



Communication
for
Change

Role Playing

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Role Playing

Introduction

Role playing is a useful technique for discussion groups. It is very helpful to (a) Involve the participants; (b) Help real feelings come to the surface; and, (c) To study behaviours in a safe situation.

One of the techniques in order to begin a discussion is the use of Role Play. Even certain points of discussion could be exemplified through a role play. The educational value of a role play depends on the quality of the discussion that follows:

What is Role Playing?

It is an attempt to help members of a group take an issue from a verbal intellectual level of learning and put it on a level of practice or action. It is defined variously as “dramatizing of a problem or an incident in the area of human relations”. It is also defined as “the acting out of roles in the situation of human relationships”.

It should be remembered that one of the premises for discussion emphasized earlier was that learning is something each individual does. Lasting and effective leaning is not always out of roles in a problem situation provides a new and meaningful experiences.

Uses of Role Playing

One of the most important uses of role-play is that it generates involvement. When there is reluctance to express opinions, attitudes and feelings, role-playing will frequently help these come out.

Role play technique will also be found very effective when the group leader needs to explore the motives of the group members, and when adjustments in groups are needed.

Role playing helps communicate a specific problem, so that people will have something real to talk about as the basis for discovering their own problems.

Procedure for Role Play

Preparation: Before the Role-play necessary guidelines regarding the technique should be given by the group leader. Once the problem has been selected, the members may be invited to suggest a dramatic situation in which the problem is at stake. The group leader sets the scene, defines the roles to be played and gives indications regarding the problem without suggesting any particular solution.

Volunteers are invited to play the roles. These should be different from their real life situations. A way of getting all members involved in the preparation of the role-play is to bread up the group members into as many small groups as there are roles in the scene. Each group will discuss how the role assigned to them should be

rendered and then will choose one actor to play the role in front of all.

The role play: Before calling the volunteers to play the scene, it is always preferable to give them a few minutes to see how best they can render their roles. They should be reminded that this is not a drama (script, stage arrangements, costumes, etc., are not needed). The scene should be kept simple and true to life.

The impact of the role play will depend much on the spontaneity of the characters. It will be better to improvise everything.

It is important to stop the scene as soon as it has made it's point. A good role play will never last more than five to eight minutes.

Discussion: The group leader opens the discussion, by asking the reactions of the players to the scene and how they felt in it. Then the ideas expressed and the positions taken will be reviewed and discussed by the whole group.

The members will be asked to say whether they would have acted differently and why. What did the role play intend to show? Did it solve anything? How can this problem be resolved?

Some times it may be helpful to invite another group of volunteers to role play the same problem situation again, but taking into account the new insights discovered during the general discussion.

The reversal of roles right in the middle of a role play helps sometimes to render the situation in a more relevant manner or to lead the players to adapt themselves to new roles.

Role play for development

Role playing can be helpful to reflect problems within a group, especially problems that prevent the group from growing and developing. There is no discussion group that does not experience some internal difficulty: The highly argumentative member, the rambler, the overly talkative, the griper, the side conversationalist, the inarticulate. Such persons do not deliberately create these problems. Hence, they need acceptance, guidance sympathy and encouragement.

Hidden Agenda: A group simultaneously works on two levels. The formal task is the first and obvious level. Another level is unlabeled, hidden concern of the group. Here are all the conflicting motives, desires, aspirations and emotional reactions held by the group members, subgroups or the group as a whole, which cannot be fitted legitimately into the accepted group task. In developmental work it is necessary to find the hidden agenda to know why there is resistance to acceptance.

Communication and Feelings: One of the problems in communication is the presence of feelings which serve as the root cause for ineffective communication. Apparently people want to hide their feelings, impose

them, deny them, and distort them. For an effective developmental work it is necessary to discover these feelings in safe situation. Role play is such a safe situation.

Leadership and Leader: The developmental worker may also be the cause of effective development work. The attitudes of members of a group towards the leader, and in this case, the development worker may be projected into many role playing scenes. However, the leader must be cautioned in not being too eager to make the transition from a role playing scene to the actual group itself. It should be a member or the group itself who should notice that there is a link in the role play and the group.