

DREDERIK

This activity was created by Søholm 4H (Denmark) and Las Niñas del Tul (Spain) as part of an Erasmus+ Key Action 2 small project, co-funded by the European Union. As youth workers engaged with gender-related topics in our local communities, we collaborated to design this exercise to encourage exploration, reflection, and constructive dialogue about all things gender.

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Aim of the Activity

The purpose of this activity is to simulate realistic conversations with characters who hold problematic or disputable views about gender. By meeting and/or embodying these characters, participants will explore the complexities and frustrations that come with addressing rigid, biased, or controversial beliefs in direct conversation. This experience aims to build empathy, resilience, and dialogue skills when engaging people with challenging viewpoints, in a controlled environment.

Disclaimer: the activity is deliberately designed to provoke “uncomfortable” conversations with characters that are designed to not be interested in constructive dialogue. This allows to simulate such discussions in a controlled environment and to reflect on how they may affect the participants emotionally and mentally. It is extremely important to stress that the exercise is a role play and give the group enough time to “step out” of the role play and debrief properly.

The character cards are available through the links below, but you are also welcome to create your own and add them to the existing template.

PDF:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/19hu5RY-t_YbCYZGtssQKpV-J8DJbWwT3/view?usp=sharing

Editable template:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAGfMJqO3Jk/7w7LsJhddzTAD4hU3ENc-w/view?utm_content=DAGfMJqO3Jk&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink&mode=preview

Roles in the Activity

1- Persona Player (“Drederik” and others).

One participant will take on the role of a persona with strong, polarizing beliefs about gender. This person should choose a character, study their background, beliefs, and arguments, and, if desired, conduct additional research to deepen their understanding of the character’s perspective. They must commit fully to playing the persona, even if they personally disagree with the character’s views. The persona player should aim to keep their views throughout the conversation, and avoid changing their mind unless they have no other option. They will have a role card with the persona information (see the link above) to help them prepare.

2- Facilitator.

Another participant or the trainer will serve as an impartial facilitator. The facilitator’s job is to moderate the discussion, guide the conversation, and ensure that the dialogue remains focused for the discussion group. They will also help manage time and provide support, particularly if tensions arise.

3- Discussion Group.

The remaining participants will act as the group of individuals who respond to the persona’s views. Their task is to listen to the persona’s statements and try to find convincing arguments to counter these views. This group will have time to research and strategize counterarguments, allowing them to prepare thoughtful and effective responses aimed at challenging the persona’s beliefs.

Activity Steps

1- Briefing the Group:

The facilitator will inform all participants that this is a role-play exercise and that some of the persona's statements may be challenging, uncomfortable, or even triggering. The goal is to experience and practice engaging with difficult conversations in a safe, structured environment.

Start by introducing the persona's name and let them say their opening statement. This statement will help the group understand what the discussion will be about and prepare accordingly.

2- Research and Preparation:

Once the persona is introduced, the discussion group will have time to research and develop counterarguments. This preparation enables the group to address the persona's views thoughtfully and constructively. The persona player should prepare themselves by putting themselves in the character's shoes, really embodying the thoughts and feelings as well as their arguments.

3- Role-Play Dialogue:

The facilitator will initiate the discussion between the persona and the group. The persona player will express their character's opinions authentically, while the group attempts to present well-reasoned arguments to challenge the persona's beliefs. The facilitator ensures that the conversation flows smoothly and that participants stay engaged and respectful.

a) In order to keep the discussion flowing, the persona player can address or ignore a statement from a participant.

b) The facilitator should ensure that different participants get to speak. Our suggestion is to have each participant have 1 statement, and no follow-up questions.

c) If the persona player feels stuck addressing logical arguments, they can always decide to ignore or throw a logical fallacy back at the other participants, e.g. slippery slope or ad hominem.

4- Debrief and Reflection:

After the role-play, the facilitator will guide the group through a debrief session. This reflection allows participants to share their thoughts and feelings about the experience, discuss what strategies worked well or were challenging, and consider how they might use these skills when engaging with differing perspectives in real life.

Debriefing

Here are some debriefing questions to guide reflection and discussion after the activity:

For the Persona Player:

1. How did it feel to take on this role? Were there any parts of the character's beliefs that were particularly challenging for you to play?
2. What strategies did you use to stay in character, especially when faced with counter arguments?
3. Did playing this persona change or reinforce any of your own views on gender issues or difficult conversations?
4. How did the group's responses affect your portrayal of the character?

For the Discussion Group:

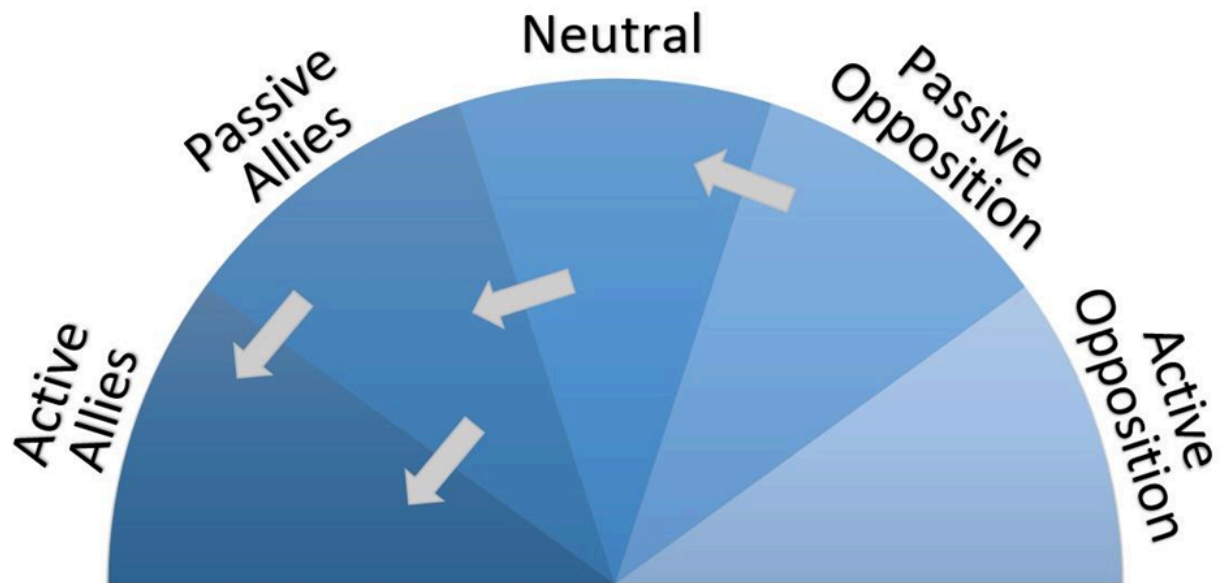
1. How did you feel when responding to the persona's beliefs? Were there any moments that felt particularly frustrating or uncomfortable?
2. Which counterarguments or strategies did you find most effective? What about the least effective?
3. Did you feel prepared enough to address the persona's beliefs? What additional preparation or research might have helped?
4. How did you approach engaging with opinions that you strongly disagreed with? Did you feel able to keep a respectful tone?

For Everyone:

1. Were there any moments where the conversation got particularly intense or uncomfortable? How did you feel navigating these points?
2. How did the facilitator's role impact the conversation? Were there moments where you felt they could have stepped in differently?
3. Did this exercise give you new insights into why people might hold certain polarizing views?
4. How might you apply what you learned here when engaging with people who have differing opinions in real-life conversations?
5. If you were to repeat this activity, would you approach the conversation differently? What would you do the same?

Introducing the Spectrum of Allies

Upon concluding the role-play and debriefing, it may make sense to introduce the concept of the Spectrum of Allies to show how different people may be placed differently on the spectrum and how our approach may differ once we get this knowledge



1- Explain the Spectrum:

Start by briefly explaining that the Spectrum of Allies is a framework that categorizes people into different groups based on their stance on an issue. These categories typically include:

- Active Allies: People who strongly support and actively work for change.
- Passive Allies: Those who support the issue but aren't highly engaged.
- Neutrals: People who don't have strong opinions either way or feel indifferent.
- Passive Opponents: Those who disagree with the issue but don't actively work against it.
- Active Opponents: People who actively resist or work against the change.

2- Connecting to the Activity:

Point out that the personas in the role-play represented various attitudes on the spectrum, specifically as “opponents” or “neutrals” to gender equity issues. Ask participants to reflect on where they think each persona might fall on the Spectrum of Allies based on their arguments and level of resistance.

3- Why the Spectrum Matters:

Emphasize that understanding where someone is on this spectrum can help in choosing how to approach conversations. Allies may respond well to encouragement and further information, while passive opponents might benefit from listening to empathetic perspectives rather than direct confrontation. Knowing this spectrum allows us to approach each person in a way that maximizes potential understanding and shifts perspectives over time. It may even lead to the realization that some persona’s fall so far on the opposition side that it may be impossible to convince them through discussion like that.

4- Apply to Real Life:

Encourage participants to think about how they might categorize people they know or encounter in their own lives on this spectrum. How might they approach someone who’s a passive opponent differently from someone who is an active opponent? Could these strategies from the activity help shift some people’s positions, even slightly? Are there any cases where it makes no sense to continue trying to sway the opponent?

5- Reflection Question:

To wrap up, ask, “After engaging in this role-play and learning about the Spectrum of Allies, how might you change your approach when talking with people who hold challenging views on gender?”

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Programme:

[Http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/erasmus-plus/index_en.htm)

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