

YOUTH MATTERS NOW

Training Guide
for Working with
Young Offenders



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INTRODUCTION

Why this manual and what for?

The content of this manual was provided by the youth work practitioners who had experience in working with young people who are either in detention for different offences or re at risk of committing offence.

The idea of collecting examples of youth work practice with this particular group of young people came from the experience of EUROACCION, the Spanish organization that was working in the Prison of Campos del Río in Murcia providing various educational activities to young people who were in detention for both petty and serious offences. Within some 12 months the group of youth workers have developed an interesting number of different activities and methods to work with this target in such context like prisons and they became convinced that these resources could be combined with others from other organizations and together could define a powerful syllabus for other people to work with. While preparing for their work they noticed that there is a limited number of resources available therefore they needed to start from the scratch.

This is how the idea of the Youth Matters Now (YOMN) project has appeared - the project that would deal with the issue the social inclusion of young offenders, ex-offenders or at risk of offending. The project had the following objectives:

OBJECTIVES OF YOMN

To facilitate mutual learning processes as well as the exchange of experiences and best practices among European NGOs in the field of social inclusion of young offenders, ex-offenders or at risk of offending.

To compile and systematize those experiences and activities of non-formal education with young offenders, ex-offenders or at risk of offending in order to further develop a brief guide on youth work within the prison context.

To promote non formal learning methodologies for working with young offenders, ex-offenders or at risk of offending.

To promote the European cooperation and the development of future projects among the members of the network.

Youth workers from 5 countries – Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Slovenia and Spain met twice in order to share their practices of work with young offenders and discuss the content of this manual. Little did they know it would be a challenging process; the variety of and differences in approaches, different understandings of youth work in prisons, very different experience did not make the work easy.

This manual doesn't aim at being a complete guide on how to work with young people in detention, it is rather meant to provide tools, methodologies, practices and approaches that can be used with young offenders, ex-offenders and people at risk of offending in closed, open and semi-open institutions in order to:

- ⇒ Prevent further offence
- ⇒ Advice young people in matters of their interest
- ⇒ Mentor and support
- ⇒ Accompany young people in self-discovery and building self-confidence
- ⇒ Inspire youth workers who work with young offenders

How to use this manual?

Like every manual, this one can be used according to your own needs. It contains both theoretical part and practical examples or work with offenders, ex-offenders and young people at risk of offending. Besides introduction and appendices, it consists of three clear parts:

UNDERSTAND: This part aims at drawing a picture of some legal aspects related to offence in 5 countries: Czech Republic, Greece, Italy, Slovenia and Spain. It shows the 'path' young people go through when committing an offence, which can lead them to prison or other institutions, depending on the offence they committed. In this part, we are also trying to define the term 'young offender'.

PREPARE: As it is sometimes difficult for youth organisations to start working with young offenders, this chapter aims at providing practical tips on how to begin youth work, especially in closed institutions. You can find here as well some examples of challenges youth workers can meet in their work with young offenders and some tips on how to deal with them.

PRACTICE: This part presents different methodologies, approaches and activities that can be used in working with young offenders, ex-offenders and young people at risk of offending. There are practical examples that were tested and used by the youth workers coming from the organisations involved in compiling this manual. The activities deal with the following topics: social skills, social inclusion, health, human rights, personal development, intercultural learning, environment, gender and education to legality. Each activity is clearly tagged with the topic it deals with to make it easier for the readers to find the activities they might be interested in.

CHAPTER ONE

UNDERSTAND

What do we mean by ‘young offender’?

The term ‘young offender’ is a very debatable one. In the European youth programmes young offenders are very often classified as young people with fewer opportunities – young people who face different obstacles, e.g. economic, cultural, social, educational, health related, and others. The participants in the YOMN project pointed out that term ‘young offender’ can be very discriminatory and labelling, however, due to the lack of other alternatives, we decided to use it, keeping in mind who we mean and whose needs our manual tries to address.

Therefore, for the purpose of this manual, young offender can be described as:

- ⇒ a young person who committed an offence (a crime) and serves a punishment, be it in prison, in a semi-open institution or is under supervision from the legal authorities
- ⇒ a young person, who, due to the situation he/she is in, very often lacks complex support on their way to ‘freedom from offence’
- ⇒ a young person who faces different obstacles due to their situation – lack of financial resources, unemployment, rejection from the family or community, or/and social stigma
- ⇒ a young person who cannot often deal with the emotional consequences of the situation they are in

In this working definition age is an issue. In general, young offenders in the legal system are treated differently in comparison to adults. However, some country legislations allow to treat young people in certain age (even at 14) as adults in front of the court if they committed a very serious criminal offence. The experience of the participants of the YOMN project includes young people of different ages, ranging from 13 to 30.

Social inclusion involves providing **opportunities** for those members of society who do not enjoy the same level of privilege as others and striving to ensure that all aspects of society are “**open to all**”.

YOUNG PEOPLE WITH FEWER OPPORTUNITIES

Young people with fewer opportunities are young people who, largely due to their personal situation and sometimes also due to the choices they make, face different and/or more difficult obstacles in their lives than other young people.

*No Offence - Salto Inclusion
Resource Centre*

In this manual we are also dealing with methodologies and approaches directed towards ex-offenders (young people who served their punishment and need support on their way to ‘freedom’) and young people at risk of offending (young people who have already had some experience with petty crimes or are somehow attracted by a criminal behaviour). The latter group

should be, however, treated with caution, as there is a risk of labelling all young people in difficult situation as offenders. Activities have different aims and address different needs. However, all of them at social inclusion of young offenders, ex-offenders and young people at risk of offending.

Legal aspects related to young offenders

CZECH REPUBLIC

Having committed an offence, young people go through a certain path, depending on the legal systems in the country.

This path may also end up differently: in prison, in juvenile justice institution, in semi-open institution or under the supervision from the legal authorities. This, naturally, depends on the crime they committed and its legal repercussions. Let's have a look at what it looks like in different countries.

The Czech Republic legal system defines youth into groups based on their age. Youth under the age of 15 are not regarded as being criminally liable for their actions, unless in very serious cases. Youth aged between 15 - 18 are considered juveniles and can be held criminally liable to an extent, although with consideration. The level of the youth's moral and intellectual maturity is taken into account and if it is found that the degree of their maturity is not high enough to realize their actions as a danger to society, then they are not held as criminally liable for their actions.

Criminal measures on youth are considerably shorter than those for adults and comes with a wider offer of integration measures and educational programs to help them enter back into society. The educational support continues until after the release of the youth. The educational elements of their punishments are heavily emphasized. Repressive punishments are only used in justified cases, and even then it is usually done in the form of alternative sanctions under the supervision of a probation officer.

Each case of a young offender is dealt with individually with respect to the criminal act, personality of the offender, and interests of their close social environment with the aim to restore disturbed social and legal relations. This is done to help prevent criminal activity and to avoid unnecessary repressive and retaliatory measures.

Juvenile justice is based on the principle of economy of criminal repression. This includes preference on alternative procedures and measures which focus on social integration and prevention. The only time when punitive measures are is as a last resort.

During the court procedures, the youth in question can be held in detention or custody, but this is considered as an absolute exceptional measure. It is preferred

to substitute detention with a guarantee, supervision, and promise of his/her placement in the care of a reliable person or with a financial guarantee that the youth will come to his/her court procedures. Detention of youth can last a maximum of two months and only in exceptional circumstances can it be extended for another two months. For serious violations, juveniles can be kept in detention for six months. In this detention phase, youth are kept in different cells from adult prisoners.

Public prosecutors can ask relevant bodies of social and legal protections of children and the Probation and Mediation services to establish a report on the background of the young person. In this includes personal, family, and social background of the young person, current life situation, the youth's age, degree of intellectual and moral development, their character, background, and environment in which they were raised, their behaviour before and after the wrong act was committed and other circumstances.

GREECE

Laws about young offenders and juvenile crime are not systematized in an all-inclusive code in Greece. Substantive law provisions are in the Greek penal code, recently modified by the law 3189/2003, procedural provisions are gathered up in the Greek code of penal procedure, and correctional provisions are grouped in the Greek correctional code.

The whole Greek system is aligned to the principle that education is the most effective alternative to detention for young offenders. Education is not seen here as a goal, but as a mean for achieving social inclusion with an effort to reintegrate the minor in the society. Education is the key word for social reintegration of youngsters that share a very problematic schooling history characterized by low attendance, high level of dropouts, non-systematic efforts, grade retention, and academic failure.

Greek penal code divides children in three age groups according to the penal responsibility.

Children to 8 years are not subjected to the Greek penal code and the only measure that can be taken against them is the parental custody.

Children from 8 to 15 are still not criminally responsible but they can be judged by a Juvenile Court and sentenced with educational or therapeutic measures.

Children from 15 to 18 fall in the category of "juveniles" and they have a relative criminal responsibility. According to the offense that was committed, they can be sentenced with detention in jails or young offenders' institutions, but preferably they are condemned with educational and therapeutic measures. The decision is taken by the Juvenile Court Judge, who takes into account various factors such as the child's personality, his or her social conditions, the environment he/she lived in, and, last but not least, the report by the Juvenile Court probation officer.

At the age of 18 normal criminal responsibility begins, even if till 21 youngsters fall into the category of “young adults” and punishment can be mitigate.

Crimes committed by young offenders are judged by a First Instance Juvenile Court composed by a single judge, and in second instance by a Juvenile Court of Appeal formed by three judges, one of them being the single judge of the First Instance Court.

For protecting the charged juvenile a legal fiction is adopted and the child can never be charged with felony, but with misdemeanour. A previous investigation on the child's health, moral and mental situation, lifestyle, family situation, and general background is conducted. A confidential report available to the judge is drafted by the institution in charge. During the trial defense rules are the same as for adult's procedure and Juvenile Court Aid is always present. Even if sentenced as guilty, the child never pays the costs of the trial and the educational measures, but not the therapeutic ones, are registered on the criminal record.

Sanctions are divided in educational measures, therapeutic measures, and detention in a young offenders' institutions. Any of them is directly related to the committed crimes, but they are imposed in a general sense taking into account the child's background and the other variables listed above. In special conditions, **diversion** is possible, even if rarely implemented. Diversion means that there is no prosecution if the public prosecutor thinks there is no possibility of re-offending. Measures applied in case of diversion are educational measures, the payment of a fine of 1000 Euro, the victim-offender mediation, the reparation, or the community work.

Educational measures can include:

- reprimand
- parents' or legal guardians' care
- placement under the responsible care of a foster family
- placement under the care of a Youth Protection Association, a Youth Center, a Juvenile Court Aid
- mediation between the offender and the victim
- reparation (compensation of the victim)
- community work
- participation in social and psychological programs
- attendance of vocational schools or trainings
- attendance of special road safety training programs
- placement under the intensive care of Youth Protection Associations or Juvenile Court Aid
- placement in public or private educational institutions

A special mention to the victim-offender mediation is necessary. It has been introduced by the law 3189/2003 with no system, no method, and no previous pilot programs. These conditions made this provision hard to be applied and not very effective in its

application. Still it is very important because it allows for the offender to realize the human dimension of his / her action. It implies the assumption of responsibility for the offender and the satisfaction for the victim, with a better re-integration in the society for both. This success of this reformatory measure depends on the offender's consents and on his or her conscious responsibility.

Therapeutic measures can be taken in case the child has a mental or functional illness or disorder or in case s/he is addicted to drugs and / or alcohol. In exceptional case the punishment can continue till the child reach the age of 21.

The examples of therapeutic measures:

- the responsible care of parents, legal guardians, foster families
- the intensive care under a Youth Protection Association or a Juvenile Court Aid
- the participation in a therapeutic advisory program
- the placement in a therapeutic institution

Not being considered as a rehabilitative measure **detention** is considered as the *ultima ratio* when all other educational or therapeutic measure deems not having any effect for avoiding the juvenile further committing crimes.

Framework sanction of detention has been abolished in 2003. Detention needs to have an exact duration and can be imposed for a minimum of 6 months till a maximum of 10 years. For crimes that are normally punished with more than 10 years of detention, a juvenile can be imprisoned for a minimum of 5 years till a maximum of 20. One third of the detention period being passed it is possible for youngsters not a risk of re-offending to have regular leaves for no more than 45 days in total per year. Leaves are allowed for attending training or vocational courses, for working or looking for a job. Half of the period being passed, the juvenile can be released under condition unless is still considered to be at risk of re-offending.

When sentenced with detention, juveniles are imprisoned in special institutions for young offenders or in dedicated sections of adults' prisons. There are only three correctional centres for minors in Greece:

1. Volos Education Institution for Male Minors with a capacity of 25 youngsters subjected to reformative measures of placement in an education facility. Volos facility only hosts young aliens.
2. Special Juvenile Detention Centre Facility for Males in Avlonas with a capacity of 280 inmates.
3. Special Juvenile Detention Facility of Kassavetia with a capacity of 308 detainees.

During the stay in the jail, youngsters are forced to attend basic education, while it is not mandatory to work, even if working could reduce detention. Young inmates have the right to training, practice sport, attend cultural and creative activities, and complete studies or vocational education. Diplomas obtained in jail have the same

legal value of the ones obtained outside and there is no mention on where the title was achieved.

ITALY | Italian Juvenile Justice System is managed by a separate Department within the Italian Juvenile Justice Ministry. It has competence and takes decisions on national political guidelines and carries on investigations and researches about Juvenile Justice Services.

Consequently, in Italy there is a separate Juvenile criminal law and a separate Juvenile Justice Tribunal which is in charge not only to judge on crimes committed by young people, but also has competences on youth protection, including adoption and child protection in the administrative processes.

Concerning the structure, within the Juvenile Justice Department, which is located in Rome, all over Italy there are 14 regional offices called Juvenile Justice Centres that are coordinating several local offices called Social Service Offices for Minors that are directly working with young people in conflict with law through a structured law. There, specialized social workers work in order to help, support, and understand why young people, accused of offences, have committed them providing them with rehabilitation programmes directed as well towards their families. Social workers are the connection and the bridge between the judge and the offender and they are in charge to report directly to the Judge, to look for educational project for the youngsters and to liaise with non NGOs, companies, or local administrations in order to settle up the activities for personal development with the aim of social recovery of a youngster.

It is to be said that the general framework for Juvenile Justice System in Italy is not aimed at punishing the young person, but rather to educate and let him or her understand the gravity of their crimes and to restore their offence to the society or the person offended. The whole system aims at avoiding the possibility to commit the offence again and therefore to end up as adult offender in future.

According with Italian Juvenile penal legislations, the age when committing an offence is crucial in order to decide further steps into the Juvenile Justice system and also its treatment. In fact if the youngster commits an offence between 0 and 18 years old, the youngster is only submitted to civil proceeding and the punishment is cancelled.

If the youngster is older than 14 years old or/and has committed a very serious crime, either if it is object of an investigation, either if it is caught while committing the offence, he/she enters into a step by step criminal process in order or to be judged or to join restorative justice and educational/social programmes.

First of all it meets the Judge for initial prosecution who makes the first investigations and prepares all the information for the following step, the meeting with the judge for judicial hearing who is the person who can make provision for trial and decide for judicial measures. The Judge for initial prosecution, after starting the investigation, keeps the minor “under observation” for max. 4 days. During this time, social workers and psychologist are working with the minor in order to investigate his/her personal background, the family situation and the circumstances which have led him/her to commit the crime. They can suggest to the judge for initial judicial hearing precautionary measures before the real process takes place, which can vary from prescriptions, forced stay at home, to give custody of the minor to a Minor Centre or to send him/her to a Jail for minors, which is separate from the adult one.

If the situation is not so complicated, minors can receive the “judicial forgiveness” and have the offence cancelled, but if the minor is not cooperative, the trial starts and leads to condemnation under the supervision of the supervisory magistrate.

If, however, the minor accepts the help of the social services, the real educational project starts and it is carried on through several interviews with the minor in order to shape his or her own project according with his/her personality, background and interests. It foresees the following: school and education activities, work and professional development, restorative justice programme and volunteering, sport and free time activities.

If, after a short period, the educational project gives its initial results, the young person accepts to join it and it is clearly perceived that the continuation of the educational project would help the youngster in developing tools to improve his/her life and avoid all situation which can lead to commit again a crime, the judge can assign him/her to join the probation period for a maximum of 3 years. During the period the judicial process is suspended and in case of positive results, this would lead to the final cancellation of the crime. In case of a negative result, the young person enters the court and can be sentenced.

SPAIN | When a minor commits a crime, several things can happen depending on different circumstances (the gravity of the crime, the family environment, if the minor has existing penal records, etc.)

If the minor is less than 14 years old, there is no penal responsibility.

If the minor commits a crime he/she will go to the judge who will decide with consideration to the above mentioned circumstances. Once the judge decides, he/she will transfer the competences to execute legal measures to the regional authorities.

Depending on the type of crime, the minor can go to a youth detention centre or receive a penalty such as community service or to take social skills trainings, etc.

When a young person is stopped by the police, generally they do an interrogation and they get this declaration in the offices of the Police that has intervened in the detention. The young person can declare or deny to do it.

If the police suspect him/her of being guilty, he/she will be locked-up within the police headquarters, where the person can be kept up to 72 hours, after which they have to prove crime to the commission for the permission to interrogate the young person and to declare the imprisonment or release the person.

If during the interrogation the judge believes that there are presumptive evidences of guilt, he/she has two options: send the person to prison without bail or set a fine.

In imprisoned, the young person enters the prison in the module (building) number one where he/she will be searched (physically, clothes and other goods), his/her fingerprints and photo will be taken and his/her data collected. All cash will be taken and transferred to a personal account in the prison called a 'peculio'. The person's family can also transfer money to this account.

Then he/she will be transferred to jail in order to wait for a medical check, an interview with the social worker and with an educator. Sometimes the psychologist can and will visit the newcomer. The young person will be in this module between one half to three days, depending on the workload that the technical staff has to do that week.

When the young person is going to his final destination, he/she will get a bag with hygienic materials such as condoms, sheets, and a blanket, plus his luggage.

For first time offenders, once the person has received the judgment and condemned, several things can happen. If the sentence is less than two years and the person doesn't have penal record he/she will not go to prison. However, if the sentence is longer than two years he/she may not avoid imprisonment. Once he/she is in prison the treatment committee will wait for the confirmation of the sentence and between one or two months later the classification degree. When this classification degree comes, the life in prison of this person can change or can continue as before.

The different degrees that the sentence can be established are:

First level or close regime. This level is only applicable to dangerous inmates or high risk individuals and **because of that, they are transferred to isolation modules as they can't enjoy a normal life in prison.** They will be kept locked in their cell for a total duration of 22 hours a day, with individual walks in the yard of 2 hours. They cannot enjoy normal entertainment activities as the rest of the inmates and their means of communication (face to face, through the window, telephone and letters) are permanently watched.

Second level or ordinary. This is the level that the majority of inmates have in Spanish prisons. Even if a person commits a serious fault and he/she is taken for a few days to isolation cell, he/she will not lose this level; the incident will only be noted in

his/her files. Once a young person has fulfilled a fourth of their sentence they can request the third level.

Third level of open regime. In practice this level can only be enjoyed by the young person once he/she has fulfilled at least fifty per cent of the sentence. Only in a few situations (politicians, rich people, very ill persons, specific drug addictions or similar, or people who are in preventive detention and have fulfilled almost all the sentence) can access this level.

Module of respect

This kind of module didn't exist in Spain until a few years ago. In the normal module the inmates can do activities that they want to do (studying, laundry, cleaning or cooking, trainings and sports, etc.) or they can decide to do nothing (walks in the yard, board games, etc.).

In the module of respect, the main difference with the normal system is that the inmates have to realize a set of activities and keep some norms of conduct already established.

In order to go to this module, the inmates have to compromise and obey the rules and the discipline of the group. They have to attend the detox and training programs, get on well with their peers, take responsibilities, be careful with their personal hygiene as well as clean in their surroundings, etc.

There is some kind of self-management in this modules organized in the form of assemblies and commissions where the inmates are able to take some own personal decisions.

CHAPTER TWO

PREPARE

How to start working with young offenders?

Before starting working with young offenders, ex-offenders and young people with the risk of offending, it is always useful to answer the following questions:

WHY WOULD YOU LIKE TO WORK WITH YOUNG OFFENDERS?

This is a crucial question about your motivation

and your objectives (the objectives of your organization). Youth work is about supporting young people but not every youth worker has the capacity to support young offenders and the support from the organization he/she works in.

DO YOU HAVE NECESSARY COMPETENCES?

The work with young offenders, especially with those who are in detentions requires a set of skills,

knowledge and attitudes: understanding of the legal and penitentiary system, ability to work under stress, ability to deal with difficult situations, openness, tolerance of ambiguity, distance from social/professional roles, ability to be discrete, assertiveness, listening skills, ability to support others and openness to be supported. In most situations you will not work alone with young offenders, you will be watched by the guards or even recorded; some things you will wish to do might not be allowed in prison.

DO YOU HAVE RESOURCES?

This is more a questions of human resources. It is advisable to work in pairs paying attention to gender.

The story from Spain

We were invited by the Spanish National Agency of the Youth in Action Programme to run a training for young offenders about how to plan, implement and evaluate a specific project within the format of a Youth Initiative Project.

This training aimed at training a small group of 15 participants (young offenders) from the prison Murcia I (in Sangonera town) during 3 months. We did non-formal education activities with them twice a week and step by step helped them to develop their own project, based exclusively on their needs and interests. The final idea for this project was called PRESYRADIO aimed at

breaking stereotypes and prejudices about young offenders as useless and dangerous people in the society. The project was based on the idea of creating a radio program inside the prison, where young people would prepare the structure of the program, the interviews, the music and all the necessary arrangements.

After these 3 months, the people that were directly involved in EUROACCION, felt deeply and positively touched by such experience and decided to take a step forward and to apply to the Spanish bank, La Caixa, which had a call for proposals about fighting against marginalization and poverty.

We applied with a project called NOSCETE IPSUM that aimed at capacity building and entrepreneurship of young people in prison MURCIA II (this was a much bigger prison than the first one where we started). This project started in November 2011 and finished in November 2012. It gave us the opportunity to learn and to start understanding the context of prisons. It also made us reflect on our educational approach with young people and non-formal education for several reasons.

We realized that the needs of the target groups are very different depending on their penal situation. For instance, working with young people in youth detention centres was in a way easier because the dynamic in those centres is very different than in prison. In youth detention centres the motivation of the groups, their background, and especially the fact that the youth had never been to prison, made a difference. These groups were constantly accompanied by their social educators who provided much support.

In the prison we could see that there is nothing like that level of support. In a module of 50 young people, there were about 2 social workers and 1 psychologist, for all of them! The educational and psychological support was at bare minimum. Being confronted with this reality we then assumed that our role was even more essential and really needed by the groups of young people. Yet after a few days of work with them, we faced a very different reality.

The first time we were in the prison for a longer project, we went to work in a module for young people (more or less the youth aged between 18 and 25). First we had an opening meeting to introduce the work we would do. At least 40 young people along with our staff and a few other professionals, came together with great expectations. Our first impression was that it was going to be difficult to manage such a big group because we were just 5 facilitators, working in couples in each session, twice a week and honestly a welcome reception was unexpected.

What happened after we really don't know, and we are still wondering why and what can be done differently to improve the situation?

After the first week, the number of young people attending the workshops was quickly decreasing, from 40 to 20, from 20 to 10 and from 10 to 5 or sometimes 3 or 4. We tried to change the activities (all of them were about non-formal education), from some that were more introspective and "serious"

to other funnier and more interactive activities. We used any kind of techniques we knew such as music, video, or movies, to get their attention and participation but nothing changed in this process, and it was nearly impossible to run activities for 2-3 people.

Then we entered a supervision process with an external supervisor to try to analyse our performance, our emotions and future plans. Our conclusion at that moment was that it was very hard to support this group of young people if they didn't feel it necessary to receive this support. If there is no awareness about the need of help, we can't create or impose that, it must come from the group.

We decided to switch the project activities to other modules, like the Therapeutic Unit Module (UTE) and Women Module because these modules required a higher level of commitment and motivation from the inmates to participate. In both of them, the inmates were required to be drug free inside the prison (in other modules, drugs are present, even if they are totally forbidden because the inmates manage to smuggle them inside), also they had to commit to keep a collaborative and respectful behaviour, and to participate in all activities and workshops. People in these modules were rewarded with positive points for respecting their commitments and it implied an improvement of their penal situation, for instance, getting permits for the weekends more easily, and things like that.

All in all, our experience in these modules was better in the sense of being able to work with the group each time, not missing many people in the activities and always having an average number of 10-12 people in every workshop. Apart from the quantity element, we also noticed a qualitative improvement in these groups in terms of contribution and progress in the learning process. These groups were formed by people from different backgrounds (illiterate and people with basic education and very few with secondary school degree). Participants were active very often, asking questions, enjoying the activities, and having a lot of fun.

What happened the first time that we really started the work in the prison with the second, larger group, and we were able to continue?

Well, first we decided in our team that it would be good and necessary to allow couple of weeks where people in the module could get to know about our workshops and only try them out. Finally after this period of time, we closed the group, in the sense of not allowing other people to come and go and we worked only with those who made the commitment to stay.

This was neither realistic nor feasible because the group was always changing. The participants never remained consistent. This was a result of administrative reasons inside the prison, other penalties to the inmates, people's emotional fluctuations (sometimes naturally, sometimes because of medical treatments) which meant we never managed to keep the same group all the time. From the first 30 participants we started in January 2012, we kept only a 5% of

them by November of that year. This gives a clear picture of how difficult it was to keep a certain group dynamic and how much we as a team had to adapt our methodological approach to run the workshops. Group building was a transversal feature (always present and needed to support a trustful atmosphere in the group) as well as individual therapy for those participants who needed it, which was given on demand.

While deciding on the work with young offenders, especially those who are in detention, it is worth having in mind the following do's and don'ts.

DO	DO NOT
Respect the needs and time of all participants in the process	Share your personal stories, phone number or e-mail address
Take care of a proper dress code (ask the detention authorities before you start)	Be authoritarian; though it is important to keep authority
At the beginning, tell people why you are here and what you will do	Be stressed or frustrated when you get a different space for your workshop or the time changes
Co-operate with the penitentiary staff and always inform them what you are planning to do	Talk too long; it is better to get people involved in different activities and give them space to express themselves
Be flexible when it comes to space, time and number of people available for your workshop	Be very strict with time – be prepared to work longer or shorter
Create a safe feedback space for the participants – this will allow them to express their feelings and emotions	Pretend or tell people you understand their situation unless you really understand
Observe the group dynamics and make use of the individual skills of the participants	Tell people things you do not know if they ask you about stuff related to their staying in detention; it is always better to consult penitentiary staff before
Make sure everyone has the space to express oneself	Bring illegal stuff to prison
Make use of different approaches; small group work is turns to be often a good way to get people involved in the process	Bring your mobile phone or other electronic devices with you; sometimes you may have the chance to leave them when entering the detention centre
Set the rules for your work	Promise to bring or fix things that are not allowed in prison; ask the penitentiary authorities what is allowed
Consult your colleagues and give feedback to one another	Ask or motivate people to tell their personal stories about crime they committed
Be discreet	
Be prepared to deal with personal stories of the participants, conflicts or difficult questions	

Be ready to learn, listen to people and acknowledge that you do not know something

Take care of your personal comfort and be prepared to fail

Pretend you are an expert when it comes to the situation of prisoners and the problems they need to deal with

Before entering the detention facility you will be asked to fulfill certain criteria. Make sure you consult the penitentiary authorities beforehand not to be surprised in the end. Most probably you will be asked to:

- ⇒ Present your ID before, which might be scanned by the penitentiary authorities
- ⇒ Present your crime record certificate even if you have never committed any crime
- ⇒ For an interview by the prison authorities on your plans, people you will work with, etc.
- ⇒ Present other documents required by the detention facility authorities

When planning your work in the detention centre, think first about the needs of your participants. It could be useful to organize a meeting and try to recognize these needs.



The experience of the participants of the YOMN project shows that the young people in detention needed emotional support from time to time which was given in the form of individual talks and therapy (Gestalt) where the main intention was based on listening to the person and serving as a contention in their emotional struggle. The groups expressed their need to have

entertaining and educative activities, where they could feel time passing by quickly, or as they said, "I forgot I am in prison during the workshop".

More specifically, the needs between men and women were also quite different sometimes. While men were more into entertaining and educational activities, watching documentaries about nature, culture, etc., women were more into gender activities, exploring what it is to be a woman or a man, and discussion. They also preferred activities with more physical contact with each other as well as with a more intimate atmosphere.

With men, trust building activities were challenging because trust was a difficult issue for them. Normally they don't trust one another in groups so it is better to do so in pairs. Although there were problems in some activities when the participants were asked to share their experiences after the activity in pairs, normally they would have concerns about sharing it with mates they don't usually relate to, so very often they asked to change partners, and to go with their peer they trust. Activities to improve and further foster confidence in the group were not very successful because even if they do them and commit to it, the question was always, what the other person would do with the information he/she got, once they are outside the session.

CHAPTER THREE

PRACTICE

List of methodologies, examples of practice and activities

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Activities to start with, energisers and group building exercises

Activity 1

Group checking

Simple way to start the day

Topics

Personal development; social skills

Objectives

- ⇒ To create space for the group where the participants can freely express themselves
- ⇒ To contribute to the creation of a trustful and safe atmosphere in the group

Duration 20 to 60 min.

Space requirements/materials

Chairs for every person and a quiet place

Group size max. 20 participants

Number of facilitators Minimum 2 people.

Description

Tell the participants to sit in a circle in their chairs. Then explain that the idea of the activity is to give them some time to freely express the way they feel in that moment. Tell them that there is no specific topic they have to talk about and that they are invited to simply explore how they feel and to just share it within the group. Explain that it is not about having a group discussion but mostly to have some time for each of them to speak about their concerns, or to share something that is important for them. You can allow comments and reactions from their peers as far as it is encouraging and supportive to the person that is speaking. It is very important not to allow people to begin discussions about how others are feeling or about their concerns. The idea with this activity is to create a safe atmosphere in the group where people don't feel judged by others or by the facilitators but the opposite, they feel they can say things openly.

Observations

Group dynamics in prison contexts are extremely changing. One day the group you facilitate shows themselves extremely cooperative and participative, while the next day they seem really down and passive. Because of that, this activity is somehow difficult to measure in terms of its duration as it can last 20 min or 2 hours depending on the emerging needs of the group. As a facilitator you must be ready for unexpected emerging issues, emotions of sadness, euphoria, anger or sorrow. It is also important that when doing this activity you bear in mind that after it you may not have more time to run any other activity or if the group points out many concerns or fears, you may want to end the session with some nurturing activity, or some exercise that brings some extra emotional support. Normally this activity is perceived as very needed and people feel comforted and listened to, which is a great form of support for them.

Activity 2

Energisers

Positive energy first!

Topics

Personal development; social skills

Objectives

- ⇒ To raise energy and dynamism within the group of participants
- ⇒ To create positive energy and atmosphere in the group
- ⇒ To allow participants to relax and have fun

Duration 3 to 10 minutes

Space requirements/materials

Space to allow a group of 20 people to move freely; flipchart paper and markers

Group size max. 20 participants

Number of facilitators 2 or more

1. Sun & Cloud (3 - 5 min)

Tell participants to stand in a circle. Invite them to choose one person secretly in their mind; they should not say who they chose. Then ask them again to choose a second person (a different one). Once they are done with this, tell them that the first person will be their sun and that they must stay as close as



possible to their sun (because it is warm and nice) but as far as possible from their cloud, which is the second person they chose. Obviously this exercise will involve a great chaos and movement, but in fact, this is the idea, so if participants ask you about this activity to be a chaos or a mess, try to avoid any kind of reasoning on that and just encourage them to experience whatever it may happen. It is a short activity of maximum 3 minutes, so feel free to stop it whenever you feel it is enough movement and chaos going on. You can ask at the end how they felt and if they think it is possible to keep some equilibrium in the group so it does not move constantly.

2. The Tenant

Explain that this activity will involve 3 basic and different roles. First role is the tenant, second is wall A, third is wall B. There is also an earthquake.

At your signal, people will have to form groups of 3, where one person will be wall A, another wall B and the third will be the tenant. Both wall A and B have to stand one in front of each other raising their arms and grabbing each other hands, leaving an empty space in between so that the tenant can go inside.

Once the group gets the basic structure that each trio must always stay together you can instruct the group about how to play. You or one participant in each round will scream either “wall A!”, “wall B!” “tenant!” or earthquake. If wall A is called, then the person in that role must change fast and go to another trio becoming wall A there. The same goes for wall B and for tenant. If the “earthquake!” is called then

all trios and tenant must change place. Do it several rounds until you feel that the group is enough “energized”.

3. Evolution (10 min)

The goal for the participants is to move from the first stage of evolution; amoeba; through dinosaur, Australopithecus and end up as a superhero.

In the first round, everyone walks around as “amoebas”. An amoeba is visualized by walking with its arms and hands waving like bird wings but from rear to the front. Amoeba keeps mouth very open with its tongue in and out during the movement.

When an amoeba meets another amoeba they stop, and play “rock-paper-scissors” game. The winner progresses to the next stage of evolution, which is dinosaur. The loser remains an amoeba, but may continue to seek other amoebas for more “rock-paper-scissors” games.

Battles for evolution always take place between creatures of the same level (amoeba with amoeba; dinosaur with dinosaur, etc.)

The dinosaur is characterized by having one arm bent backwards and down like a tail, while the other arm is bent in front as a head on a neck. While walking around like this, they say: “dinosaur, dinosaur”.

When a dinosaur meets another dinosaur they play “rock-paper-scissors” game. The winner progresses to the next stage of evolution, which is Australopithecus. The loser remains a dinosaur.

The Australopithecus is characterized by performing like a monkey but more erected than one of those. Still it is supposed to make monkey sounds and say all the time “Australopithecus, Australopithecus!”

When an Australopithecus meets another Australopithecus, they play the “rock-paper-scissors” game. The winner reaches the highest stage of evolution, which is a superhero, while the loser will remain Australopithecus.

When you become a superhero, you stand in a circle around the other participants. You do a superhero pose while standing in a circle, and loudly sing or hum superhero themes. Then the facilitator will call the end of the game.

At the end, you can count how many people stayed in the different levels and then, for the amoebas you can call for a group hug and a big applause joking with the fact that they need to evolve more and have fun because of that.

Observations

- ⇒ Provide very clear instructions at the beginning of the. Ask people to practice different poses, so that they better remember them when the game begins. You may want to write down all stages of evolution on the flip chart paper for the participants.
- ⇒ You can add other stages of evolution to the game (e.g. fish, homo sapiens, jelly fish, etc.)
- ⇒ Explain that the game is not about who evolved further and who is more effective but to have fun and joke with the little “poor” amoebas that need so much support to evolve further!

4. Three Roles (5 min)

Instruct the group to form two lines of equal number of people, one in front of each other, then explain that the activity is based on the traditional game of "rock-paper-scissors" but that instead of doing any of those gestures they will have to choose between three different characters: The Granny, The Knight and the Tiger.

You need to explain how the three characters perform and who wins in each round.

The Granny is showed like an old, weak, cute woman that seems harmless but suddenly grabbing her cane she can hit the knight with. So the Granny wins over the Knight.

The Tiger does a scary roar and gesture of attacking with fingers like paws and he attacks the Granny. So, the tiger wins over the Granny.

The Knight stands still with his sword in front of his head. He stabs the tiger, so he wins over it.

The game starts by each person choosing one of those characters (without saying it loud who they chose) and performing it on in front of each other.

So, all in all, the winners are: Granny wins over the Knight. The Knight wins over the tiger. And the Tiger wins over the Granny.

5. The Bear of Poitier (*Augusto Boal, Games for Actors and Non Actors*)

One participant is designated the bear of Poitiers. He/she turns his/her back to the others, who are the woodcutters. After a short moment of silence, the bear must give vent to an enormous growl, whereupon all the woodcutters must fall to the ground and ‘play dead’, not making the slightest movement, absolutely motionless as if their life depended on it. The bear goes up to each one of them, growling, and touches, tickles prods, and tries any trick he/she can think of to woodcutters laugh or move; in short, his/her goal is to force the woodcutters to show they are alive.

When the bear succeeds, the woodcutter who has shown he/she is alive becomes a second bear, and then the two bears set off to do the same thing to the other woodcutters, who still try not to move. Eventually there are three bears, then four, and so on.

6. Go around 3 times!

Tell participants to stand in a circle. Then invite them to choose one person from the group secretly in their minds. They should not say which person they chose. Then, instruct them that when you give them a sign they will have to go to that person and go around him/her three times. That is their only task, and they have to do it despite the chaos that may happen. Once the person has finished his/her task he/she has to sit down on the floor. The game is over when the last person finished.

7. Show what you like

Ask participants to stand in the circle. One participant starts showing what he/she likes to do without speaking. While showing it he/she slowly moves to the middle and towards some other person in the circle. When he/she reaches that person he/she says what he likes to do, e.g. 'I like dancing' (it is important that if he/she likes dancing he/she actually dances towards the other person) After saying it, he/she replaces the person he/she was moving towards in the circle and that other person continues the game with his/her linking. Continue the same activity and keep it interesting and fun.

Do not make fun of any activity participants chose to show and give them compliments.

Activity 3

The Sinking Boat

Make the group work efficiently!

Topics

Social skills

Objectives

⇒ To foster group building and improve the participants' ability to work in a team.

Duration 30 minutes

Group size 7 to 25

Materials

A large piece of paper or cloth able to contain a large group of participants standing on it

Description

Start introducing the scene. *"Your group has shipwrecked and as a result you only have this floating piece of wood. Your task as a group is to stand all over the surface in such a way that you distribute your weight all over and the wood does stay balanced and you don't fall in the water"* Say that you will allow 1 minute talk and then they will have to do the activity in silence. Once you clap hands they have to freeze in their place on the piece of wood and you will decide if the weight is well distributed, if everybody is in the right place or not. If not, you can give them a couple of chances to repeat the activity and see if they manage or not. Remind participants to permanently check where they are (each of them) and where the others are over the wood, until you clap hands.

At the end of the activity you may want to ask the following questions:

- 1) How did you feel during the activity?
- 2) What happened?
- 3) Are you satisfied after with you achieved?
- 4) How was it to do the activity in silence? Was it difficult or not?
- 5) What strategies did you follow to accomplish your mission?
- 6) Did you notice any leader in the group?

- 7) What would you change from what you did?
- 8) What makes a group work efficiently?

Activity 4

The Empty Chair and the Tired Man

Would you give your seat to a tired man?

Topics

Social skills

Objectives

- ⇒ To foster group building and improve the participants' ability to work in a team.

Duration some 30 minutes

Group size 7 to 25 (depending on the space and number of chairs available)

Materials

Chairs for every participant plus one for the facilitator ("tired man")

Description

First of all you need to arrange the chairs (one per participant) in the space distributed randomly all over the floor of the room (don't put them in a circle or following a particular pattern, just randomly in any direction), in a way that people get seated looking to different directions. Just leave one chair extra for yourself.

Explain the group that they will have a common task: to prevent the tired man (you or another person) sit in the empty chair. Tell them that there are 2 basic rules they must respect. The first one is that the chairs are fixed to the floor and they cannot be moved. The second is that once they decide to move to another chair and they regret it they can come back to their chair BUT ONLY if they took just one step forward when leaving their chair. Clarify that if they take more than one step, they cannot come back to their chair and they are forced to move to another.

Once the rules are clear allow the group to take their chairs and to discuss for 3 minutes what they will do. After that time they will have to work in silence. Once

the time is gone you can start the activity. You or another person can decide to take the role of the tired man, whose unique mission is to find an empty chair where to sit and rest. You ("tired man") start walking towards the empty chair with slow walk and allow the group to react. If you manage to sit in any chair you can give them another chance.

After about 7-8 minutes you can decide to stop the exercise or give new chances to the group after discussing and readjusting their strategy. Feel free to check with the group what to do, if continue a bit more or to go to the debriefing.

You may ask the following questions in the end:

- 1) How did you feel during the activity?
- 2) What happened?
- 3) Are you satisfied after what you achieved?
- 4) How was it to do the activity in silence? Was it difficult or not?
- 5) What strategies did you follow to accomplish your mission?
- 6) Did you notice any leader in the group?
- 7) What would you change from what you did?
- 8) What makes a group work efficiently?

Observations

Make sure the chairs are strong enough for people running and sitting on them rapidly. Make sure that the floor is not slippery and that the chairs can stay stable on it. You may need to say to the group that they cannot touch you while you are walking among the chairs looking for the empty one.

This activity raises a high level of competition in the group and it is likely to happen that the group blames the person that fails and loses the chair. If this is the case remind the group that it is not one persons' responsibility but the group's to take care that the tired man does not sit in the chair.

If the space is not very big you can decide to make two groups, where one is performing after the other and in this case you need just half of the chairs. In this case it may be important to tell the two groups to decide on their strategy. Once they have it, remind the second group that as they will watch the first group performing they are not allowed to change their strategy as a result of the first group performance.

Activity 5

Warm up, rhythm games and body improvisations

Good way to start before doing some theatrical activities

Topics

Gender, social skills

Objectives

- ⇒ To prepare participants for the further work with theatre
- ⇒ To make participants feel safe in the group
- ⇒ To make participants aware of their body

Duration from 2 to 30 minutes

Space requirements

Preferably a large room for the participants to move freely

Group size any

1. In a circle - Clapping our hands like an orchestra.

Ask participants to form different groups. Each group is given with their hands. One person becomes the maestro and directs the orchestra.

2. In a circle - Rhythm and names.

The facilitator gives a rhythmical motive, and the whole group follows. The participants clap their hands on their thighs two times and then their fingers two times, so that the following sequence is achieved in 4/4: thighs-thighs, fingers-fingers, thighs-thighs, fingers-fingers, etc.

Then, when clapping ask participants to repeat their names to have a combination of voice and rhythm in the following sequence: thighs -thighs/ my name-my name, fingers- fingers/my name, the name of someone else in the group.

The one that hears his/her name has to continue with the game, without losing the rhythm.

3. In a circle - Zip-Zap-Zop

The word “Zip” passes round the circle from one to the other, with the voice, the head and a movement of the hands, too. I take the “Zip” from the one that stands

on my left and pass it quickly to the one that stands on my right. We are free to change the flow of the circle, by giving the word “Zap” to the one that stands on our left. So, for example, I may give “Zip” to the one standing on my right and he/she may change the circle’s flow by giving me back a “Zap”. If someone wants to stop the flow he/she says “Zop”. Then, we can either change the flow of the circle, or insist until the “Zop” becomes either a “Zip” or a “Zap”. This game is quick and it aims at a continuous rhythm with quick changes.

4. In a circle - 1-20

The aim of the game is for the team to count from 1 to 20, without two people speaking together. If two or more voices are heard together, the game starts from the beginning. The game aims at concentration and it introduces the idea of ‘giving space’ to others. You may want to ask participants to close their eyes while playing the game.

5. Body improvisations

- ⇒ Walking forwards, backwards, around, slowly, with interruptions, sideways, to and from, stepping high, low, heavy, pause and stay in stillness, allow patterns to develop, run fast, sudden changes of direction, everywhere in the room, between two points, note the light, shadow, smell, temperature of the room, listen to the sounds, in or out of the room, come in groups, empty the space etc.
- ⇒ The facilitator gives instructions: touch something blue, go to the floor, touch someone with your elbow, 3 heads together, make a circle with 5 people, touch someone’s foot, with one hand touch someone’s foot and with the other someone else’s head etc.
- ⇒ Follow a leader: Begin with walking, at any point choose your own leader, follow any aspect of their activity, anticipate them, imitate them, set up a related activity in harmony with what is going on, obstruct their activity etc. Someone else maybe is following you.
- ⇒ Tempo and speed: slow motion, normal speed, really fast. Play with these three, create sudden changes, and surprise yourself. Find a simple sequence of movements and try to give a different speed to each movement.
- ⇒ Rhythm and dynamics: we separate in pairs; we find a movement sequence that creates a simple story. We present our story, trying to give different rhythms and dynamics to our movements, doing one movement really slow, for example, and then repeating it really fast. See how our story changes, by changing our rhythm. We emphasize the role that the body plays and not the expression of the face. We try to keep the face neutral.

- ⇒ In Pairs: body dialog. Act and react to what the body of my partner says. We can play again with the dynamics and the rhythm, the quality of the movement, the use of space, the speed.
- ⇒ In Pairs: body dialog with opposites. Short body phrases. One does the opposite of what his/her partner does. “Opposite” may be the quality, the shape, the speed.
- ⇒ Chorus work: Walk as one. Separate in groups; try to move in the space as if you were one person. When you repeat the improvisation, set a leader. Each time the direction of the group changes, the leader has to change, too. The leader can play with the rhythm and the dynamics of the walk, the level of the walk (move across the floor, move by walking as an animal, move by jumping etc.). The leader may, also, play with sounds and voices while walking. The group has to follow as a chorus.
- ⇒ Sit-Stand-Walk-Run: using these four simple actions, improvise in groups of six, using the actions in relation to time/space/ the others. See the landscape and the relations that can be created.
- ⇒ Sourcing: Allow to be influenced. Choose your own space in the room. Start from resting and gradually start following any impulse, let one action flow into the next (be prepared to do nothing). Allow the activity of others on the periphery of your vision to influence what you are doing.

Activity 6

A day on the beach

My best moments of contact with the sense of touch

Topics

Personal development; social skills.

Objectives

- ⇒ To facilitate the self-perception of each person
- ⇒ To create a trustful and respectful space in the group

Duration 100 minutes

Space requirements and materials

Close and quiet space; Chairs; Music

Group size 12 to 25 participants

Number of facilitators 2 minimum

Description

Tell participants that they will do a guided visualization and explain them what it is. Make a relaxation first to help them go through the visualization (you can see the example in the activity “My Secret Place”)

Invite participants to sit in a circle with their eyes closed, breathing deeply and focusing on their breath. Allow them some time to concentrate on their breathing.

The visualization goes like this: “imagine you are on the beach, try to feel what is that beach like, how is the touch of the sand beneath your feet... listen to the sound of the sea, let yourself go with the sensation in this environment. Look at your hands, see how they turned into a very old person’s hands. Someone that has lived many different experiences, during many years.

As a facilitator try to take them to different moments of their life: childhood (remembering pleasant things you touched with your hands), teenage hood (what kind of experiences you lived through your hands). And now, imagine yourself in a future moment of your life: what beautiful things you would like to caress, touch, feel or perceive through your hands.

Invite the participants to focus on all the sensations choosing a certain moment and enjoy the feelings, smells, colours that this moment transmits to them. Give them some time to feel what this moment transmits to them and tell them to transfer all those sensations to their hands.

Then ask them to take their hands to their face and caress it trying to enjoy the moment. Step by step invite them to come back to the present moment to the room, here and now. You can make now a plenary round where you can ask them to share what they felt through their hands.

Observations

Some of the participants can have difficulties to close their eyes. In the prison context it is difficult to create a trustful space. On top of it some inmates follow some psychiatric treatment due to some mental disorders or they are in a detoxification process. As we have mentioned in other cases it is not convenient to insist to close eyes because it can be problematic, so in those cases they can do the visualisation with their eyes opened.

During the visualisation try to be attentive to the state of participants, in case you feel any of them is feeling nervous you can invite the person to leave the room.

Using arts, theatre, circus and music

Methodology 1

THE SOCIAL CIRCUS AND CIRCOSTANZA® PROJECT

Topics

Social skills; social inclusion; personal development; gender; education to legality

It is a very recent application of circus art in instances of social or physical disease/problem; it is a form of artistic mediation that allows one to intervene in problematic social contexts, creating a link between disadvantaged and non-disadvantaged reality, so it is a useful tool for social integration process.

The social circus combines the circus pedagogy to work with socially excluded and young people at risk. This approach shows how the art education is a powerful tool; it stimulates autonomy, solidarity, self-esteem, physical well-being, communication, and adaptability. These are some of the skills that are learnt and practiced.



The aim of social circus is not only to offer a future to the young people as circus performers, but rather more to focus on stimulating their self-awareness, autonomy, self-management, self-discipline and some resilience. The social circus was born from social education that allows, through its various forms, to get contact with own emotions and to strengthen self-awareness, using a universal language with only a small verbal part. The disciplines of social circus are accessible to all people and bring out their personal potential, encouraging self-esteem as well as psychological and physical growth. Across the juggling, acrobatics, magic, etc. every person can find a discipline that best represents them and in addition to that, it is also open to illiterate people because they do not need to know how to read or write. Self-discipline is essential and through constant practice, the problems and risks of social circus allow people to understand that they are able to overcome the difficulties by their own efforts. The boys discover they are strong, capable, and valuable people. Once again they are rediscovered as a person with value, and re-evaluate the belief of not being able to become a different person. The techniques of social circus deal with such issues as sexuality, social relations, inclusion, prejudice etc., and create the processes of tolerance, understanding and trust.

In the circus there is a playful component that is essential that is called, "moving games." Through movement, young people learn more about themselves and each other, developing their own potential and self-esteem. The games also creates funny moments, therefore circus activities and games become a part of comicotherapy.

The term "*circense*" (Italian) and its relative tools immediately spur enthusiasm and interest (active learning), the participants are active, they create something for themselves, driven by their needs and desires, and learning through the involvement of all senses.

EXAMPLE

UCI operators at Juvenile prison "Ferrante Apnorti" with magician Budini

UCI has created a project called Circostanza® in 2005 as a part of the social circus. It combines circus arts with dance, music and arts. This is a harm reduction project and teaches juggling, balancing, acrobatics, clowning, magic, micro-magic and miming. This project was also be done in juvenile prison; in this context it began it in 2006 and started in September and ending in July each year. The Circostanza® activity provides an initial "Welcome Moment" where we give information and talk to the boys. After the welcoming, there is an educational activity - a competition about cooperation and trust. This is followed by the technical and artistic part where you teach the participants circus techniques in a funny educational way. Finally, there is a closing part where you can play games of emotional intelligence. Everyone can talk about their emotions and give feedback. At the beginning of the activity the social circus worker uses a planning form, which is used to define the tasks one wants to accomplish.

In addition to the planning form, the operators, each time after the activity, write a report with observations, findings and problems encountered. Then, they discuss the performance as a team, expanding the exchange of information with the staff of the institute. The planning forms are also made in the final and medium term with information about the activities - the minors present, the problems encountered, the strengths and areas for improvement.

An important part in the social circus is "the Circle of Sharing" which means facilitators and beneficiaries of the social circus come together to talk about the successes, difficulties, emotions and areas for improvement. This moment of reflection for young people gives everyone the right to speak, to disagree, to express their opinions and to make contribution. The Circle of Sharing is essential for the pedagogical method of social circus, as it contributes to the development of a liberal, critical and democratic education.

The operators who wish to work in juvenile detention, require pedagogical-educational, artistic and circus preparation. The operators of Circostanza® are all professional educators, psychologists and education professionals. Beyond the educational preparation, they all have knowledge of circus and new circus. Every operator knows the basics of all the activities of circus and specialises in a specific discipline. They constantly update their studies, attend courses, workshops, seminars and conferences on young offenders, immigrants, educational or psychological

problems, crime, circus arts and other disciplines. Ongoing training is essential, as the context in which one works is dynamic.

The operators should have the following competences:

- ⇒ empathy, active listening and ability to build relationships
- ⇒ ability to withstand stressful situations
- ⇒ artistic and technical skills of circus gained from studies and experiences
- ⇒ knowledge of the methodologies of the circus and its games
- ⇒ ability to manage their emotions and control personal states of anger and nervousness
- ⇒ ability to stimulate creativity, awareness and autonomy in the young offenders
- ⇒ ability of taking care of yourself (avoiding situations that may lead to burn out)
- ⇒ adaptability
- ⇒ group management and ability to lead teams
- ⇒ understanding of forms of security needed to carry out the activity
- ⇒ knowledge on how juvenile detention works
- ⇒ ability to support the group emotionally and to encourage participation
- ⇒ skills of providing feedback to encourage the young offenders
- ⇒ creativity
- ⇒ openness, sense of humour, and positive attitude
- ⇒ ability to see each participant as an individual

It is recommended to take care of the supervision of an outside professional (psychologist or counsellor) for the social circus team: a space where they can talk about their experiences and lived within the juvenile prison.

Activity 7

Juggling

This activity, run in several sessions, ends up with a show!

Topics

Social inclusion; environment; personal development; intercultural learning; social skills; education to legality;

Objectives

- ⇒ To strengthen self-esteem and self-confidence
- ⇒ To learn how to recognize own limits and facilitate participants' awareness about the reality of their personality related to the dynamic of the group
- ⇒ To practice how be patient and perseverant
- ⇒ To learn how to work in a team
- ⇒ To facilitate collaboration among the minors and develop self -help skills
- ⇒ To develop physical skills and time perception

⇒ To discover participants' hidden creativity

Duration 1.5 hour per each session (several sessions needed – once a week)

Space requirements

A possibly large room inside the prison. The usage of a large space such as a gym allows young offenders to move more freely and encourages the participants to be active. Additionally, gyroscopic juggling or other kind of juggling techniques require a high ceiling.

Materials

Balls, clubs, flower stick, rings, Chinese plates, scarves, cigar box, markers, paper, scotch, rope, pedagogical card games

Sometimes: camera, video-camera, stage costumes to make a show and video performance

Other materials that are used at the end of the activity (closing time): "slice of emotions" or other visuals for evaluation purposes (see example in the end of this activity)

Group size 8 - 12 young for each group

Number of facilitators 2 or 3 (one of them should be experienced in social circus and juggling)

Description

The activity needs to be run in several session. In the first week of work it could be useful to introduce the daily activity with some getting-to-know-each-other, team-building games, pedagogical games. The artistic path leads to open mind behaviour from the individual to help him/her overcome common difficulties met and to be more and more conscious about their potential ability. To learn to play very well with the help of facilitators, they need to master each complicated part of the trick piece by piece and afterwards, understand how to recompose it. In this step of the activity the individuals are practicing together and they use this moment to exchange among each other suggestions, advice and tricks learnt.

Concentration and patience are two of the most important aspects that always accompany the individual for the whole workshop. Keep calm with the mistakes, be perseverant in replaying, repeating and correcting in order to complete the juggling exercises.

Before finishing the session it could be of added value for either the educator or the minor to take 5 - 10 minutes to make some emotional intelligence games to receive feedback.

With the tools of juggling, invent games that are also artistic and playful like flower diablo tennis and basket. The first employs the flower stick for the game similar to volleyball, with the difference that each roll provides a trick of the flower stick. In the second game, we use the diablo and every trick is used to throw the the tool into a basket (like basketball).

In the end of several sessions participants prepare the show for the spectators or a video presentation.

Template for evaluation



Activity 8

Balancing

“Balance, peace, and joy are the fruit of a successful life. It starts with recognizing your talents and finding ways to serve others by using them”. Thomas Kinkade

Topics

Social inclusion; environment; personal development; intercultural learning; social skills; education to legality;

Objectives

- ⇒ To strengthen self-esteem and self-confidence
- ⇒ To learn how to recognize own limits and facilitate participants' awareness about the reality of their personality related to the dynamic of the group
- ⇒ To practice how be patient and perseverant
- ⇒ To learn how to work in a team
- ⇒ To facilitate collaboration among the minors and develop self -help skills
- ⇒ To develop physical skills and time perception
- ⇒ To discover participants' hidden creativity
- ⇒ To develop skills of individual attention and concentration
- ⇒ To practise self-control and learn how manage stress

Duration 1.5 hour per each session (several sessions needed – once a week)

Space requirements

A possibly large room inside the prison. The usage of a large space such as a gym allows young offenders to move more freely and encourages the participants to be active. Additionally, gyroscopic juggling or other kind of juggling techniques require a high ceiling.

Materials

Rolla-bolla, stilts, unicycles, foam, markers, papers, scotch, rope, pedagogical card games

As in the juggling activity: Sometimes a camera, video-camera, stage costumes to make a show and video performance

Other materials that are used at the end of the activity (closing time): "slice of emotions" or other visuals for evaluation purposes

Group size 8-12 young for each group

Number of facilitators 2 or 3 (one of them should be experienced in social circus and juggling)

Description

The following small activities can be used:

- Balancing **with** an object, when the artist has to maintain a balance with one or more tools
- Balancing **on** the object, when the artist maintains himself/herself on different instruments (rolla-bolla, tense wires, balance ladders, walking globes, stilts and unicycle).

Use the balancing activity after you practice juggling; this is a moment for the participants to show consistence and patience to reach small goals. Achieving a state of equilibrium implies overcoming of all initial fears.

Activity 9

Acrobatics

Stretch your body!

Topics

Social inclusion; environment; personal development; intercultural learning; social skills; education to legality;

Objectives

- ⇒ To strengthen self-esteem and self-confidence
- ⇒ To learn how to recognize own limits and facilitate participants' awareness about the reality of their personality related to the dynamic of the group
- ⇒ To practice how be patient and perseverant
- ⇒ To learn how to work in a team
- ⇒ To facilitate collaboration among the minors and develop self -help skills
- ⇒ To develop physical skills and time perception
- ⇒ To discover participants' hidden creativity
- ⇒ To develop skills of individual attention and concentration

Duration 1.5 hour per each session (several sessions needed – once a week)

Space requirements

A really large space is needed, like a gym for the appropriate exercises such as running and moving games. It is important that there are no obstacles like tables, chairs and so on. Acrobatics requires the necessary safety spaces (foam mats).

While one operator is explaining the movement, another facilitator should be near to insure safety.

Materials

Foam mats on the floor (to guarantee safety), markers, paper, scotch, rope

As in the other 2 activities: Sometimes a camera, video-camera, stage costumes to make a show and video performance

Other materials that are used at the end of the activity (closing time): "slice of emotions" or other visuals for evaluation purposes (see example in the end of this activity)

Description

The session is set in the same way as juggling. The first 5 - 10 minutes is spent on introduction and warming up activities. The training begins with the physical warm up exercises with various instruments that will be used. This lab is supposed to be more team work oriented, so collaboration and interaction is crucial. Inside the group someone is designated as the defter and then the group is split into two smaller groups, "the porteur group" and "the agile group". The **Porteur** group form the base of human pyramid or balance exercises, usually 2 or 3 persons. The **Agile** group are going to realize the most complex areal tricks.

This practice creates interaction among the participants and enables the positive reinforcement of a single individual and the relative integration.

At the end of the technical part there is a stretching phase, followed by space for feedback.

Observations for all three activities

We realized that young offenders often need time before starting the activity in which they can speak to the operators. This moment is also important to establish the bond of trust. The bond that exists between the operator and the rest of the professionals in juvenile detention is essential. Weekly meetings called "Stop & Go" are fundamental. In these meetings, we can talk about the young offenders and specifically about their legal situations and the activities in which they are participating in. The various professionals that are working in prison then can exchange valuable information in order to create a better support network.

Strengths of the project:

- ⇒ This methodology takes into account abilities, needs and limitations of each person;
- ⇒ Learning circus skills through playing;
- ⇒ The ability of operators to create a climate of listening and group participation;
- ⇒ Presence of teams, which have become a reference point for the participants

- ⇒ The variety of circus techniques has encouraged each of the participants to learn and improve one or several techniques suited to their tastes and abilities;
- ⇒ This methodology encourages peer education;
- ⇒ It brings out qualities of the participants and invests in promoting confidence in themselves and in others;
- ⇒ It stimulates creativity and use of it as a means to enhance learning of peaceful and controlled conflict resolution.

Practice 1

Creative writing and theatre

Topics

Social skills; social inclusion; personal development; gender; education to legality; intercultural learning

This practice was implemented in the Diavata Prison, Thessaloniki Greece between 2008 and 2011.

THE TARGETS OF THE PROGRAMME:

The program works on two levels:

- the free, creative expression of the inmates, involving the depiction of their individual aesthetics, sense of humour, ideas and issues, through the conception and writing of original theatrical texts, as well as through the presentation of these texts in theatrical performances
- the reinforcement of the idea of team – work and cooperation in addition to the removal of conflicts and tensions, which can appear in places of confinement, through a creative process with a common, specific goal.

THE PROGRAM: a brief review

The beginning:

The program “Creative Writing and Theatre” started in the women’s ward of Diavata Prison, in February 2008 and continued until 2011. Initially, the program was a part of the Action Scheme entitled “*Actions for the preparation and implementation of the inmates’ rehabilitation*” which was under the auspices of the ESF Actions Implementation Authority for the Management of European Funds of the Ministry of

Labour and Social Affairs and more specifically, it was implemented through the operational program “Employment and Vocational Training.”

In the first period (February 2008 – December 2008), the program was implemented by the non-profit, nongovernmental organization “*ANTIGONI – Centre of Information and Documentation concerning Racism, Ecology, Peace and Non Violence*” in cooperation with “*ARSIS – Social Organization for the Support of the Young.*”

The Procedure:

The program “Creative Writing and Theatre” covers a wide spectrum of interests. The participants read literary and theatrical works, exercise their bodies, practice in articulation, and create sets and costumes as well as theatrical plays. At the same time, the concepts of team work and cooperation adopt a protagonist role through the exchange of opinions and the structuring and completion of a shared idea.

Each cycle of the program consists of three stages:

Common theatrical terminology and acquaintance with basic technical elements: The participants are acquainted with basic elements of theatrical education so that through play and improvisation, they can adopt a common theatrical terminology, which is vital for the team work that is going to follow. More specifically, by using elements from the Physical Theatre, the participants improvise on different qualities of movement and speech and work on exercises of rhythm, concentration, team coordination, and perception of space, expansion of the imagination, articulation, and the realization of the body and the relationship with the other members of the team.

Parallel to that, they are acquainted with different theatrical plays and playwrights so that the participants familiarize themselves with various structures and forms of theatrical writing.

Composition of the story and writing: The participants create their own stories. With the guidance of their instructors, they compose stories and develop the characters and the dialogues through improvisation. The elements of team work, cooperation and initiative are favoured and they are intense at the stage of the formation of an original theatrical work, which stems exclusively from collective work and thought. As there is not a complete text, the participants, by improvising and assigning tasks, invent and write the dialogues, select the best of them, perform and direct the final draft.

The rehearsals and the performance: After the completion of the composition of the theatrical play, the process of the rehearsals begins, having as a final goal the theatrical performance itself. Once more, the result is product of team work, cooperation and shared goal. The finished play, from its writing to its performance, direction and set and costume making, is an original play.

Review

The average participation rate of women inmates in Diavata Prison was ten to fifteen participants, sometimes decreasing to seven or eight and sometimes increasing to twenty. Taking into consideration the limited number of women inmates in this particular prison (thirty five women on average), as well as the special conditions prevailing in prisons (transfers, discharges), this number indicates the great need for creative activities and true expression within the prison institutions. Moreover, the duration and the consistency of the program in the prison along with the participants' great participation and willingness to continue, sets the foundation for its further development. A most characteristic example of this is the participants' desire to form a "branch" of their theatrical team in prison, for the members of the team who are discharged, which they call "WANTED".

The process of going towards the achievement of a specific goal, which is the formation and completion of an original idea – stemming from the team's true expression – appears to work therapeutically against the daily hardships in prison and to have a catalytic role in eliminating difference and conflict. The response to the programme of the theatrical workshop and the essential contribution of the participants, despite the hindrances that we had to cope with at times, (transfers, hunger strikes), are indicative of the great need for activities that enable the expansion of thought and expression; qualities that are considerably limited in an institutionalized environment.

The aim to strengthen team spirit and cooperation seems to be achieved to a great extent, through the pleasant process of play, improvisation and the structuring the theatrical play. The inmates see themselves working in a totally new and different framework, in which they become creative and come up with ideas that become accepted in an open to discussion environment.

The program "Creative writing and Theatre" had continuous presence in the women's ward of Diavata Prison from 2008 to 2011 and it had come to represent an environment open to the exchange of opinions and the creative expression of the inmates.

Our experience so far has shown that the consistency and stability of the programs, which are supported by the inmates themselves, are crucial in making these programs a pleasant, significant reference point among the daily difficulties of institutionalization. In contrast, the fragmentary, transient nature of most programs, due to lack of funding, culminates in reinforcing the inmates' sense of uncertainty and poor attendance.

Topics

Social skills; social inclusion; personal development; gender; education to legality

The Theatre of Pratello is a cooperative that develops and implements theatre projects with teenagers and young adults in the context of social disadvantages, particularly in the juvenile justice system. For fourteen years the theatre project within IPM of Bologna, organized manual and expressive workshops, which produced an annual show open to the audience from outside.

Another project, entitled "Theatre within the Community", involves youth who are in alternative measures to jail as well as guests of educational communities who collaborate in a festival every summer, now in its sixth edition, "Pratello. Festival Theatre & Music", during which they work as technical aids, staff and actors. The cooperative also works with projects which "build a bridge" between the educational world (higher education institutes in the region) and the world of educational communities, prison, and youth centres with theatre and writing activities, which involve a mixed groups of adolescents. Among these, there is the theatre called DIALOGHI within the IPM, bringing inside the Institute more than 500 young students to watch performances, builds opportunities for discussion, debate and joint work between different adolescences. The Theatre of Pratello, since 2008, also works with adult prisoners of Bologna producing shows that first debuted in Arena del Sole in Bologna, a permanent theatre of the city. Furthermore, it is one of the founders of the Coordination Prison Theatre Emilia Romagna, an association that brings together organizations working with theatre projects in prisons in the region, recognized in 2011 by a Memorandum of Understanding between the Regional Agency of Penitentiary Administration and Emilia Romagna. The work of Teatro del Pratello, one of the most well known in Italy for continuity and quality of artistic products, is made possible thanks to an agreement between the Municipality of Bologna, Bologna Province, Juvenile Justice Centre for Emilia-Romagna and support FOUNDS of Emilia-Romagna.

The theatre project within I. P.M. Bologna

The annual Theatre Project at the Institute for Juveniles in Bologna involves young people to participate in many workshops of theatre practices aimed to create a final show, in two areas:

- manual skills, linked to activities such as production of artefacts, costumes, scenery
- the expressive and communicative skills specifically as creative writing, body movement, theatre, editing video.

The theatre project at the IPM involves the participation of a "mixed" group formed by the Company of Pratello, which brings together young prisoners (usually 8-12), plus participants of the theatre with the training of Botteghe Molière, a theatre pedagogy project oriented towards young students both experienced and inexperienced. Every year the projects give a group of typically socially excluded participants a direct experience of the theatre, constituting the group of external actors in the shows with the inmates of Penal Institute for Minors. From year to year several other actors are added to this group (people of University of the Third Age, prison police, and figures of public life of the city).

The Final Show

The Final Show is performed every year in December with 15 day of repeat performances that are open to the audience from outside the institution, with a capacity of 99 spectators a night (the maximum allowed to enter in the Juvenile Institute). Some 1400 people see the performance each year.

The project has the following fundamental objectives:

- To educate about group work
- To recognize and positively experience their own emotions.
- To deal with an experience of self-empowerment, wherein young people can test their perseverance, repetition and precision, in order to capture the meaning and necessity of rules of order.
- To transmit skills in expressive reading, body movement and acting
- To experience theatre as an opportunity for individual work in groups.
- To create opportunities for interaction between different adolescences, overcoming mutual prejudices.
- To create positive possibilities in the process of reintegration of young offenders into society
- To build opportunities for listening and interaction among domestic and foreign youth, who are often unaccompanied minors confined in IPM waiting for their trial.
- To facilitate tolerance of differences to experience that in variety there is always an asset. The cultural roots of origin and the different visions of the world are always an asset to be valued and not to simplify and compress.

Topics

Social skills; social inclusion; personal development; gender; intercultural learning

Music is a very powerful tool you may want to use in your activities. Sometimes as background, sometimes as a learning tool and sometimes just to have some fun. Music can take different forms, you can play it in different moments, or you can invite participants to create it with some instruments. In both cases the results can be very interesting and very often participants appreciate a lot its use in the activities.

As a background: Music used in the background during other activities may bring different positive emotions to participants. Bearing in mind the context they live (prison or detention youth centre) the access to music can be very limited and restricted. Normally inmates are not allowed to access Internet or if so, under the supervision of the staff of the prison.

Your sets of music can make a difference in the routine of the participants and indeed can mean an added value and extra motivation for them to go to your workshop.

There are two possibilities when it comes to selecting the right music in the activities as a background. Sometimes participants will request specific music and songs from you that they like a lot. Playing that music can reinforce your link with the group and the trust they have in you. Another possibility is that you decide to bring your own selection of music, with different genres, rhythms and styles, which in a way can results in a new learning experience for them and it can be very beneficial for the group. You may also want to combine both possibilities giving them the chance to make music request to you while you decide in certain moments what music is more convenient.

Music as a tool: Sometimes music can be used as a means to achieve some learning objectives. For instance using percussion instruments with the group can pursue different aims such as to create group rhythms and promote the sense of belonging to the group; activate the group and energize it; serve as a way to steam out frustrations or anger through playing drums or djembes; it can serve to foster the sense of rhythm and coordination individually or as a group, etc. After certain type of activities involving strong emotions in the group, using percussion can serve very well the purpose of making people release anger, frustrations, and the group atmosphere before and after of percussion is very often very different and relaxed.

There is usually to be a general mood of relaxation in the participants after percussion sessions.

There can be occasions where the music can help you a lot in creating a relaxed atmosphere while running guided visualizations or relaxation exercises.

Then, you may want to look for relaxing sounds of bells, sounds of nature or other type of music like chill out music,

classical or new age type of music. In general it is good to have some three basic sets of music ready to use: relaxing music, energetic music and background music. The last one can be very varied and you can incorporate music from the peers (normally they request from you and then you find the music at home and bring it to the session) or your own selection.



All in all, bear in mind that music will always bring a different dynamic when using it. Sometimes silence can be very convenient for the nature of the activity you want to run, sometimes silence can be a bit disruptive for people not used to it and it can bring some feelings of emptiness and discomfort. Feel free to explore with your group what is the dynamic among them with and without music and just follow your intuition when to use it.

MATERIALS

Materials used in all activities in this context are normally inventoried when entering with them in the centre (prison or youth detention centre). It is very important to keep account of the materials used in the workshops and inform the group in order to avoid that some materials can be taken (accidentally or voluntarily). There has been cases in which a participant has sold some of the materials she/he got from the room but even worse if the missing object are scissors or pens, as they can be used as weapons.

PLANNING OF THE ACTIVITIES

Due to the characteristics of this target group, it is difficult to foresee how the planned activities will be realized in the end.

The number of participants can vary substantially from one session to another as well as the continuity and the commitment to attend the activities, being likely that part of the group can show up in particular cases and not always as we may think.

Sometimes you may want to prepare 2 or 3 different sessions depending on the number of participants you may have at the end or even depending on their mood. For instance you prepare a session with very energetic exercises that foster creativity and generates a very positive energy in the group but then, just in case,

you can prepare another session where the point is just to support the group and to nurture it through relaxation activities or other exercises involving physical contact such as hugging exercises, massage or hot chair (people say positive messages to the person seating in the chair). This way you can always have a PLAN B. Bear in mind that sometimes the emerging need of one participant can really influence the whole session and it is not bad to attend to that need and to respond to it. Other times it may happen that your feeling is the opposite, one person expresses a need that does not correspond at all with the group will, then one of you may decide to speak to this person in private while the other facilitator runs the session for the group.

Activity 10

Creating Volume

3-colour collage in 3D

Topics

Social skills

Objectives

- ⇒ To foster a space for cooperation in the group
- ⇒ To encourage creativity as well as self-esteem
- ⇒ To acknowledge the value of each member of the group

Duration 60 minutes

Space requirements and materials

Closed and quiet space; tables and chairs; different types of papers and colours: cardboard, silk paper, couched paper; scissors; glue and tape; an empty wall to put the art works from the group

Group size 7-25 participants

Number of facilitators 2 minimum

Description

Arrange the tables in the centre of the room.

Tell participants that they have to create a figure in 3D, using different papers of different textures and colours.

The number of glue sticks, rolls of tape, and scissors will be smaller than the number of participants, and this way cooperation and interaction is further promoted due to the fact that they will have to ask for some materials to the other peers.

Tell the group that they can create the piece of art they wish, with total freedom. When they finish they can stick their piece of art on the wall, using tape, choosing the place where they want to stick it and putting a title to it. When all pieces are finished you can inaugurate the exhibition, facilitating the presentation of each piece of art. Each participant can then present their piece, say the title what it represents for them.

Observations

What participants share helps the facilitator to observe group dynamics, the kind of relationship among the participants, who asks for materials, who doesn't and goes to take it him/herself, who shares and who doesn't.

If during the exhibition participants make comments or give feedback to the other people's pieces, make sure those are respectful and supportive.

This activity flows in a relaxed and funny way. You as a facilitator should try not to intervene very much, your intervention is minimal, and the group self regulates in terms of needs. In fact, the initiative to make an exhibition can start from the group and you may want to decide not to say it from the beginning and wait for them to see what happens.

If there's someone that feels ashamed to show their piece in the group, you can encourage to do it without pressing the person.

Activity 11

Let's make a comic

Comic, four vignettes, and four characters

Topics

Social skills

Objectives

- ⇒ To foster creativity and the narrative perception
- ⇒ To promote teamwork among the group of participants

Duration 100 minutes

Space requirements and materials

Close and quiet space; chairs and tables; A4 paper; white cardboard; crayons and pastels; pencils and erasers

Group size 8 to 24 participants

Number of facilitators 2 minimum

Description

Ask the participants to form groups of 4 and to choose their places. Explain them that the work consists in making a comic of 4 vignettes with 4 characters.

Explain that each member of the group will have to create a character with all its physical characteristics, personality and name.

Once they have finished with the characters they can present them to their partners and from there they can start a brainstorm about a possible story happening among the 4 characters. They will have to choose the story they want. They can input text and colour.

Once they have finished the comic in each group, they have to share with all the participants and do a brief presentation.

Observations

For this activity it is necessary that participants are motivated and opened enough for a new experience. In case they feel uneasy, more than usual, with depression and anxiety symptoms, you may consider not to do this activity because it implies a high level of concentration due to the multiple instructions and dynamism.

Activity 12

Farewell Graffiti

Let's make a farewell graffiti together!

Topics

Social skills

Objectives

- ⇒ To close a period of group activity and to raise awareness of what it means
- ⇒ To stimulate the cooperation among all participants

Duration 60 minutes

Space requirements and materials

Close and quiet space; big table in the centre of the room; flipcharts; pastels and crayons

Group size 7-25 participants

Number of facilitators 2 minimum

Description

Spread the flipchart paper (you can stick several of them to create a big one) over the table together with the pastels and crayons. Invite participants to create a collective farewell graffiti in order to close the activities they were doing during the last weeks. They can draw in the paper whatever they want, they can draw or paint about what they are taking from the workshop with them, what they found out after that process, etc. Feel free to explore different aspects you consider relevant.

They can move around the table and draw in different places. They can also interact with their peers' drawings as well as to talk and comment on what they want. The activity will be closed saying them that they can say a few words to say goodbye as this is the right moment for it.



Art therapy

Activity 13

Your “Secret Place”

Your most beautiful place on Earth!

Topics

Personal development; social skills

Objectives

- ⇒ To contribute to participants’ emotional well-being in general
- ⇒ To foster the self-support of participants through guided imaginary and art therapy
- ⇒ To encourage participants’ creativity

Duration 1.5 hour

Space requirements and materials

Quiet room; relaxing background music; A3 white sheets of paper; pastels of different colours; A4 white papers and pens.

Group size 5 to 20 participants

Number of facilitators 2 minimum

Description

This activity is run in several steps.

Step 1: Relaxation

Invite participants to sit comfortably or to lay down somewhere in the room. Tell them that you will play some soft music and you will invite them for a little journey in their minds. Explain that they can close their eyes while listening to your words or, if they prefer, they can just keep them open.

Once they are ready you can start a brief relaxation to help them to relax and to take some distance from the previous situations they experienced. For the relaxation you can decide the best way to do it, but in general, you may want to remind them about breathing deeply, feeling the air entering their lungs, filling their chest or abdomen, breathing out slowly and at the same time, imagine that every time they breathe, the air comes through their feet, going across all their body up to the head. They can repeat this image several times, and then you can focus your words on different parts of their body they must relax, following a logical order, e.g.: start with feet, thigh, knees, hips, back, abdomen, back, shoulders, arms, hands, neck, mouth, eyes, and face.

Step 2: Guided Visualization

Once the relaxation is done you can read this text and do the guided visualization as we indicate or you may decide to do your own. The important thing is that they feel they are in a beautiful place, feeling safe and protected and they have the time to really imagine this place.

“Now, begin to create a picture in your mind of a place where you can completely relax. Imagine what this place needs to be like in order for you to feel calm and relaxed.

Start with the physical layout of the place you are imagining... where is this peaceful place? You might envision somewhere outdoors... or indoors... it may be a small place or large one... create an image of this place.

(pause)

Now picture some more details about your peaceful place. Who is in this place? Are you alone? Or perhaps you are with someone else? Are there other people present? Animals? Birds? Imagine who is at your place, whether it is you only, or if you have company.

(pause)

Imagine even more details about your surroundings. Focus now on the relaxing sounds around you in your peaceful place. Now imagine any tastes and smells your place has to offer. Imagine the sensations of touch... including the temperature, any breeze that may be present, the surface you are on... imagine the details of this calming place in your mind.

Focus now on the sights of your place - colours, shapes, objects, plants, and water... all of the beautiful things that make your place enjoyable.

To add further details to this relaxing scene, imagine yourself there. What would you be doing in this calming place? Perhaps you are just sitting, enjoying this place, relaxing. Maybe you imagine walking around... or doing any other activities.

Picture yourself in this peaceful place. Imagine a feeling of calm... of peace.... a place where you have no worries, cares, or concerns.... a place where you can simply rejuvenate, relax, and enjoy just being.

(pause)

Enjoy your peaceful place for a few moments more. Memorize the sights, sounds, and sensations around you. Know that you can return to this place in your mind whenever you need a break.

In these last few moments of relaxation, create a picture in your mind that you will return to the next time you need a quick relaxation break. Picture yourself in your peaceful place.

When you are ready to return to your day, file away the imaginary place in your mind, waiting for you the next time you need it.

Turn your attention back to the presence. Notice your surroundings as your body and mind return to their usual level of alertness and wakefulness. Feel this room again and the presence of your peers. Little by little start moving your body, take your time, there's no hurry.

Keep with you the feeling of calm from your peaceful place as you return to your chair or place again”

Step 3: Drawing

After that, each person comes back to their place in the room. Tell them that they have in front of them an A3 paper and the idea is that they take some time to paint the place they were in their imagination. They can use the materials (pastels, crayons, or other colours) you prepared to do so. Let them have about 15 – 20 minutes to recreate and paint that place. Tell them to put a title to the drawing once it is finished.

Step 4: Debriefing

Once everybody finished drawing, invite everybody to put their paintings on the floor in a way that they are visible for everybody. The idea is to organize a kind of improvised gallery where everybody can see the paintings of the others. Allow some time (5-10 min) for the group to go around and have a look at the different drawings. After that tell them that they can share as much as they want about their drawings and that they can take the floor if they want. This moment is just about expressing what they would like about their drawings and it is a very important moment for them to elaborate after the visualization and the drawing. You can ask questions to encourage people to talk such as: how did you feel doing this activity? How was it to do it? Was it difficult? Do you want to share something you experienced?

You can finish the activity instructing participants that they can use this drawing as a self-support measures for those moments in which they feel not good or sad.

Indeed the drawing can serve as a tool that they can use in the way of a meditation and it can brings them back to such positive and supportive environment they were in the exercise.

Observations:

This activity requires some facilitation skills from the facilitator such as being patient, speaking slowly during the visualization, actively listening to what people may share after in the debriefing and more importantly it requires the ability not to interfere with their experience by asking too many questions, or by suggesting how the place they imagine looks like. You must try to leave enough space for them to imagine and to express what they consider relevant from their experience. There is an important remark, if you know that some participants are under some treatment or with schizophrenia please refrain from doing this activity. Guided visualizations in general are not recommended for people under such circumstances, in case you have someone like that, you can skip the step 2 of the visualization.

Variation of the activity: You can add one more element in the visualization. The possibility to imagine someone participants give credit to, some teacher, master, or guide they could visualize and that is present in that place. This presence of a very special person they feel they can learn and be protected by. Once they complete step 2 and step 3 you can add then a 4th step, where participants are invited to write a letter (as if they were that Guide) to themselves, positive, encouraging and supportive, imagining what this person could tell them. They can write the letter in the back of the drawing. Then later, you can approach this part in the debriefing and if they like, they can share what the “Guide” told them.

This kind of activity comes from different psychology schools such as Transpersonal or Gestalt and the idea behind is to reinforce the self-support and the inner healing wisdom of the inmate. Doing exercises like this they can realize that there is a healthy and wise part in themselves despite all health problems they may have or had in the past.

Activity 14

Feeling my body

Feeling my body like being an animal or an object, and I move across the space

Topics

Personal development; social skills

Objectives

- ⇒ To facilitate self-perception of the body
- ⇒ To foster interaction and movement within the group

Duration 120 minutes

Space requirements and materials

Close space without interruptions; percussion instruments; A4 paper; pens, chairs and tables or carpet in the floor.

Group size 15 to 25 participants

Number of facilitators 2 minimum

Description

One of the facilitators starts playing different rhythms with percussion instruments while participants move and dance in the space. Tell them to be aware of their feet and the way they walk, and how they feel the contact with the floor. Invite them to move their body following the rhythms of the music and to go all over the room. Ask them to pay attention on how they feel their body, physical sensations that they experience.

Characters (animal and/or object): Following the movement of their body and without interrupting, invite them to visualize their body as being an animal or an object feeling what the physical sensations are and how this animal or object is moving in space. You can tell them to explore the space during the movement, to interact with their peers. Warn the group when there is one minute left to finish the activity and ask them to stop where they are when it's over and tell them to close their eyes. Ask them to check how they feel physically and emotionally.

Invite the group to write down about the activity, which animal or object they were and how they felt.

Plenary round: Share as much as they want from what they wrote.

Percussion: Invite participants for a last dance focussing attention on their feet and to de-role from the animal or object they were in the previous activity. The idea is that they get rid off the previous role or identity and become themselves again.

Observations

It is important to respect the rhythm of each person to understand their limits without pushing them too much. You have to be attentive to this dynamic. It is possible that there is no interaction among participants and then you can try to encourage it a bit, but if there is no reaction it is better not to insist. You as a facilitator can intervene in some cases when the participant gets blocked and doesn't move. Be attentive to the difficulty of the person and help him or her at the beginning with a little movement that he/she has to follow and you repeat it with him/her until he/she can do it alone.

If there is no time to make the final dance to de-role participant from their character you can still do the de-rolling inviting them to step strongly on the floor being very aware of what they put down to the floor (the role they had).

Activity 15

Here and now

Share with the group how you are here and now

Topics

Personal development; social skills

Objectives

- ⇒ To help participants realize about the perception they have about themselves
- ⇒ To create space of trust in the group and to help participants to get to know each other

Duration 100 minutes

Space requirements and materials

Close and quiet place; tables and chairs; A4 and A3 paper; pastels and crayons.

Group size 7 to 25 participants

Number of facilitators 2 minimum

Description

Arrange the tables in a circle or in the centre of the room. Another option is that the participants arrange the space in the way they wish.

Tell participants that they have to make a drawing about how they feel here and now. Explain briefly how the pastels and crayons can be used and how they can mix colours and create new ones from what they have.

When the majority of the group has finished the drawings ask them to put a tittle to it. There are 2 options when giving time to make the drawing, give the group 15 minutes or give them the time they need to finalize the exercise. Those who finish should wait in silence until the others are done. To end up the activity, instruct the group to observe the drawing and to reflect what it says to them.

Tell the group that when observing their drawing they can first check what is obvious that they perceive in it and then they can reflect on the emotions that the drawing reflects.

You can have a plenary presentation where each person can show the drawing, the title and the description of the obvious and the emotional elements that they perceive in the painting.

Observations

The arrangement of the furniture gives you information about the attitude of the group to work together or to work on an individual basis. In case they sit individually, in the debriefing during the presentation of the drawings you can arrange the chairs in a circle creating possibility for people to look at each other.

Participants usually do not have knowledge about art technics and most of them consider that they can't draw. It is important to explain that they don't need that knowledge and that it is about exploring with the colours and the shapes.

It can happen that some participants get blocked in front of the white paper. In this case allow some more time for them. In case they need some help you can support them by listening about the difficulty they are experiencing, encouraging that they start drawing in the paper (remind them that it is ok, it is just a paper and that if they don't like what they did, they can always start again).

Activity 16

I am a landscape...

What is my inner emotional landscape like?

Topics

Personal development

Objectives

- ⇒ To raise awareness about the personal inner emotional situation
- ⇒ To create a trustful and respectful space in the group

Duration

60 minutes (the duration of the activity will depend of the number of participants and the time for each of them in the final plenary round)

Space requirements and materials Closed space; A3 white cardboard; temperas; brushes; chairs and tables.

Group size 7 to 25 participants

Number of facilitators 2 minimum

Description

Invite participants to sit in a circle and explain that they are going to take part in a guided visualisation. Start making a relaxation exercise as described in the activity called “My Secret Space”. It is very important that their feet are in contact with the floor and while they are breathing they feel their body in that moment. After the relaxation participants make 3 deep breaths and little by little they close their eyes. Then, start the guided visualisation; you can say this: “Imagine that you are in front of a road, you are walking in this road with your own pace, observing how it is, and it is a sandy path, rocky, made of asphalt... Feel how it is to walk in this road... Observe the world around you: how is the landscape? Are there plants? Which colours do you see? Is it sunny? Are there clouds? What is the temperature? What can you smell? How do you feel in that landscape? Step by step continue walking and notice how the landscape changes... Observe how the landscape is, pay attention to the details, colours, smell, temperature, and how you feel in that landscape... Keep on walking and see how the landscape changes and ones more observe around you and check how you feel... Little by little you can come back saying goodbye to the places you went through and step by step come back to this room... Take a deep breath 3 times and feel your body sitting on the floor, here and now”. Without talking ask participants to keep in contact with their inner state and invite them to sit in front of the table and draw one of the landscapes that caught their attention the most. That tittle of the drawing should be “I am a landscape ... and ...” and ask participants to add 2 adjectives to that sentence.



Later, in the plenary round, ask participants to present one by one their drawing saying the title, describing what they see in the painting in first person tense and how they feel in that landscape.

At the end of the round you can invite them to say loud one word about how they feel before they leave the room.

Observations

Some of the participants can have difficulties to close their eyes. In the prison context it's difficult to create a trustful space. On top of it, some inmates follow some psychiatric treatment due some mental problems or they are in a detoxification process. As we have mentioned in other cases it is not convenient to insist that the participants should close their eyes, so in those cases they can do the visualisation with their eyes opened.

During the visualisation try to be attentive to the state of participants, in case you feel any of them is feeling nervous you can invite the person to leave the room.

Regarding the timing for making the drawing you can give them 20 minutes or the time they really need. During the plenary round the group has to respect the speaker and each person can share with the group as much as they want. You as a facilitator foster respectful attitude among the participants with regard to the person that is presenting his or her painting. You have to mention that this is a space for trust and confidentiality, it is a space for respect and no aggression.

In case some participants need a lot of time to present keep in mind the available time left in the session and if you consider that is not enough time for the rest of the participants try to limit softly his or her intervention and invite the person to continue in other moment or space available (Maybe individually with you). You can also remind this person about the need of the other peers to present as well.

Activity 17

Feet Silhouette

Share with the group your perception of the World

Topics

Personal development

Objectives

- ⇒ To help the participants to see their own perception of themselves
- ⇒ To foster cooperation in the group
- ⇒ To develop participant's empathy

Duration 100 minutes

Space requirements and materials Close and quiet space; tables and chairs; a separate space without tables and chairs; white A3 cardboard or even bigger; tempera of various colours (primary colours, black and white are essential); brushes (different sizes); pencils

Group size 7-20 participants

Number of facilitators 2 minimum

Description

Hand out a piece of card board to each participant. Ask them to stand in a circle putting their card board on the floor. Then, invite them to stand on the paper and to draw the silhouette of their feet using the pencil (with shoes or without, the participant or the group can decide)

After this, explain that you will do a small standing visualization. If any participant has difficulties to close the eyes or feels dizzy he/she can do it with eyes open.

Participants stand over the silhouettes and close their eyes. They must notice the contact of their feet with the floor, paying attention to the breathing and their feelings. Invite participants to feel what the floor is like, what material it is made of, what colour, texture, if it is soft or hard, keeping an eye at all possible details.

Next, tell them to pay attention to how they feel there, how they feel the touch of the floor in their feet, what emotions come to them. Little by little they raise their head, make a few deep breaths, and start opening their eyes, each person in their own tempo.

Tell participants to come back to their place, to their table, chair and to paint in the cardboard the floor they visualized, leaving without painting the inner part of the silhouette of both feet.

After the painting, invite the group to make a kind of path putting all the drawings in a line. You as a facilitator are supposed not to organize it but leave the group the freedom to do it. The path will be done how all participants agree on it.

Once the path is ready, participants are invited to walk on it one after the other, taking their time to walk and to feel each painting in their body and the emotions that come to them. The exercise must be done in silence and with a respectful attitude from everybody.

The first participant stands over the first painting of the path putting his/her feet inside of it. When the first participant goes to the second drawing, the second participant can step on the first drawing, and so on until all participants go through the whole path.

Give this piece of instruction to the participants: “check how you feel over this floor and what sensations come to you”.

Once they finalise this walk, you can start a feedback time where each participant can say how they felt in each painting, which physical sensations they got and what they realized after walking the path.

Observations

You can do this exercise in different phases of the group process, in the beginning of it or in a later stage. The results may show the phase of development of the group as such.

As a variation of this exercise you may want to invite participants to also write down what they felt in each painting as well as doing a further personal introspection with each participant.

It is important to remember that what each participant feels with each painting belongs to him/herself even if it is about someone else's painting.

This perception also facilitates that participants find their own emotions in the other peers, as well as develop empathy.

Activity 18

My mask

I make my mask and I walk with it

Topics

Personal development

Objectives

- ⇒ To stimulate a playful attitude and creativity in the group
- ⇒ To help participants to gain a perception of the self
- ⇒ To generate a space for group trust and mutual understanding

Duration 90 minutes

Space requirements and materials

Close and quiet space; tables and chairs; flipchart paper of different colour; pastels and crayons; scissors; glue and tape

Group size 7-25 participants

Number of facilitators 2 minimum

Description

You can start the activity with a plenary round in order to allow participants to express how they feel in that moment, emotionally and physically.

Then arrange the materials in a big table in the centre of the room and put the chairs around. Invite the group to sit around and start preparing masks each person identifies with. They can use the materials for that. You may also want to make the masks using other type of materials such as clay; in that case bear in mind that you will need some more time as well as other materials.

Once the masks are made invite the group to do a parade with everybody wearing their own mask. Each participant will present their mask in the way of a fashion show. Each participant will walk in the catwalk and for this you can encourage and animate the process to make it more dynamic and fun for them. Invite them also to animate the process so that everybody contributes to the atmosphere of being in a real “catwalk show”. Once everybody went through the catwalk, you may want to invite the whole group to go together again through it.

Observations

After the activity you can run a debriefing of it. The participants can also get some minutes to write down individually or share in plenary how they felt with their mask, explain its characteristics and if they realized about something new about themselves.

Peers can also give feedback during the individual catwalks with the important remark of being respectful and avoid any kind of aggressive behaviour.

Normally this activity happens in a funny and relaxed way and it invites people to play and have fun.

You may want to use some percussion, done by one of the facilitators, adapting it to the movement of the participant and without being directive but just to adapt to the “walker”.

Activity 19

Caricatures

It is funny to see my caricature and to caricaturize others

Topics

Social skills; personal development

Objectives

- ⇒ To raise awareness about self-stereotypes and prejudices and about others
- ⇒ To foster the interaction within the group from a humoristic point of view

Duration 60 minutes

Space requirements and materials

Close space; A4 paper; pastels and crayons; chairs and tables

Group size 7 to 20 participants

Number of facilitators 2 minimum

Description

Arrange the table in pairs, one in front of the other, or in 2 lines. Participants sit one in front of the other. Invite them to draw the person who sits now in front of them. The drawing is a caricature that has to exaggerate some features of the partner, it can also involve using strong colours. Give them about 15 or 20 minutes to do this.

Invite them to change partner and to do the caricature again in the pair, but this time give them 10 minutes, when they finish each caricature they have to give it to the partner. End up the activity with a plenary round. You can ask them what do they observed in the caricatures they did; peers are also allowed to give feedback. Finally ask each person to say one word that expresses the emotion the person feels.

Observations

Generally this is an activity that creates fun and a relaxed atmosphere. You as a facilitator can support each participant to get rid off the self-judgement so that that they could open to exaggeration and to take things with a sense of humour. In case there is a conflict between any of the participants, try to bear in mind that this is an space for respect and knowledge, which means that this conflict could be worked out in further sessions.

This activity allows the participants to be aware about how they perceive the others, him/herself and also about the image that we project, in a soft way and as an introduction of a further deeper work.

Activity 20

Four emotions

Let yourself go by your feelings

Topics

Personal development; social skills

Objectives

- ⇒ To raise awareness about the personal inner emotional situation
- ⇒ To facilitate self-perception of each person
- ⇒ To create a trustful and respectful space in the group

Duration 100 minutes

Space requirements and materials

Close space; tables and chairs; A3 paper; pastels and crayons; music

Group size 12 to 25 participants

Number of facilitators 2 minimum

Description

Start the activity with a plenary round in order to find out how people feel here and now. Divide the room into four spaces: each space represents one emotion or state of mood: the first space is called “relaxation” and when the participants enter in this space, they will sit on a chair, close their eyes, take a deep breath trying to connect with their breathing; invite them to let them go by the sensations that this state produces, trying not to think and not to feel anything else but relaxation. They have to stay in this space for at least five minutes. Once they have gone through the first they enter in the second space “Doubts and fears”; invite them to focus their thoughts towards the doubts they feel right now, to focus on their fears, here and now, where they come from, how they make them feel. They will stay in that space for about five minutes. When they have gone to the second space, they will change to the third, “Anger”; ask them to try to feel what makes them feel angry and invite them to try to get rid off it, maybe by screaming or stepping on the floor; they will stay in that

space for about five minutes. The last space you will ask them to go to is “Happiness”. Tell them to think about the things that make them feel happy and smile during their life, people that made/make them happy, the events that make them content; in this moment you can play some happy music that invites dance and movement, letting them go free and following the rhythm, they will stay in this space for about five minutes. After the four spaces ask them to choose the state that best represents how they feel here and now, tell them to go to that space and to explore where all those emotions, sentiments or perceptions come from when they are in that space. Finally give each participants an A4 paper where they will have to draw a human silhouette in which they have to write: in the head, the thoughts that they had in that space; in chest, how they felt; in the hands, the tools they have (in the context of the prison) to try to stay ok and in the feet they will write the support they can count on (people, music, books, etc.). Once they have finished the silhouette call everybody for a plenary round in which they will be invited to present their silhouette, talking about what was their inner process depending on the spaces they were.

Workcamps, youth exchanges and youth initiatives

Practice 3

Involvement of young offenders in short-term international project

Topics

Social skills; social inclusion; health; human rights; personal development; intercultural learning; environment; gender; education to legality

Informagiovani co-operates with different bodies of the Juvenile Justice System in Italy, involving young offenders in local and international activities, in particular in international voluntary projects and in youth exchanges.

Started in 2002 with one participant, the work initially started in Sicily spread all over Italy, and in 2012 involved about 30 participants from different regions of Italy with an yearly planning of activities. Involving young offenders in international volunteering activities, no matter if they are run in Italy or abroad, helps them to broaden their horizons, to “start including in their dreams travelling as a learning experience” as one of the pioneer social worker who had first the idea to include one of her youngsters into these international experience said about the importance of including them into international volunteering activities.

In fact, joining such a kind of activities broaden the horizon not only of international volunteers but also for young offenders, not so often used to go out from their neighbourhood. If they live in a big city, they even ignore the centre of the city felt as a really far destination.

Joining such an intense experience as international volunteering activities can be the tool for them to see that there are other possibilities outside their normal daily life and that these other possibilities can be a good starting point to start improving their life.

These are the different international activities IG is involving young offenders into.

Workcamps

Workcamps are short-term volunteer projects which are organized by different organization all around the world through international settled networks and their duration can vary usually from two weeks until one month; they can host generally from 8 to 15 volunteers from different countries (max. 2 volunteers from the same country) with no age limits. During a workcamp volunteers live together in one place and work together on some concrete project together to help some local organisation, e.g. repairing tables in the forest, cleaning the city, etc. Camps can be also about helping local NGOs to organize a festival of cultures, helping with some small agricultural work in permaculture farm or renovating a building. What is important is that through practical manual work, volunteers get acquainted with the social/environmental/cultural value of the project or get to know local problems. That is demanding for international volunteers and pushes them to learn, to deepen

their understanding about that issue and gives them practical results allowing them to learn about themselves and the other culture having contact with the local people and international volunteers at the same time in a continuous learning process.

The main themes for a workcamp can be:

1. Antiracism, Antifascism, Refugees and Ethnic Minorities
2. North-South Solidarity
3. Peace and Disarmament
4. Disabilities
5. Children, Teenagers, Elderly People
6. Environment
7. Sexuality and Gender
8. Socially Disadvantaged
9. Art, Culture, History
10. Ideology and Spirituality

During workcamp volunteers have the possibility not only to help to local community and gain new skills and knowledge, but it is also a unique possibility to share their cultures and traditions. During every workcamp volunteers focus on one particular topic but it is a way also to share their own culture through organizing intercultural dinners and presentations about their own countries.

Volunteers are only asked to pay their travel cost and they receive food and lodging as an exchange with their work and concrete support to the project they join.

Youth exchange

Youth exchange are also short-term mobility project, financed from the Youth in Action programme, which bring together group composed by 4-8 young participants per country plus a leader from two or more European or neighbouring countries. Youth exchanges last for 10-15 days and participants meet together to discuss and work together on some topic relevant for today's Europe, e.g. environmental sustainability, European awareness, intercultural learning, etc. A young person does not participate in the project alone but within a national group which makes it also interesting, as participants can bring different experience depending on their background.

Young offenders in workcamps and youth exchanges

IG involves young offenders in the youth exchange projects or camps which are run in Italy but also abroad. In every project we involve max 1-2 young offenders from different USSM (social services for minors) of Italy because in our experience joining these kind of activities is more enriching, as they are more motivated to socialise with foreigners and not only stay all the time within their national group. Deciding to send young offenders to international activities is a matter of joint work

and evaluation made by social workers who are working on daily basis with the involved youngster, and IG staff who knows all the available projects and therefore they can together decide what it is better for the young participant.

According with the maturity and level of self-esteem and autonomy of each youngster, there are different steps to join the international activities for young people. They can start from an international volunteering activity in their region, or in another region of Italy, a Youth exchange in Italy then abroad and finally joining a short-term EVS project

Volunteer activities as a tool of social inclusion

Volunteer activities are the core of IG international activities. They get even more value if the group is formed by people coming different backgrounds not creating ghettos and facilitating mutual understanding and tolerance. International activities help to foster sense of belonging to community and recognise own potential for each volunteer to feel useful for the society, being able act towards change and above all it provides a concrete output from the project joined, a concrete result of practical activities.

During international volunteer projects participant work max. 6 hours per day, 5 day in week and also in youth exchanges we dedicate few days to some small practical tasks.

Simple physical work put all volunteers at the same level. Also if there are big differences between participants (age, language barrier, cultural differences) or some participants are just too shy to start communication, during moments of volunteering they are “forced” to interact together since they want to fulfil the task.

How to start

Placing young offenders in the short-term international projects such as workcamps or youth exchanges is a process which requires intensive collaboration with bodies of juvenile justice system. In Italy volunteering activities are a part of restorative justice programmes and young offender in probation period can join even activities which take place abroad. Their participation is prepared jointly by the youth worker who is following each of them and by the IG leader or coordinator of the chosen activity. At the end of the activity, coordinators and leaders will write a report to the Social Service offices in order to evaluate the behaviour and challenges or changes. This document would be included, together with the minor offender report, with all the other files to be given and kept by the judges for final sentence.

Preparation/support before participation in workcamp or youth exchange.

Participation of young offenders in international workcamps or youth exchanges is not easy experience because the majority of young offenders very rarely or never travelled more than few kilometres from their house. Therefore preparation is fundamental for their successful participation in it.

Collaboration with social workers is fundamental and thus important that they receive in time information about that workcamp/youth exchange and know how it works. Support from the side of social assistant is important also because there is

generally lack of understanding for this kind of activities from the side of parents and family. For this reason we have carried on training sessions for social workers involving them also in mini workcamps.

Minicamp- experience of living and working together

To make young offenders more familiar with the experience which awaits them is good to organize small simulations of workcamps/youth exchanges. We call this simulations “minicamps”. During this experience, which lasts generally not more than 2 days they can experience daily life in an international voluntary projects, with clear rules, tasks for cleaning and cooking in shifts and examples of practical manual volunteering activities, national evening (typical activity of workcamps during which participants present their food, culture, traditions to the others). To make this experience as authentic as possible we try to organize them in cooperation with other local NGOs. We use this opportunity also to present them projects they can participate in. It is important also for us to know them better before we send them to a project and to see how they interact in a wider group.

Very important role in this preparation meetings is played by the “experienced” young offenders who have participated in some international volunteer project previously and can directly tell their experience as a peer. This moment is important for both sides. For young offenders it is more interesting to listen to a direct experience but also for the “experienced” young offender it is a significant moment of recognition of their volunteer work and participation.

Minicamp is an important experience also because it introduces to young offenders the basic concept of common living together and sharing which is generally very different from what they experience in community or prison.

Meeting with the leader

Another important phase of preparation is the meeting of social assistant and young offender with the appointed leader who is going to coordinate the project/bring the group abroad. During this meeting general rules for participation should be explained and a specific “social contract” is discussed and signed. Social Contract contain detailed description of duties and rights of each participant during the international volunteer project. Youngsters are informed also about travel possibilities and arrangements and about the leader’s report which will be written after the end of the project.

The contact between young offender and leader before project is necessary as it helps to create a good relation between the leader and the young person. It is also important for the parents. Parents often transfer their anxiety for having their kids far from them, demotivating them to join the activities and therefore it is really important for them to train them to be responsible towards the commitment taken. Often the youngster or his/her family is not able to afford the ticket expenses, especially if youngsters are joining a youth exchange abroad so IG buys the ticket for the youngster, and therefore asks to give a “down payment”, which would be returned in case they would participate in the project but would be however kept in case of “sudden illnesses “or “no show” the day when the project starts.

Leader should be in contacts also with social workers of young offender to receive all information about young offender which are relevant to their participation in project. For example it is important to know if the youngster has been drug or alcohol dependent.

Tips how to work with young offenders in workcamp and youth exchanges and the most frequent problems

The work with young offenders during the exchange or workcamp is very different from that during activities. Workcamp or youth exchange is an experience of living together 24h per day. Young offenders are out of their environment and they have better possibility to express they individuality out of community. They are individuals not part of group.

- Respect-trust

Young offenders like all other people have the need to feel themselves being respected. This is important especially from the part of leader. Leader should create an atmosphere in which everybody feels respected also if there are big differences in the group. It is also very important to show trust.

- Responsibility

To help young offender to integrate into the group and feel good in the project you can also give him responsibility that helps him to find his/her “role” in project. He/she can help you with organization of work (many of our young offenders are really skilled in manual work or cooking). Giving a particular responsibility is also a very good way how to motivate them during volunteer activities. Giving responsibility is also an effective way how to solve some problematic situation.

- Respect the rules

It is good to establish rules of living in camps or youth exchange together with all participants (shifts of cleaning, cooking, organizing free-time activities, place for socialization, and place to rest).

House rules and particularly small conflicts about house rules (when some participant ignores them) are perfect examples to show to young offenders practically the importance of rules in society.

The official rules of participation in workcamp/youth exchange have to be respected during all the time without exceptions. Respecting the rules for them is not only a matter of caprice, but it is part of their restorative process.

- How to overcome language barrier

The official language of all international project is English, therefore young offender may have problems to communicate with other volunteers what can lead to excluding him/her from the group. Organising simple letting-to-know-each other games may help. Also during the planning phase the leader should think about this problem and try to choose methods, in which the young person will be able to participate (e.g. sport activities).

The leader should also help with translation, especially at the beginning of the project.

One of the biggest mysteries of universe is how some participants (very often young offenders) who know just 10 words in English are able to communicate with everybody and express any of their needs.

- Good work!

One of the biggest motivator of volunteers in any age, culture and religion is a simple sentence: “Good work, guys!” This sentence has a double value with young offenders. It is very important to appreciate all their initiatives and volunteer activities, of course if they deserve appreciation.

Human rights education

Methodology 3

Human rights education with young offenders

Topics

Social skills; personal development; health; human rights; social inclusion; intercultural learning; gender; education to legality

There are many explanations what human rights education is about. However, it is important to remember that, whatever the definition, human rights education involves three aspects:

- ⇒ Learning **about human rights**, knowledge about human rights, what they are, and how they are safeguarded or protected;
- ⇒ Learning **through human rights**, recognising that the context and the way human rights learning in organised and imparted has to be consistent with the human rights values (e.g. participation, freedom of thought and expression, etc.) and that in human rights education the process of learning is as important as the learning in itself and is actually part of learning;
- ⇒ Learning **for human rights**, by developing skills, attitudes and values for the learners to apply human rights values in their lives and to take action, alone or with others, for promoting and defending human rights.

Therefore, human rights education is not only about learning what human rights we have, and what they actually mean; it is also about developing practical skills and attitudes of respect towards the others. It is also about being able to take action for your own rights and the rights of the others.

Human rights start with a human being, as every human being has human rights due to the fact that he/she is human. Secondly, human rights are also human as they were created by human beings and they are laid down in many national and international documents. Thirdly, human rights are human as they can be violated by human beings.

This is one of the most difficult fact for many people to accept – that human rights belong to everyone, even to very serious criminals closed in prisons. They have some rights restricted (like right to freedom) or limited (like right to privacy); however, most of the rights apply to them and need to be observed and protected, especially the right to freedom of expression, right to fair trial, freedom from torture, freedom from discrimination or right to safety and security of a person.

Why do young offenders need to know about human rights?

1. Young offenders who are in the closed detention centres or institutions are very often undergoing trials or interrogations. They need to know what rights they have in such situations, like right to a hearing in a language a person speaks or right to having a defence lawyer. Moreover, the techniques of interrogation should follow certain principles and standards in line with the European human rights law. If this is violated, the offenders should know where to turn up to for support or investigation.
2. Prison has sometimes its own rules, there are power structures and power games the inmates play. Most of them are illegal and create the situation that threatens personal safety and security. One should know how to protect themselves from this practices and where to turn up for help.
3. Life in prison or detention centre is regulated by law (internal or national). It is good to know what one can and can't do or what is allowed for the guards to do.
4. Human rights are about respect and valuing human dignity. Human rights education helps to develop skills of co-operation, listening, communication and negotiating different standards. It also aims to develop attitudes of tolerance, respect to the other people's needs and expectations, showing support and help. It also empowers people to make their own decisions and build self-esteem that young offenders very often lack.

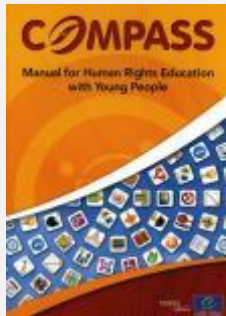
Human rights education is a useful tool to work with young offenders as:

- It starts from what people already know and understand. It does not impose opinions and create power structures between the facilitators and participants. It aims at building new knowledge, skills and attitudes on the ground that is the closest to participants' experience
- It motivates people to take action for their own rights and the rights of the others; this actions is sometimes small but it has an empowering effect
- It deals with the problems that are relevant for young offenders, like health, violence, safety, discrimination, and many others. Therefore, it is not providing an abstract learning but something that is close to participants' lives.
- It responds directly to young offenders' needs and deals with the issues they sometimes do not know how to manage.
- It is based on freedom of expression and creates the safe space for the young offenders to discuss, exchange opinions and views.
- It can be done with a variety of the methods: simulation exercised, role plays, theatre exercises, working in pairs or group to achieve consensus. Therefore, it is interesting for the participants and provides dynamism in learning.
- It may improve the relations between the inmates in detention.

A socially inclusive society is defined as one where all people feel valued, their differences are respected, and their basic needs are met so they can live in dignity. Social exclusion is the process of being shut out from the social, economic, political and cultural systems which contribute to the integration of a person into the community

Cappo 2002

Human rights education can be also used to prevent offence or violence. Human rights education is a legal right under international law. All people have the rights to human rights education - Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that everyone has a right to education and that “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace”.



In 2012 the Council of Europe published the revised version of COMPASS – Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People that provides not only the theoretical background on human rights and human rights education but also includes many educational activities. These activities are ready to use and do not require extensive knowledge to prepare and run with young people; they are designed the way that is accessible and understandable for young people to be both participants and facilitators.

SOME USEFUL RESOURCES

Books and booklets

1. JUST Juvenile Justice - Development of child rights based methods of intervention to prevent juvenile crime and promote reintegration of young offenders - Italy, Greece, Romania. JLS/2008/ISEC/AG/097. Manual of presentation and methods and intervention, Save the Children Italia 2011

Available in English at:

https://www.google.pl/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0CCoQFjAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.eucpn.org%2Fdownload%2F%3Ffile%3DIT_JUST.%2520Juvenile%2520Justice.pdf%26type%3D8&ei=xJbMUeniNoXUtQaY2oCgAQ&usg=AFQjCNFcopkrwRXccHLf9q5Pe3UYSloQgQ&sig2=WfqF2JuvzLNZ93AZlg6CXQ&bvm=bv.48572450,d.Yms

2. No Offence. A practical booklet for setting up international youth projects with young offenders, ex-offenders and young people at risk of offending or currently in prison, Salto-Youth Inclusion Resource Centre

Available in English at:

<http://www.salto-youth.net/downloads/4-17-1414/NoOffence.pdf>

3. COMPASS – Manual for Human Rights Education with Young People, Council of Europe 2012

The older version of the manual is available online in English, French, Russian and Arabic at:

<http://eycb.coe.int/compass/>

Other Internet resources:

1. Video about social circus - <http://youtu.be/smeNmZJIndg> (in Italian)

2. The Prison Performance Network – information, resources and networking for artists/educators who facilitate performance work with prison

<http://www.prisontheatreconsortium.blogspot.com>

3. The Prison Arts Coalition – many resources on working with arts in prison

<http://theprisonartscoalition.com/resources/>