, the trainer asks questions:

- Where does freedom of expression end and discrimination begin?
- Why is it so important to express my own opinion objectively and without violence?
- Why is it important to have an opinion in a democratic society?

#### ***Tips for implementation***

Number of participants: 8 to 20

Duration: approx. 1-2 hours

Facility: training room, outdoor, seated circle

Equipment/materials: PC/Laptop with internet access, Worksheets for preparation (to shorten the internet research, the trainer can present the national laws already printed out)

#### ***Source:***

LoPe

#### ***What needs to be considered with this method?***

This exercise is also based on voluntariness; if a group member does not want to speak in front of the others, that is fine and to be respected. In this case, it is enough to contribute to the research.

## Vulnerability

In the textbook, the concept of 'vulnerability' according to Judith Butler has already been introduced (p. 22 f). She considers vulnerability to be one of the most primal forms of human or social relationships. Each and every one of us has had the experience of violation in the course of his or her life. People who belong to discriminated groups of people are exposed to a higher potential for injury (cf. Hark & Villa 2017).

Against the background of vulnerability, Butler has developed an ethics that assumes that we humans are dependent on each other in a society. Only together in coordination with others can we construct a world that enables a good life for all. The prerequisite for this is that we recognise that we ourselves, but also others, are vulnerable.

In the following exercise, participants are confronted with their own and others' emotions in the confrontation with other opinions. This is intended to create awareness of one's own vulnerability and the vulnerability of others.

### **Experiences**

There is no experience with this activity so far.

### **Didactics**

- Joint discussion of a topic
- Presenting and questioning one's own positions
- Raising awareness of how to deal with vulnerability

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

In this activity, participants should be sensitised to the fact that in discussions they themselves are hurt by statements and can hurt others. What and how hurtful statements are or can be depends entirely on the inner constitution of the individual and can only be answered conclusively by the individual. In the exercise, the participants are confronted with their own and others' emotions in the confrontation with different opinions. The aim is to raise awareness of one's own vulnerability and the vulnerability of others. Participants should develop an understanding that they and others are related to each other in vulnerability. This fact is declared as a basic assumption.

### **Implementation**

**Preparation:**

Prepare some controversial statements, about five or six. Try to find examples that are likely to be particularly emotional for the participants, that reveal their different opinions and are likely to be of interest and relevance to the participants.

1. Distribute any number of chairs around the room so that there are two facing each other, one for each participant.
2. Explain to the participants that they are going to listen to music. When the music starts, they should walk around the room as they like, or they can dance if they feel like it. When the music stops, everyone quickly sits down in the next chair, so that at the end everyone is sitting opposite one person. Then read out a statement. The person in the pairs who sat down last gets 60-90 seconds to give their personal opinion on the statement read out. During this time, the other person should say nothing and give no indication of whether they agree or disagree with this opinion. Then the roles are reversed: the second person has 60-90 seconds to share their opinion.
3. play music again and read out another prepared statement.
4. Do this for all the prepared statements or as long as time allows. Alternatively, once everyone understands what is at stake, you can ask participants to propose their own statements for discussion. However, insist on topics that are truly controversial.

Final discussion: Set up the chairs for a discussion in a circle.

Lead a discussion about the feelings participants experienced during this exercise and what they can learn from it in terms of dealing with controversial issues.

- What feelings arose while listening to others' perspectives?
- What feelings arose when giving their own perspective?
- Were there any statements that were perceived as hurtful?
- Did you/do you feel that a statement you made yourself hurt someone else?

**Reflection:**

Could there have been a way to mitigate the hurtful impact of a statement or could it even have been prevented? Together with the participants, collect ideas for forms of communication/rules that promote mindfulness towards the feelings of others. Make it clear: these rules cannot prevent injuries, only diminish them. It is important to realise that we can potentially never exclude the possibility of hurting others and being hurt by others. "In communication, the general principle is that it is not understanding but misunderstanding that is self-evident." (Schweiker 2005, 7).

Mindfulness can also mean forgiving people for hurtful statements when it becomes clear that they have not deliberately hurt. It is very important that we find ways to sincerely apologise for hurtful behaviour so that apologies can be accepted and a discourse culture of fault tolerance can emerge.

### **Example statements for the discussion**

- "There is too much emphasis on children's rights, but not on their responsibilities."
- "Gay couples should also be allowed to adopt children."
- "The EU is a waste of time and money and should be dissolved."
- "Parents should not be allowed to beat their children."
- "Nuclear weapons are necessary to maintain world peace."
- "Young people should be allowed to vote at the age of 14."
- "The death penalty should be reintroduced for those convicted of extreme acts of violence."
- "Animals should have the same rights as humans."
- "Euthanasia allows for humane dying and should not be subject to prosecution."
- "Parents should be allowed to design their own babies - it's a consumer choice."
- "The rich should pay less tax because their wealth creates new jobs."
- "There should be no restriction on people's freedom to travel between states."
- "Gender equality mainly benefits women and leads to discrimination against men."
- "Cannabis should be legalised."
- "Sexual identity is shaped by society, not nature."
- "Politicians think of themselves first and foremost."
- People who smoke and are overweight should pay more for their health.

### **Tips for implementation**

Number of participants: 5 to 15

Duration: approx. 45-60 min

Facility: depending on the number of participants

Equipment/materials: List of controversial statements, device for playing music - e.g. CD player, laptop, smartphone, etc..

### **What needs to be considered with this method?**

- Some participants may have concerns about expressing their private opinions publicly. Tell them that you are only talking to one person at a time and they will not be judged in terms of the opinions they express. Explain that it is important to put them in this situation so that they understand and learn to deal with the feelings that are likely to arise when discussing controversial issues. If participants express that they do not have an opinion on a particular issue, encourage the participant to think about what that might be. Is the person not affected by the issue? Ask if the person can imagine why the issue might be important/relevant to other people. (Such an occurrence can also be well taken up in the reflection round and provide an occasion for an exchange).
- This exercise requires a high level of pedagogical expertise, as it deliberately deals with

vulnerability. It is therefore advisable to try out the exercise in the team of teachers beforehand. This exercise can also be done well in tandem:

- Vulnerability can be perceived as a taboo subject by some people, e.g. older men who cannot admit their own vulnerability (fragile masculinity). Discuss in advance with your pedagogical colleagues how to react in such a case. Prepare for this and similar cases.

- If there is a need for counselling after the exercise, offer the possibility of a one-to-one discussion.

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## The Fairness Contract

### **Experience**

As a counsellor for refugees and people with a migration background in the LoPe association, I often experience how important it is to be respectful and fair when it comes to meeting new people. In groups with minorities from many different cultures, it is sometimes a particular challenge to respect the differences with others and to understand each other. The aim of this exercise is to make my participants aware of the importance of respect, justice and knowing their own and others' boundaries by signing a 'fairness contract' in advance.

### **Didactics-**

Reflection on one's own attitudes

- Who am I in the eyes of others?
- Showing respect in feedback to others

### **Learning objectives and potential applications**

How do you react when someone disagrees with you? We respectfully practise dealing with opinions other than our own in our encounters with other people.

### **Implementation**

1. create group rules:

- Live a respectful and tolerant coexistence.
- Show team spirit
- Pay attention to punctuality
- Eat only during breaks and outside the group room
- Let others finish and listen
- be curious and ask questions
- Turning the phone off
- Accept other opinions
- show a well-groomed appearance
- maintaining order and cleanliness
- respect boundaries
- Speak in I-messages

2. The participants are divided into two large groups. The trainer chooses a topic on which the participants should have different opinions.

Example: One group thinks that they should adapt to the culture of the country they live in, learn the language and be active in society on their own initiative. The second group believes that it is the community they live in that is responsible for integrating new residents and people from other parts of the world into society.

3. The participants sit down in the selected groups and plan how they can best present contributions (in a respectful way) and what they should focus on.
4. One participant from each group is appointed to stand in front of the others and discuss their demands in plenary. They should argue in a factual way, respect each other's opinions and listen.
5. When all participants have finished their presentation, they answer the following questions:  
"Did you manage to remain respectful?"  
"Were you provoked at any point?"  
"Did you feel respected?"

***Tips for implementation***

Number of participants: 10 to 20

Duration: approx. 1-2 hours

acility: training room, outdoor, seated circle

Equipment/materials: PC/Laptop with internet access to plan inputs, paper, pens

***Media***

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nJJa9f0l8XQ>

***What needs to be considered with this method?***

The focus is on learning to respect others with different opinions than your own and to see how successful a conversation with others becomes when you respect and listen to each other.

The group rules in this task ensure that each participant feels heard and noticed. Experience shows that when participants are made aware of this, the mindset changes.

***Source:***

LoPe