# Conflict Management

## Psychodrama as a tool in Education

Training materials - Module 7

Leonardo Da Vinci project – Transfer of Innovation

INDEX

# 1. Module Description

**Conflict Management** is the seventh module of the course **Psychodrama as a Tool in Education**. As with all the modules that make up this course, it may be studied independently. However, it is recommended the information presented here to be unified with these of the other modules, in order to have a more holistic and integrated knowledge of the project. It is aimed at all teachers of adult, vocational or life-long training who are interested in learning about the management of conflict in groups, from the psychodramatic perspective, and its application in the classroom.

This task may be applied to diverse groups of students and may contribute to the development of a more spontaneous and creative climate in class, as members learn to interact in an open, honest and sensitive way. No matter how angry or disappointed they get, they learn to preserve communication and not to interrupt it, as opponents usually do in social circumstances. Empathy grows and as students and teacher gain better insight of their functioning, they are led to more functional relationships and to more productive learning procedures.

## 1.1. Aims

The module has the following interrelated aims:

- to introduce VET adult educators to the psychodramatic way of managing conflict situations in personal and group level, in its relevance for education.
- to develop their personal abilities in order to stand and to manage in a more functional way conflict situations in workshop environment and to contribute to the personal development of the participants,
- to present and practically illustrate how these exercises, interventions and techniques can be applied in workshop environment,
- to achieve a collective work derived from a personal work and to discuss on its applicability in the participants' educational practice.

## 1.2. Learning Outcomes

On successful completion of the course module the educators are expected to:

- indicate the extra value of the psychodramatic intervention in conflict management,
- identify the benefits of ''opening'' and confronting an existing, obvious or underlying, conflict in the group and how this influences the learning procedure,
- point out the limitations of such an exploration in the classroom,
- list three exercises that refer to conflict management and how these can be applied in class,

- propose and run an appropriate psychodramatic exercise which corresponds to an emerged conflict situation in a classroom of adult learners.

## 1.3.  Organization of the materials and the workshop

The collection of materials in this manual is orientated towards helping the educator apply simple exercises that have to do with conflict management in the classroom. However, the content presented here can also be used to organise a training workshop, led by a Psychodramatist, for adult educators themselves. Such a workshop will give trainers and trainees the chance to expand their perception about the several aspects of conflict that they should take into account. Where possible, the workshop will last for eight hours and will run as a single-day session. If this is not possible, it will run over two, preferably consecutive, days. It is best if the group has at least eight members and no more than fourteen. More specific guidelines for this workshop can be found in the handbook for instructors.

This module is divided into two main sections; an introduction to theory and an introduction to practice. Further sections complete the information that educators will need in order to achieve the objectives set out.

- The introduction to theory comprises nine sections through which we explore some very important questioning about conflicts and conflict management. In particular, we explore what means normal and non- normal functioning of the group, how a confrontational situation is expressed in the group and how it is resolved, what leading weaknesses appear, which should be the leader's attitude in a conflict situation and the social elements in groups that we should take into account. In the following section ''Conflict Management in Psychodrama'' we highlight the psychodramatic intervention in standing and handling difficult situations and finally, the psychodramatic contribution in ''Conflict Management in Education''.
- The introduction to exercises corresponds to the exercises examples and to the practical application of the above knowledge. The goal of all the exercises is to experience an issue spontaneously and unconsciously, because only like that people function without thinking and with their defences and resistances low and so, they show how they are really related to a specific issue.  Thus, the members start wondering about the way they function in class and in similar or corresponding situations in their lives.
  In addition, there is a section containing considerations and risks the leader should have in mind when applying these exercises and the responsibility that comes with their use.
- In the section dealing with evaluation, the instructor will be able to assess the impact the exercise has in the classroom. The bibliography lists the books and articles that have provided the information used to prepare this module. They make up a very useful guide for anyone who would like to extend their knowledge and study about groups in Psychodrama in greater depth.

## 2. Introduction to Theory

Interpersonal conflicts are universally present in human relations and become especially visible in group psychotherapy and in groups in general. The mere fact of being together in a group assures that there will always be some amount of friction among its members. Though such frictions may have an apparent ''negative'' effect on the group, they are not necessarily something ''bad'' or pathological of what to get rid of. Rather, like states of crises, conflicts may be viewed as normal in healthy relations and if properly managed, as opportunities for development, growth and new learning (Bach and Goldberg, 1974; Ormont, 1984; Cornelius and Faire, 1989; Gans, 1989). Pines (1988: 57) observed that group analysts are trained to be sensitive to the balance between co-operation and conflict in the groups and they bring to the attention of the group members the presence of both these centripetal and centrifugal forces.

Interpersonal conflicts are so central to the group therapeutic process that the learning gained as a result of their exploration is regarded by some practitioners as the sine qua non of group therapy. In groups, the expression of negative feelings towards other group members or towards the group leader may open up a more intimate and honest level of the relationship and may, in a paradoxical manner, contribute to the maintenance of groups as well as to the disturbance of interpersonal relations.

If the open conflict is denied or suppressed, then it will be definitely manifested in indirect, erosive and often nasty ways. Although our direct associative thinking for conflict is negative- destruction, bitterness, war, violence-, if we think a bit more, positive associative thoughts come to our mind: action, stimulation, change, development. That happens also in therapeutic groups. Some groups become «extremely good» and avoid thoroughly the conflict and the juxtaposition, mirroring usually the leader's avoidance of aggressiveness. However, conflict is so inevitable in the process of group development, that its absence indicates a deficit in the developmental sequence. Additionally, conflict may be used in the service of the group, provided its intensity does not exceed the members' tolerance and provided that proper norms have been established in the group. Learning to successfully manage the conflict, is an important therapeutic step that contributes to atomic maturation and to emotional adaptability and resistance (Yalom, 2006: 490- 1).

We begin our task by tracing the main parts:

- ▶ What does *Normal function* of the Group mean?
- ▶ What does *Non- Normal function* of the Group mean?
- ▶ How is a Confrontational situation *expressed* in a Group?
- ▶ How is a Group Conflict *Resolved*?
- ▶ What *Leading Weaknesses* appear?
- ▶ The *Leader's Attitude* in a Conflict situation.
- ▶ *Social Elements* in Groups.
- ▶ Conflict management in *Psychodrama*.
- ▶ Conflict Management in *Education*.

<u>Notation:</u> In this particular module a *historical detection* is not probationary. Each social and cultural frame defines the way the individual's function, the way the conflicts emerge, the way the functional and non functional aspects of persons' personalities emerge. A certain resolution given in a particular frame cannot be generalized. This would constitute stereotype or prejudice and so, it would lose the special nuances that receives in the particular environment in the particular moment in ''here and now''.


## 2.1.   What means Normal function of the Group?


The suitable relationship with the leader, the coherence of the group and the trust between the group members and the leader are necessary presuppositions for the effective process and outcome of a group.


Research in psychotherapeutic groups highlights the value and the determinative role that the relationship between the member and the leader plays in therapy, characterized by trust, warmth, empathic understanding and acceptance. The aim is to inflate these virtues in educational process. A strong and positive bond between the leader and the member refutes the depressive beliefs and facilitates the modification of cognitive distortions. The absence of a positive connection makes the intervention techniques ineffective or even hazardous.


The corresponding of relationship between the leader and the member in the atomic psychotherapy, in group psychotherapy and in groups in general has a broader meaning, which includes the relationship with the leader, with the other members and with the group as a whole. We refer to all these relationships in the group by the term «cohesion of the group».


Cohesion is defined as the resultant of all the forces that act on all members, so that to remain in the group. Simpler, cohesion is the quality that makes a group attractive to its members. Members of a cohesive group feel warmth and comfort in it and a feeling of belonging. They appreciate the value of the group and feel in return that their value is also appreciated, they become accepted and supported by the other members.


We should not forget that the members of a group are attracted by the group in different degrees and that cohesion is not stable- conquering it once does not mean preserving it forever-. On the contrary, it shows great fluctuations during the life- time of the group. The early cohesion and commitment are necessary for the group to be able to stand and include the most difficult personal work that will come to later stages of group development, as more conflicts and greater discomfort emerge.

Group members see that they do not only benefit passively from group cohesion, but they produce themselves this cohesion creating functional and durable relationships- maybe for the first time in their life. To belong to a group increases the self esteem and covers the needs for dependence of group members, but in a way, it also cultivates the responsibility and the autonomy, as each member contributes to the welfare of the group and internalizes the atmosphere of cohesion.

Groups with great cohesion have better total effect than groups with low group spirit. The emotional connectedness and the experiencing of group's effectiveness contribute to its cohesion. The individuals form more mutual satisfactory relationships with other members. In very cohesive psychotherapeutic groups, members show greater levels of self- disclosure, self- expansion, self- exploration and receiving of interpersonal risks. The presence of cohesion in the beginning of each session and in the first sessions of a group, is in correlation with positive effects. It is essential for the group to develop cohesion and the leader to be alert to conceive the way with which each member experiences it.

Cohesion is experienced in interpersonal, intrapersonal and intragroup level. Members of a cohesive group accept each other, support and trust each other, tend to create essential relationships in the group and the validation that each one receives by the other group members consists for them a new and vital experience. In conditions of trustful acceptance and understanding, members are more willing to express and explore themselves, to realize and integrate some aspects of their personalities that they did not accept until now and to relate to others in a deeper way. Self esteem is greatly influenced by the role of the member in a cohesive group. The social behavior that the individual will develop in order to gain the appreciation of the rest of the group, is also adaptable to form new social relationships outside the group.

Additionally, cohesive groups are more stable, with more systematic presence of their members and with less alternations (''member turnover''). The early termination excludes every benefit for the member who leaves, but also blocks the development of the rest group. Cohesion favors self-disclosure, taking risks and the creative expression of conflicts- elements that facilitate the goal of the group.


## Remember

- ✓ A functional relationship between members and leader is characterized by trust, warmth, empathic understanding and acceptance.
- ✓ Group Cohesion: The resultant of all forces that act on all members, so that to remain in the group. Simpler, the quality that makes a group attractive to its members.
- ✓ Meaning & importance of Cohesion.


## 2.2.  What means Non- Normal function of the Group?

When we are thinking of the non- normal function of the group, there are some elements that every group leader should have in mind, due to the important role they play in the formation of the group and in its progress. These main components are: the dynamic of the group, the subgroups that are formed inside the maternal group/ Work Group and the ''shift'' created from the primary aims of members when entering the group to other aims and secondary satisfaction.

**2. 2. A) Group Dynamic**

An analytical reference to the developmental goals which appear in the process of a group has already been done in *Module 2: The Power of the Group* and cited in the corresponding Training Materials, in *2.4.a. Stages of Group*. So it is recommended, if needed, consult that module and read the whole citation, in order to remember how the dynamic of the group changes and influences its process.

The early sessions of a group are characterized by a dynamic caused by the members' focusing on authority relationships. During this period, the experience and actions of members are colored by their previous experiences in relation to authority figures and a desire to re- create the relationship systems within the group in order to enhance the power to express themselves freely and creatively (Clayton, 1994). At the beginning of a series of group sessions, members usually idealize the leader. They turn to him/ her for every single answer, they look for the approval and acceptance of the authority. Important issues which occupy them are the seeking of acceptance and approval, the commitment to the group, the determination of approved behavior, the seeking of orientation, structure and meaning. As the group proceeds, the members are occupied with issues as the domination, the control and the authority and there, quite usually, conflict arises.

 Conflict happens either among members or between members and the leader, as each member attempts to establish the degree of initiative and power he/ she prefers. An ambivalence towards the leader begins when the members start to realize that he/ she has not the ''magical'' qualities they attributed to him/ her and he/ she cannot fulfill the limitless expectations they had, no matter how capable he/ she may be. Around the fifth session, some or all of the group members may interact with each other in pairs in a friendly manner and the conversations develop without reference to the group leader, thus we may conclude that a new warm up develops spontaneously between the members (Clayton, 1994). Also, some members may start turning against the leader. Members doubt about the whole procedure, whether it has meaning or not and also doubt about him/ her. This is the moment when they are afraid that the beautiful sense of the group will be destroyed. It is the moment when each one goes to his/ her deeper personal issues and unconsciously resists taking the responsibility of himself/ herself. In this phase, some members may abandon the group. In between the tenth and twentieth session some secedes may take place.

A perceptive group leader will value what is developing in the group in the fifth and succeeding sessions and will then naturally mobilize other roles in their personality that are appropriate to this new situation. The way the leader stands and manages the conflict plays a determinative role to the way the group may be developed, it may constitute a precious and fruitful experience for the personal development of members or may even lead to the dissolution of the group.


**2. 2. B) Subgroups**

The creation of *subgroups* is an inevitable and often disruptive fact in group's life, but may also promote the group work, if we understand it and use it in the appropriate way.


Often the members' concern for their personal connection and status, stimulates the creation of subgroups. A subgroup appears in the group because of the belief of two or more members that

they can derive more satisfaction from a relationship between them, than by the group in its whole. In therapeutic groups the members who violate its norms with secret relationships, choose to satisfy their needs instead of aiming their personal change- the primary reason for which they are in therapy.

It is important to note that the out- of- group behavior which is not ''brought'' into the group, is transformed into powerful resistance. Meanwhile the out- of- group behavior which is ''brought'' later in the group and is ''opened'' there, may be proved of great therapeutic value.

The creation of subgroups may show a high degree of hostility that is not liberated in the group, mainly towards the leader. This is more possible to happen when the leading style is authoritative and restrictive. Group members that are not in position to express directly their anger and frustration to the leader, deliberate their feelings indirectly by creating a subgroup or by transforming a member into a ''scapegoat''.

Other times, the creation of subgroups reveals problems in the group development. The lack of cohesion within the group encourages the members to withdraw from the great and complex relationships of the group, to simpler, smaller and more functional subgroups.

Sociability out of the group is often the first stadium of the creation of subgroups. A clique of two, three or more members may start to talk on the phone, to meet for coffee, to exchange visits etc. The members of a subgroup may be recognized by a behavior code: they may agree with each other no matter what the issue it is, they may avoid juxtapositions, they may exchange meaningful glances when somebody out of the clique speaks, they may arrive and leave together. Their desire for friendship exceeds their commitment to look into their behavior.

The creation of subgroups may have an extremely disruptive result in the progress of the group. Whether a person is included or excluded by a subgroup, difficulties usually emerge. Those who are included in a subgroup of two or more people, often feel that life in the group is much more complex and finally less retributive. Also, a member transmits his faith from the goals of the group to the goals of the subgroup. They ''forget'' that their primary goal of entering a group was to be facilitated in exploring their personal relationships, in expanding their knowledge or any other reason. The exclusion from a subgroup complicates also the group's life, as it may energize a stress feeling which is connected with previous experiences of exclusion.

The subgroups, with or without social relationships out of the group, are not always disruptive. If the aims of the subgroup agree with the aims of the Work Group, the formation of subgroups may finally increase the cohesion of the Work group.

The principle is clear and fundamental: any contact out of the group may be proved useful, if the goals of maternal group are not abandoned. The subgroup is not by itself destructive for the group, but the silence conspiracy that usually surrounds it might be.


2. 2. C) Primary Aims- Secondary Satisfaction

The primary task of every group, therapeutic, educational or other, is to achieve its initial aims. But, as soon as a group begins strange things happen: the members ''forget'' the original aim for which they entered the group. They shift their energy from their original aim in order to pursue some other secondary aims in the group. This shift in relation to the aim of the group, as well as the dynamic tension between them, offers the leader important information about the group and its members.

Dr. W. R. Bion has focused attention on the fact that a group is an entity that is defined by its function. Group work per se is not the focus on the needs of individuals because a group is more than the sum of its individual parts.

At the same time, Bion is clear that there are different forces operating within a group that militate against the achievement of group aims. The concepts which he presents with respect to these other forces, correspond to a number of diverse apparent phenomena. They are, therefore, integrative concepts and when understood, they provide big assistance to a group leader in understanding and relating to the group.

In every group there are two groups: the "Work Group" and the "Basic Assumption Group", each of them with their function and mode of behaving.

The Work Group (W)

The Work Group is the aspect of group functioning that has to do with the real task of the group. One group may have the task of planning a program, another one to review the activities of the year and another one to study the behavior of the group or to explore the socially unacceptable behavior.

The Work Group functions in the same way as the ego of a rational and mature person. The Work Group is therefore conscious of time and the processes of learning and development. Thus there will be an acceptance and tolerance of the fact that group members may take a good deal of time to solve a problem or develop a new way of functioning.

The Work Group defines its task and then creates a structure that will be likely to assist the completion of that task. For example, one group may decide to appoint a treasurer to collect dues and assign other group members to carry out specific tasks for the good of the whole.

The individual is in this group by choice and his interest is identified with the interest of the group.

The Work Group is in touch with reality and constantly tests its conclusions in a scientific spirit. It seeks knowledge, learns from experience, and constantly questions how it may best achieve its goal.

Three Basic Assumption Groups (ba Groups)

Basic assumptions are primitive states of mind which come automatically into being when individuals get together. The fantasies and emotional drives associated with the basic assumptions unconsciously dominate a groups functioning in such a way that interfere with its explicit work task.

Thus in a personal development group the members will start to act *as if* they had met together for another purpose other than to develop their abilities. As just stated the basic assumptions are unconscious. Thus they are tacit, unspoken and out of awareness. They can only be elucidated by a process of deduction. Conclusions are drawn on the basis of the emotional state of the group (Bion, 2009).

For further information on the Three Basic Assumption Groups (ba Groups), which namely are the Basic Assumption Dependency (baD), the Basic Assumption Fight- Flight group and the Basic Assumptions Group, you will find in W.R. Bion's bibliography.

## Remember

- The group dynamic & the developmental goals which appear in the process of a group.
- Meaning of Conflict & when it appears in the group.
- Meaning & Impact of the creation of subgroups.
- The way the Work Group functions & the ''as if'' way the Three Basic Assumption Groups function.
- In conclusion, there is a fine line between the experiential group with educational aims and the experiential group with therapeutic aims. If the experiential educational group becomes more ''personal'' and ''emotional'', it will be most probably dissolved, because it will be disorientated from its initial goals.

## 2.3. How a Confrontational situation is expressed in a Group?

A situation of conflict in the group may be provoked either among members and/ or between members and the leader, and it may be expressed either directly or indirectly.

The group is never totally consensual in attacking the leader. Always some members of the group join the attackers and some others join the supporters of the leader.

The leader may have difficulty to perceive the underlying way the conflict is being expressed. Some members may come late to the group, after it has started or they may get in class with delay after the interval. The leader may notice that while he is speaking, members change the subject of discussion. Some may have formed subgroups. A sociometric exercise with the criterion ''whom I feel closer'' also depicts the relationships between the members and will help the leader shape an opinion. Disagreements may be expressed or inactivity/ withdrawal may appear, members sit on the chairs and don't want to get up and play or they refuse to express themselves. They may speak generally for a topic and avoid making focus on something in particular, e.g. ''all psychologists are…''. In any case, the leader has to perceive it and bring it to the surface, otherwise group members will abandon it or the group may even be dissolved.

From the moment the conflict begins, it follows a certain route. Both ''sides'' develop the belief being right and the other are wrong, they are good and the others bad. Additionally, although at that moment it is not recognized, both ''sides'' support their point of views with the same certainty. In such case, we have all the requested elements for a deep and continuous tension, which may lead to a dead end.

- ► Conflict is expressed either among members and/ or between members and the leader, either directly or indirectly.
- ► Pay attention to the underlying way the conflict is being expressed.

## 2.4. How a Group Conflict is Resolved?

Usually what happens is a break in communication. Both sides stop listening to each other with a certain degree of understanding. If both objecting sides were in a social circumstance, the most probable is that at this point they would interrupt their relationship and they would never be in position to correct their misunderstandings.

Objecting sides not only stop listening, but is possible to unconsciously distort the perception of each other. Their perception is filtered though a screen of stereotypes. Words and actions of the opponent are distorted, in order to fit in a point of view that has been established in advance. Each one sees his actions as honest and logical and the other's as mean and calculated. That's why is very important to quickly establish a collective spirit in a group's life, to avoid such a sequence.

For the effective management of group conflict, the primary presupposition is *coherence*. Members have to develop a sense of mutual trust and respect and to appreciate the group as an important mean for the coverage of their personal needs. It is of great importance to *preserve communication* for the survival of the group and for their better inner understanding. The coherent group will move far from using underestimating characterizations and towards being aware of those aspects of others that make them angry and so, of those aspects of themselves that make them angry. It must become clear that everybody is here to develop a better understanding of himself and not to smite or make foul of others.

When a member feels that others accept him and try to understand him, he relaxes, he feels less the need to stay stuck in the old patterns of behavior and maybe more willing to explore different sides, new roles of his personality. When empathy grows, the management of conflicts is facilitated.

At this point is good to remark that the final goal is not to permanently abolish conflict. Conflict will keep on emerging in the group, despite the effective management of previous conflicts and despite the existence of important mutual respect and warmth. The leader's work is to use conflict in favor of members' maturation.

When people get angry with each other, that by itself shows that are important for each other and take each other seriously. For the members who have difficulty to express their anger, the group is a safe place to try to express it. For the members who easily react aggressively, the group is a place of experimentation, to test how to express themselves. It is a challenge to recognize quicker that they are angry by observing the body language: the fists are tight, the mouth is tight, that others may react negatively to a certain behavior of them, but they still appreciate them. It is worth feeling that being direct and fair is neither dangerous nor destructive and can work in their favor.

Group leaders attempt to convert the conflict procedure into a learning circumstance for the members. Apart from the ''sources'' of their aggressiveness, they may gain great feedback by realizing the way they have been expressing it. In psychodrama during an intervention, the technique of «mirroring» or «role reversal» may give fruitful feedback to the member for his stance, body position, face mimic, behavior. He may realize the divergence between his intention and his final action or reaction, which increases importantly the self awareness.

The management of conflicts contributes to the development of members' emotional tolerance and the sharing of intense feelings increases the importance of the relationship. The group cohesion increases when members experience together intense emotional experiences, independently from the nature of the emotion.

## Remember

- ▶ Necessary presuppositions for the effective management of competitive and confrontational situations are the coherence and the preservation of communication.
- ▶ The final goal is not to permanently abolish conflict. Conflict will keep on emerging in the group.
- ▶ The leader's goal each time is to use conflict in favor of members' maturation.

## 2.5. What Leading Weaknesses appear?

Managing a conflict is a hard work: there are so many delicate matters that the leader should have in mind and such is the complexity of the emerged dynamics, that some leading weaknesses may arise.

As group members express themselves, some group members are positive to them, others negative and others are neutral. Thus, subgroups form around different stars who may express a particular set of values in a more memorable way. Some members may push the leader to take a position on what is going on and the leader may slip on *becoming part of a subgroup*. The group leader can take a position, but the point is how he will express it, so as not to block the expression of the individuality of others and also how he will manage to connect with others in the exact point they are trying to compose. Group leaders who have developed the ability to conduct crisp, quick sociometric enactments so that everybody is involved, create a sense of companionship and a positive feeling amongst everybody. Their position is also more stable. Participation in a neutral sociometric activity brings everybody out to the fore where they are able to work on overcoming any fear about exposing themselves. At this point a healthy daring and courage begins to develop in everybody. Each subgroup is also associated with certain roles and role clusters.

Many people in their conversations in everyday life as well as in more formal group situations focus on their lack of ability and many of the responses which are made by other people also focus on their lack of ability. This is consistent with the desire of many people to put themselves in a superior position and put the rest of the world in a weak, underdog position. Once *the superior and inferior positions* have been established, it is only a small additional step for the ''superior'' person to take on the role of fixing up the problems of the ''inferior'' person and setting them on a new path (e.g. the eager advisor, the rational thinker). This method of assisting other people to let go of the old

repeatedly fails. The relationship system that psychodrama encourages, involves a broader analysis and development of a relationship system in which both people are actively involved in relevant aspects of the work.

When the leader starts to focus on the possibility that the group members will spontaneously express themselves in forms that he/ she cannot predict and bring forward complex conflicts that they urgently wish to resolve, he/ she may very well find himself/ herself planning some strategy, for any strategy that he/ she dreams up will give him/ her a greater sense of being in charge. The trouble with this is that any strategy he/ she dreams up for making him/ her feel more secure immediately creates a barrier between him/ her and each individual in the group. The antidote to this is to quietly reflect on who he/ she is. As the leader does this, he/ she will realize that there is something within him/ her that will be available to him/ her at the point where a group member throws him/ her a curved ball. He/ she will be able to make a response at the time and therefore there is no need to develop a strategy in advance. There is no need for the educator *to rely on the power or authority associated with his/ her status as the group leader* (e.g. the organized strategist, the unmistakable judge). When he/ she depends on his/ her status, he/ she will mentally warm up to concepts associated with control.

On the other hand, every leader has experienced the value of feeling small when conducting a group. When he/ she does that, he/ she is being more at home with himself/ herself and it is possible to be at home with the other people as well. It is possible to be together, to appreciate and enjoy one another, to be friendly and approachable. His/ her field of vision expands. There is a much more acute perception of one another's actions. It is possible to be aware of the emotions of others and to pick up the overall atmosphere in the room. And this is good, because his/ her work as leader of the group requires that he/ she knows each person. He/ she is not there simply to relate to the masks the members hide behind. He/ she wants to know the people as they really are. And when he/ she thinks about it, he/ she knows that he/ she has risen to the occasion when a person has brought up a complex concern and has felt an inner sense of satisfaction in doing so.

In all group work we experience the fact that learning throws us into the new and that at the same time we want *to stick with the old and familiar*. When anyone says something to us our mind seeks to play tricks on us and to translate any new items into something old. We miss the nuances. We miss the delight of coming into contact with the unique elements in the person who addresses us. Our minds take up certain aspects of the content of a sentence and reduce it to a caricature. In working with colleagues we find ourselves constantly floored by the limited responses we receive. In our work as group leaders or group members we make great efforts to say something that is filled with meaning and another person in the group will dismiss it with a shrug or say something like: "You're right but I've heard it before." You know that they have missed hearing you. There is already enough isolation in this world yet in many groups each person speaks only about them-selves.

Sometimes the *stubbornness* of the group leader is a factor. The group leader may stubbornly wish to keep focusing on authority relations with the idea that some more work in this area will finally assist a group member to arrive at a permanent resolution of a conflict about authority. There is also that inner emotional need in the leader to stay safe by focusing on the familiar area of authority relations.

One person in the group states that they want to stand firm in the face of criticism. Immediately another group member states that they can really identify with this because they have the same problem. Each person wants to get something for themselves. Sometimes different people in the group are free associating and there is no apparent connection being made. Yet, although there

are always forces pulling us to sustain easy patterns, it is needful that we awaken ourselves to the fact that we are not quite the same as the others and that we make the effort to enter into the situation of the others. Eventually we must learn to be with the other and teach them to be with us.

## 2.6. The Leader's Attitude in a Conflict situation

When a conflict situation is being emerged, it is very important that the leader does not seek to change what is being expressed but rather to experience and explore it, to act as a *trusting explorer*. It is better *to be with group members rather than trying to get group members to do certain things*. Naturally it is necessary to develop the ability to let go of any tendency to control the content of what other people express or the means by which they express themselves. It is necessary not to tranquilize what is being emerged, but to let it be developed in order to reinforce the expression towards various and different perspectives. However, in order *to give up the need to control* others, the ability to stay conscious of yourself and of what is going on around you and even to maintain an attitude of appreciation or enjoyment must be developed by every group leader.

The leader has to reinforce *the members who have difficulty in conflicting to stay open at that point*, which means to stay in touch with their inner selves without looking for quick responses in ''why am I doing this?'' type of questions. The same work is required by the leader with the members *who easily come into conflict,* which means to learn, despite their anger, to stay in touch with themselves. It is good to give the appropriate amount of time to the expression of the conflict and not to hastily close it. It is good to explore the subgroups which are shaped, members who avoid conflict, members who pursue conflict, members who support the leader and members who are against him. When a situation of conflict appears, *the leader's response must be immediate and drastic*, more even when there is indirect expression, mockery against some group member etc. When a group leader responds immediately and relevantly to the group member who is most warmed up to the work of the group the spontaneity level of the group is increased. And relating to the emergent interaction, whatever this interaction might be, puts the group leader in touch with the vital essence of the group.

*Intervention must be swift and decisive* whenever a restrictive solution is being enacted. The intervention may be made by anyone in the group. If the group members make the intervention this is excellent since it indicates the development of an ability to actively create a better future for themselves. However, if a group member makes no intervention then the group leader does so.

Sometimes a group wants to be comfortable all the time· and refuses to assist in the clearing away of blind spots or to enter into unknown areas. Sometimes a group leader will have to strongly focus on drawing out the motivating creative forces.

Group members and group leaders maintaining an emotional contact is a requirement for letting go of the old and developing something new. Obviously it is also necessary for them to be present physically in the group. In the early sessions of a group particularly, there are many moments when individuals make a move to break off emotional contact. Capturing these moments is a big factor in the development of the group norm that everybody is present with each other while maintaining contact with their own experience.

Whenever an effort is made to open the group to a wider range of perspectives, individual group members make opposing efforts to maintain a familiar stereotyped focus. The *effort to widen the focus is sooner or later opposed, because the fear for the new and its management brings internal conflict*. Any stereotyped familiar focus promotes a cozy experience of safety. Such opening out

stimulates the warm up of each group member not only to their own individual concerns but to the life experiences of others in the group. As any people enter into a more intimate communication they will always experience some difficulty. There will be an emptiness, a vacuum in their experience as they open up to something new. It is essential that group leaders do not over-emphasize the presence of a difficulty or the presence of emptiness. Rather there is a need to maintain the attitude that individuals can keep going in the midst of a difficulty or an experience of emptiness. Over-emphasis on how hard it is may simply result in group members becoming introspective or playing "poor me", to focus on relationships which have gone nowhere and to feel sorry for themselves.

A group leader is constantly making assessments of the *balance of forces* in any group situation. There are motivating forces pushing people to break through in to some new way of living. The motivating forces are opposed by the forces of reaction which are controlled by some fear. The solutions which a group arrives at are the result of efforts to come to grips with the conflict between the motivating and reactive forces.

Group members bring up a wide range of concerns including experiences of defeat. The group has great value for them when they are able *to re-experience their concerns in a new context*. The old defensive patterns may be safely discarded in a context where they are accepted and even enjoyed and where others are actively involved with them in the discussion of relevant issues or through teaching and coaching. Also, it is very important to realize that *this group leader is not a strategist*. This tends to create an atmosphere of safety and this helps in freeing the group from preoccupation with old battles with authority figures. The group is freed to be there with one another and to experience one another in the here and now situation as equals.

When a group leader functions as a *lover of life* and as a trusting explorer or something similar to that, this enhances group members' ability to write their own script as they go along and to unfold their life. Merely because a group member states that they wish to express anger or focus on some other aspect of their personality is not a good reason for the group leader to become fixated on them acting in any particular way. The ability of a group leader to relate to the real purposes of group members and also be responsive to the emergent realities requires a high level of spontaneity. *A leader/ trainer with spontaneity, openness and optimism will manage to relate with the new.*

## 2.7. Social Elements in Groups

The values of different cultures and sub-cultures influence the functioning of every member of a group. Here we will highlight the value of exploring social influences and their impact on the individual in groups and to discuss means for carrying out productive exploration.

The personal functioning of every human being clearly shows the influence of the different cultures in which we have lived and of the culture in which we currently live. In the different roles we play there is a peculiar blending of socio and psyche elements. The nature of that blending varies greatly. At one end of the scale the influence of the conserved social roles of a culture may dominate to such an extent that our functioning is stereotyped and predictable and holds little interest either to ourselves or to others. A preponderance of social roles in our daily life leads us in the direction of despondency. If this situation continues for a long time it is a difficult task to resurrect any creative spark and cut a new path for ourselves. On the other end of the scale a

person's individuality may be developed to such a degree that the rest of the world can make no sense at all of their behavior. An individual who takes no account of the history, values and norms of the culture and sub-cultures around them may be regarded as an oddity or an object of ridicule and be forced to live in isolation from the rest of the world. Such a person may land up being an angry fighter, or a writer of manuscripts that are never published, or a soap box orator whose audience never takes them seriously.

In group sessions various group concerns and themes emerge. The way in which individual group members and sub-groups come to grips with each concern or theme is influenced by social forces. The type and extent of this influence usually remains out of the awareness of group members unless the group leader makes a special effort to shape the group in such a way that group members warm up to this area.

Let us consider a situation in which members of an organization have met for the purpose of reorganizing their work system. The group trainer has asked them to divide into smaller working groups of five with a view to completing particular tasks. One group of five people has formed. A group of four people is in process of coming together. There are two groups of three people. There is one person who is standing on their own. There is another group of five which is in process of forming. The group of five people which has already formed is quickly leaving the room. They act superior to the others. The trainer enquires what they are doing and they, in a perfunctory way, say that their group has formed and they plan to meet in another place to complete their task. At this point a number of other people in the room are ignoring the fact that they are leaving. Some group members do not even notice them leaving. Much of the functioning of the group at this point is expressive of habitual patterns in different subcultures. For example, the group of five who are leaving have the attitude that ''I'm alright Jack, I've got my act together and too bad about you if you haven't got yourself organized''. There is also the attitude of getting things done as quickly as possible without wasting time, even if the quick actions are carried out mindlessly and have a negative effect on others. Some of those who ignored the group leaving held to the attitudes of a sub-culture which values non-interference in what other people are doing irrespective of the cost of this. Some of those who did not even notice the group leaving actively held to the values of an isolationist subculture which had no concept of completing a task co-operatively.

In this particular instance the trainer involved everybody in the task of identifying the elements in the culture that influenced them to ignore the task of the whole group and to pursue their own immediate aims. This task was done briefly. The members of the group became much more conscious of their actions and became immediately more committed to taking account of the whole group. They developed better means of working co-operatively with the whole. Ultimately this resulted in a more buoyant atmosphere in the organization.

Productive investigation of social factors calls for an appreciative attitude by the group leader and members of the group. Learning proceeds more easily through allowing ourselves to be conscious of whatever life is throwing up in front of us. Attempting to understand cultural factors before entering into the experience of the different cultural forces results in a know-it-all approach. Pretending to understand in advance makes the learning frustrating and painful. A group leader who thinks they understand all about the values of a particular culture may play an adversarial role with group members. The letting go of any superior position that implies possession of knowledge in advance assists in the achievement of that relaxed stance that goes along with real discovery.

Social exploration leads to a greater consciousness of the impact of the values of sub-cultural groups on the functioning of individuals as well as the group functioning in an organization or

group. The greater conscious awareness and thinking through of a situation results in a better integration of social and individual values and to a more unified working group (Clayton, 1994).

## 2.8.   Conflict Management in Psychodrama

Psychodramatic philosophy contains terms as spontaneity, creativity, openness, development, joy, appreciation, expression, sharing and mutuality. Endorsing this philosophy, the psychodrama leader tries to bring each individual to a point in which to form and state his inner thinking and feeling. When conducting a group we pursue to keep each member and the whole group in touch with their real essence and not to be connected with the masks they wear. The leader also pursues to do this when a conflict situation appears. It is very important for the leader to remain open to whatever is coming in the group and to approach and explore it with an attitude to know it better. The more open and accepting the leader is toward a new situation, the more he contributes to the real expression of members' individuality. And the more the members express their real selves, they gain a better insight of themselves and they become more functional because they develop a stance of acceptance toward their functioning.

In a conflict situation, the leader is called to keep each member in touch with himself/ herself and his/ her inner tension. He has to enhance expression towards all sides and options, to let the anger or any other feeling to be expressed, to be enacted and not to quieten things down.

There is a hard work to be done both by members and the leader, as the management of the new brings conflict. The fear for the new, the fear for the change, brings internal conflict and makes us stick to the old and repeat the old patterns of living, even when we do not like them, or we recognize that they are not functional for us. You may see how obvious is this in social, political or cultural situations.

The psychodramatic intervention emphasizes the importance of connection among members and leader without rational judgments, preexistent stereotypes and counseling. Respecting everybody and giving value to the continuation of communication, will lead sooner or later to a better and more integrated sense of self and to better and more functional relationships.

## 2.9.   Conflict Management in Education

Conflicts or frictions inside the training class are a very common phenomenon. Because of their difficulty and complexity in management they are commonly faced as undesirable, but it should not. Conflicts constitute part of life and an important ply of the social interaction. They may create chances for knowledge and progress and contribute to the development of adults in VET. If conflict is faced with an open and effective way, it functions as a constructive training chance. The effective conflict management contributes to the development of social skills, of having better contact with feelings and their expression, of facing stressful situations and of standing more stable under pressure.

In a training class where the members are gathered for learning, we notice that sometimes for some reasons they cannot learn and be effective and reach the desirable results. This becomes an internal conflict and the trainer must relate to it. Taking under consideration the system of roles of the person's personality (for refresh and further information, take a look at *Training Materials 2: The Power of the Group* and specifically: *2.5 Groups & Group Dynamic in Psychodrama* and the corresponding bibliography), the trainer may apply an exercise which focuses on the roles of the person. By exploring the roles of the person, *progressive roles*, *fragmented roles*, *copying roles*, the leader must evaluate and perceive the fragmented roles that the trainee experiences and impede his learning. Our goal is to focus on the person's abilities for development, but often this is achievable by working with the forces that pull the member to the back and don't let him to proceed. So the theme is, if a member or some members cannot attribute in learning because they experience a conflict inside, how will the leader take under consideration all these abilities and work with all this material.

The role of the trainer and how he facilitates the process of learning and the management of conflicts, is very important. The adults' educator must be properly trained, so as to be able to relate to all group members, to evaluate correctly the tension that is expressed and which ''shakes'' the climate of security and trust in the class. The interventions of the leader must be connected to the function of the group and group members and also to the content of the lesson (Smith& Berg, 1987). It is of great importance the leader to take into account the group in its total and to try to keep the communication among members despite the tensions. Only in this way the members will learn not to avoid conflicts but to stay there and manage them in the group and so in their lives.

## 3. Introduction to Exercises

The American philosopher John Dewey writes down ''only what you accept with your soul, only that you learn, only that you integrate in your life and character'' and it is totally compatible with the psychodramatic philosophy. In adult training or re- training and in lifelong learning, much attention has to be given to the experiences of adults and to the significance for their further development, to realize how many things they have learnt and how many things they still can learn from their experience (Evans, 1994, 4). It is characteristic that since 1972, Unesco emphasizes that a central principle of lifelong learning is the integration of learners' experiences in it.

Experiential learning is very rightly connected with the strengthening of learners. If persons gain trust on their ability to learn, they gain better control over their lives and so they may act toward the direction of social change (Mezirow, 1991, 197). With the experiential exercises and interventions listed below, we pursue the mental and emotional mobilization of learners, aiming to the integration of these two into one process. We aim to stop connecting knowledge with provision of sterile information, memorization and repetition, because the relationship which is cultivated between learners and knowledge is external and mechanical. We aim to create a relationship with knowledge in which learners will express the way they perceive life, will come in contact with their experiences and appreciate them, will develop their fantasy, creativity and spontaneity, will take over the responsibility for the proceeding of their learning, will increase their consciousness, will face the world, situations and relationships, more actively and lively.

Psychodrama in VET and in Conflict Management contributes to the development of:
▶ maintaining a direct and genuine communication between trainers and trainees,
▶ empathy, meaning to better understand the needs and emotions of oneself and others,
▶ the role of trainer as he/ she learns to stand more in the conflicts and not to avoid them,
▶ abilities for the better management of difficult situations in class,
▶ cooperative learning,
▶ creative teaching and,
▶ a life quality with liveliness and humor.

Through the implementation of the following exercises, interventions and techniques, which combine the *expression of thoughts and emotions with body action and enactment*, the whole group will have the chance to gain knowledge through experience and to search for personal meaning into it. It will become more sensitized in issues of human relationships and in forming of a working atmosphere based on cooperation and co- creation.

The exercises listed below have as a goal to familiarize educators with experiential interventions in order to develop a more open stance towards conflicts, to feel more comfortable in confronting them and not to avoid them and in having some extra tools in handling them. These exercises contribute to receiving important knowledge for all the phases of group function, divided in warm up, action and sharing. Their categorization has been done according to the aim served in each phase of the group. All exercises are connected and they can be used in different points in the

session, <u>depending on what the leader evaluates as the most suitable intervention at that point</u>. Of course we cannot know the content of the possible conflict that will emerge in class, so the trainer has to find out the central meaning of what is expressed and so to intervene suitably toward the direction he wants to explore and expand.

## 3.1. Considerations & Risks in applying the exercises for the Educator

► Many trainers try to resolve crises and conflicts in a rational way, but the only thing they get is the increase of conflicts or the dissolution of the group. It is necessary not to only pay attention to what is logically expressed, but also to the latent content of what is going on. We often use our sense in order to control things and so we leave the real essence out.

► To ''read'' well the situation, to catch the essence of what is being told and/ or done. Otherwise, the leader will intervene in an inappropriate way, he may even wonder what went wrong or why this great exercise didn't work and finally and most probably, he will be disappointed and the members will too.

► The tension, obvious or underlying, must be brought to the surface and worked out. Either with some exercises, or with an open discussion or, in a psychotherapeutic psychodrama group, by conducting a drama with the most warmed up person, with the person that has most internalized the situation.

► Common ways of members' resistance or aggressiveness are to be withdrawn, silent, with no desire to express themselves, to change the subject of discussion, to be delayed. And in psychodrama especially, is their denial to play and to display themselves. They prefer to discuss in general and in the abstract, than to concretize and make focus on their real issue.

► Attitudes by the leader like being afraid of confronting conflict, trying to tranquilize it or to ignore it by acting like nothing happens, have no desirable result, because frictions, tension and conflict will emerge despite these and because of these.

► A compassionate, respectful, trusting explorer leader tries to be with the group members and not to get them to do certain things. This enhances group members' ability, during a conflict management situation and not only, to write their own script as they go along and thus bring about an unfolding of their life.

► The maintenance of a good level of self esteem is necessary for free flowing leadership. It is necessary that a group leader develops a good sense of his/ her own value before the group commences and does not rely on the good- will of the group to maintain that sense of value. So, in dealing with difficult or pressing situations, it is more unlikely to be disappointed.

## 3.2. Exercises

There are some elements that the leader of the group should have in mind <u>before</u> applying an exercise. It is worth to examine:

- ► the climate of the group,
- ► the degree of correlation among the members,
- ► the subgroups which exist in the group,
- ► to ''read'' the body position of the members,
- ► their mood (who is open, close, skeptical, defensive etc),
- ► who sits next to whom,
- ► who are the central figures,
- ► who are the peripheral/ marginal persons,
- ► how they connect,
- ► the goal the group has & their motive for the goal.

It is also worth to wonder in:
- ► how much scope you leave to free communication among members or where you intervene?
- ► how will you establish mutual relationships (''tele'')?
- ► how will you include the most isolated persons?

Here are listed some sample criteria (sociometry) that could be used for this purpose:
Get up from your chairs and there to go
1. these who are satisfied from their work and there those who are not satisfied
2. these who have a good relationship with students and there those who don't
3. these who have a good relationship with their colleagues and there those who don't
4. these who express what they feel and there those who do not
5. these who keep inside their thoughts and feelings and there those who share them
6. these who expect from the others to find for them what to do and there those who do it by themselves, etc.

*Notation:*
- ✓ The use of these specific criteria is indicative. They can be changed and adapted to the relevant issue we want to explore.

The examination of these elements is useful for the leader in order to evaluate the behavior of the members and also to evaluate which interventions will lead to expansion. For an educational group it is useful, because it contributes to the diminishment of conflicts, to the improvement of communication and also it allows the group to see itself objectively and to analyze its dynamics and development.

*Notation:*
- ✓ *Because of the multi dimensional nature of exercises, many of them can be used for several issues and for several purposes!!!*

*Notation:*

- ✓ In exercises with couples, it is recommended to choose somebody with who are less familiar.
- ✓ If in the same session, the group is divided more than once in couples, it is better to change partner.

## WARM UP

The leader, with his/ her presence and interventions, tries to create a loose atmosphere without critical comments, which provoke tension and increase the resistances for the game. The group's goal is the members to feel as comfortable as possible, in order to express themselves freely and to formulate a complaint, a thought, a desire, a conflict, something for which they want to learn more or something which they would like to manage better.

The members are activated by the discussion or/ and by some exercises and an emotional environment is formed in the group. So the whole group, the leader and the members, starts gradually to warm up to an issue, in which they will focus and with which they will be occupied in greater depth in the Action phase.

The below exercises (Κ. Λέτσιος, clinical psychologist- psychodrama trainer, handwritten notes) introduce the members to competitive situations which hide conflict and as they experience spontaneously and unconsciously a certain situation in class, they start wondering about the way they function in corresponding situations in their lives. The conflict usually emerges around the 5th session, together with resistance, when it is time for the group to go deeper. Inside the class the educators face many times students' resistance during the learning process. The resistance appears with the form of isolation, denial of participation, rivalries, aggressiveness toward the educator, by trying to attract other students to their side, by having difficulty in learning.

## DOGS & CATS

The leader gives the instruction that ''half of you will become dogs and the other half will become cats''.

They are free to choose what they want to be. A few minutes will pass until they make their choice and they finalize that the number of dogs and cats is equal or almost equal.

Alternatively, as everybody sits on the chairs of the circle, the leader turns to his/ her left and says to the member next to him/ her: ''dog'', to the next one ''cat'', and so on. Thus, he/ she gives roles to the members.

All members stand up and the interaction begins for about 10 minutes.

There is no limitation in their playing, except of course for the expression of violence of any kind.

After time has passed, they return to their chairs and a sharing of thoughts and feelings follows. The leader poses some questions, as: ''how did you feel during playing?'', ''what dog/ cat you

were? Playful? Wild?", ''How did you interact with the others?'', ''did you enjoy it?'' or some other relevant questions that result from the member's talking.

This is a directional exercise in order to provoke feelings of intensity. It is interesting to notice that in some members a tendency to predominate emerges, while in others a tendency to recede. While it seems a very simple exercise, it may be hard for some participants. This happens because the feelings which emerge in this particular situation are connected at the same time and unconsciously with other deeper situations. So, the leader needs to be alert and present with all his/ her senses in order to manage whatever comes up.

## CONFLICT

The group is separated in two smaller equal numbered groups.

The stage is the territory of the two groups. There is a line in between them, which divides the territory. The line is not depicted in reality, it is just in their imagination.

The leader shows with his/ her hand, where this line is.

The instruction given is ''the members of the A group want to reach to the other side of the room, where is the territory of the B group. The members of the B group resist and try to repel them''.

After around 5 minutes of interaction, the groups reverse roles. The time for the change is given by the leader.

Other 5 minutes of interaction follow and the exercise ends.

When they return and sit on their chairs, a sharing of feelings and thoughts follows.

Also, the leader poses to each individual the question ''how did you feel from these two positions? How was for you to be in the group that attacks and how to be in the group that defends?''

The aim of this exercise is the same with the previous one, the ''dogs and cats''. The use of violence is forbidden and the leader must be always alert and have in mind every single member of the group, how they feel or if somebody cannot stand it. There is no particular recipe for handling unpredictable situations, apart from staying calm and trying to relate with what emerges. If somebody does not want to participate, he/ she is free to do it. The leader may encourage the person who resists or denies, by saying that we always gain things for ourselves when we enter in things. But still the person may deny and the leader respects each one choices. If somebody is very touched by what happened, he/ she will share it in the group, with absolute respect in his/ her feelings.

## ENEMY

The leader says to the group to choose somebody from the group and to become couples. Then, they are called to stand up from the chairs and go to the stage with their partner.

The instruction given is to stand face to face with each other and to touch their hands. Their hands will be almost stretched to the height of their shoulders, so there will be some distance between them.

All couples are ''set up'' in line, the one next to the other but also in some distance from others, in order to have freedom of movements.

When everybody has taken this position, the leader says that ''person A sees in person B everything he does not like. Person B also sees in Person A everything he does not like. Each one of you tries to repeal the other. Start''.

The leader leaves them in interaction for about 5 minutes.

A sharing of thoughts and feelings follows this exercise. It increases the members' warm up, as each one connects to his/ her themes and he/ she projects to the other his/ her competitive or confrontational feelings. It is interesting to see how each individual experience it, the differences and the similarities among members.

*Variation:* The opponents do not touch each other. Their hands are straight down, next to their bodies. There is a distance between them, almost the distance that they would have in between if their hands were touched. Again the one repels and the other resists and they interact for about 5 minutes.

## ACTION

The Vet adult educator in the action phase, aims to continue warming up the members to conflict and conflict management. The situations that provoke intense feelings, distaste, antagonisms, divergences, are usually faced with fear. So the leader pursues to get busy with these situations, in order to teach in practice what happens to group dynamic when confronting conflicts and what when avoiding them. It is not a matter of giving a solution to a conflict, but of creating a new warm up, a new experience that has to do with developing the ability to relate with others when things are difficult. Conflict management becomes effective, when people learn gradually not to avoid them and to keep the communication with others open.

The below exercises and games (K. Λέτσιος, clinical psychologist- psychodrama trainer, handwritten notes) must be perceived as continuation of the members' warm up and not as something different or cut off. It must be never forgotten that in psychodrama, the leader's aim is to constantly warm up the members. Only when reaching the highest point of the warm up, spontaneity is created and so the new role is born, meaning the new way of confronting an old or new situation. To follow and to increase the warm up of the members requires by the leader to have understood the theme that occupies the group and so to intervene with the suitable exercises. So, they must not be taken as a prescheduled session.

The suggested games aim to activate the members and to warm them up more in confronting persons and situations and in expressing the untold. The leader may use an exercise in order to introduce members in a competitive situation or he/ she may organize a game based on the experiences or the worries of a member or some members. Also, the various forms of personal or group resistance are handled successfully through playing. If the issue of the group is organized

and dramatized in a way which corresponds to the tension that the group experiences in the ''here and now'', then great opportunities are created for expressing these difficulties. In a Vet class, the playing builds more functional relationships which reinforce the unity of the group and connects each individual with his/ her progressive roles which lead to the internalization of the knowledge, to personal changes and to development of new skills.

## FOLLOW AND BE FOLLOWED

The leader asks from the members to put in their mind somebody from the group whom they want to follow and somebody by whom they do not want to be followed.

Everybody stands up and starts following the person who has chosen, keeping a distance from him/ her. At the same time, he/ she tries to avoid the person that he/ she does not want to be followed by.

After 2-3 minutes, the leader changes the criterion into: ''now just follow the person you want, by keeping a distance''.

After 2- 3 minutes, change again: ''now just try to avoid the person you do not want''.

After 2- 3 minutes, change again: ''now follow again the person you want and avoid the person you do not want''.

This exercise brings individuals in contact with what they avoid and with what they confront. They may have chosen a person from the group to follow and one to avoid, but inside them they have been connected with all these they avoid and face. Their stance towards conflict becomes more obvious and also, how closed or open are towards people and situations.

## TEACHER – REACTIVE CHILD

The group is divided in two smaller groups.

Group A takes the role of the teacher. Group B takes the role of the reactive child.

The leader asks from the members of each group to come closer with their chairs and to discuss a little about their role. What kind of parent they are, how this reactive child reacts etc. At this point, there is no interaction between the two subgroups, only the members of the each group talk together.

They have around 10 minutes for their preparation.

They place their chairs in a way so to have visual contact with the other group and the interaction begins.

The educator explains to them that each time a member from a group has an idea, he/ she freely expresses it. The same happens with the other group, whoever has an idea immediately answers. And so the enactment continues.

After around 15 minutes (the leader evaluates the appropriate amount of time according to the enactment), the leader gives the instruction ''you have 2 minutes to complete it''.

After finishing, they return with their chairs to the initial circle, preferably the members of each subgroup sitting the one next to the other but it is not obligatory, and the sharing begins. The instruction is ''Thoughts and feelings that were agitated in you during the enactment''.

Some possible questions are ''how did you feel from this role?'', ''how did you cooperate with your team?'', ''did you end up finding a solution?'' etc.

Depending on the number of participants, the leader may create more subgroups in order to explore and expand more the members' perspectives. For example, if we have 8 members, we will form 2 subgroups of 4 persons, ''the teacher'' and the ''reactive child''. If we have 12 members, we will form 3 subgroups of 4 persons (or 4 groups of 3 persons), ''the teacher'', ''the reactive child'' and ''the parent''. If we have 16 members 4 subgroups of 4 persons, ''the teacher'', ''the parent'', the ''reactive child'' and ''the cooperative child''. The leader leaves in free interaction all the subgroups, for a certain period of time and then, the sharing follows.

This is a very interesting game because it can be adjusted to many different working environments and situations. It works in multi levels, it transfers in here and now the competitive situation, it brings to the surface the untold messages, it helps expand oneself as he/ she experiences the different perspectives. As the members get the opportunity to play different roles their empathy grows, because they start thinking, talking and acting like him/ her, they start understanding him/ her better. They will start wondering about how he/ she feels and what he/ she wants to express. It is very possible to be surprised by their own reaction, as they warm up being in the different roles.

*Variation:* At the end or at a certain point of the enactment, the leader may reverse roles the two groups. Meaning, the members who were ''the teacher'' will become now ''the reactive child'' and vice versa, the members who were ''the reactive child'' will become now ''the teacher''.

The interaction will start over again with the same time duration.

So, both groups will experience both roles.

*Variation:* At the end or at a certain point of the enactment, the leader may ask ''if somebody, one or more, wants to go to the other group'' and he/ she goes.

The interaction starts over again or continues for some time more.

## THE SHOE

The members of the group are asked to take off their left shoe and place it in the center of the stage.

Each member separately will stand up and will move one shoe at a time, except for his/ her own.

This will be repeated for several times.

Some limitations will be given, in particular: the shoes will not be turned upside down, will not be thrown away and will not be placed outside the frame of the stage.

Approximate duration: 10 – 15 minutes. As soon as a couple of minutes are left, the leader will inform the group that they have two minutes to conclude.

A sharing of thoughts and feelings follows.

This exercise is related with how individuals feel when somebody intervenes and ruins what they have in mind. It reveals also the dynamics, while some people have the tendency to disrupt things while others to ''gather'' them, to keep things calm. Through this exercise the anger and the untold tension is expressed in a symbolic level. This exercise may be used in the beginning of the action phase for better exploration of the dynamic and the antagonisms of the group or in the end of the action phase for bigger defuse of the tension.

# CLOSURE:
# SHARING & PROCESSING

These exercises (Κ. Λέτσιος, clinical psychologist- psychodrama trainer, handwritten notes) are put in the end of the session and also in the end of a series of sessions. They contribute to the better integration of what took place during the teaching of the training material. The goal is double: to make the members an internal ''report'' of what they lived, what they learnt, what they take with them as the session or the series of sessions ends; to integrate, to take inside the most of what took place during the group session and also, if the group ends, to facilitate the expression and elaboration of separation feelings from the leader and the other group members. This process of account and goodbye is an inevitable part of the procedure of each kind and duration group.

The leader facilitates the members' expression and he proposes exercises for the account and the estimation of each one's development inside the group. And of course, he proposes exercises so as the members to experience the separation in a ceremonial way. The leader may participate to the exercises and to express himself/ herself his/ her feelings for this experience and the ending of the group.

The leader determines the time that the group will dedicate to its closure. An approximate duration for closure and evaluation is 2 hours (depending always on the total duration of the session). All members will have the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings, to reflect on the procedure and to discuss on various questions, concerning the use and implementation of this knowledge.

In educational groups, the leader proposes exercises also for the evaluation of the training procedure, the knowledge and skills that the participants obtained.

## SOMETHING THAT HAS NOT BEEN SETTLED

The leader gives the following instruction to the members: ''Think of someone with whom you have a communication difficulty. Think of something that you have not settled with this person the way you would like, e.g. you wanted to say something to him/ her but you didn't, or to do something that you didn't or anything else''.

This exercise is done with couples and so the leader asks from the group to become couples with the person who sits next to them. So everybody becomes dyads and if we have single number of participants, there will be also a triad. In the triad, the exercise is also done in couples, each one chooses his/ her partner and it does not matter if somebody has been chosen twice.

Both persons will have the opportunity to express themselves consecutively.

To be clearer, person A expresses what he/ she wants to person B. Then he/ she changes role with person B and gives an answer from that role. And there the enactment finishes.

Person B in his/ her turn does the same thing.

When everybody has finished, they turn in the circle and a sharing of thoughts and feelings follows.

Alternatively, the couples may discuss together how they experience it, without making an open sharing in the circle.

This exercise, as all the experiential exercises, does not give answers or solutions, it contributes to make people wonder about their functioning: about the way they do things, the way they express themselves, what they could do differently etc. It also contributes in expressing the untold and gives the opportunity for a correctional movement.

This kind of questioning contributes to self expansion through the generation of a new warm- up, of new responses to old experiences. So, as the individual gains a clearer, image of himself and his personality, he/ she creates clearer, more direct and functional relationships with the others.

## GROUP SCULPTURE

The members are requested by the leader to make the sculpture of the group as they would like it to be.

The sculpture will be static, as a frozen image, without movement or words.

If the members find meaningful the sculpture to say a word or to have a slight movement, it is totally ok.

They may use objects, they may all participate in the image of the sculpture or some of the members, they are totally free to do it as they imagine.

By doing that, all members come closer in order to discuss, to share opinions, to cooperate and finally to choose and create how they want this sculpture to be and what to represent. Every member starts an internal process of what group is for himself/ herself and what is for the others.

The participants will depict the sense of the group as they would like it to be, probably the sense of a good functional group and that contributes to greater integration of group work.

## JUST A WORD

The leader asks from the group members to say a word or a phrase for something that each one of them takes with him/ her, as this session ends.

It can be anything, something he/ she learnt, something he/ she realized, something which impressed him/ her, or anything else.

For example: ''communication'', ''I am not alone, there are others who feel the same way''.

In a circle, or in a free row, everybody talks briefly about it.

The leader may, if he/ she wants, say a word that takes with him/ her, after everybody has finished talking.

This exercise helps each member to focus on the most important ''thing'' for him/ her. Among everything said and done, he/ she chooses one. It is related to the *principal of concretization*, one of the most basic psychodrama techniques. It is very important to choose one, to develop the ability of making focus only on one thing at a time.

It also provides to the educator the possibility to see clearer where each participant ''is'', meaning what he/ she keeps from the training course, what he/ she wants to develop more, what to learn more etc.

## WANDER AND FOCUS

The leader asks the members to be separated in couples.

Each one of them will discuss and share with the other what was important for him/ her, what he/ she learnt, what he/ she found out, what he/ she liked.

They may leave the class, if they want and if it is possible.

Otherwise, they will find a way to co- exist with the others without annoying them, scattered in different spots in the room, speaking in a low voice.

They return to the class after 20 minutes and they sit on the chairs.

It is preferable the couples to sit together, meaning one next to the other in the circle, but it is not obligatory.

Each one shares with the rest of the group the above thoughts and feelings.

Each member tries to focus on the most important things he/ she learnt and felt during this session. It is very important for each one to realize them, to give value to them, to find connections with the others and/ or to hear something that he/ she had not thought of.

## MY ROUTE IN THE GROUP

This exercise is recommended for the Sharing phase of the last session, after the teaching of all training materials is coming to an end.

The leader asks from each member to paint a path that symbolizes his/ her route in the group, since the beginning until today.

They may add drawings, symbols or words for the important moments that experienced during it.

Markers, pencils, oil pastels of different colors may be needed in order to differentiate some elements, to emphasize others, to make it more joyful, more meaningful or whatever else.

As each one tries to focus on the most important moments, he/ she makes an internal report of the group process and his/ her personal route.

The leader asks them also, to imagine and paint where this path will lead after the sessions finish.

The members share what they keep, what they learnt, how they felt. By imagining where this path leads, they make a *future projection* (psychodrama technique), about how they imagine themselves with this new experience, this new knowledge. Future projection helps the members to make their goal more concrete and to internally connect with their progressive roles, meaning the roles that help them to move on, to go ahead.

An estimation of 15- 20 minutes seems to be enough time for the painting of the routes.

Everybody exposes his work in front of the whole group and one by one presents it, talking shortly about it.

Around 30 minutes seems to be required for the exposure and the sharing of the personal routes, always depending on the total number of the participants.

*Notation*: All members cooperate for a collective painting of the route of the group.

## 4. Evaluation

The educator will carry out an evaluation of what the learners conceived out of the teaching of the whole module by applying some fruitful exercises. For the use and the goal of these exercises, please read above the *Closure: Sharing & Processing*.

Additionally to these:

- ▶ Each member of the group chooses an object from the room, in order to symbolize what he takes with him, as this session ends.
  He leaves it in front of his feet, in a way that all the rest may see it.
  After everybody has chosen a symbol, in a circle they share with the others what they take with them.
- ▶ Each member makes an image of what he gained out of the workshop.
  He may use objects or members from the group.
- ▶ Each member makes his route in the group not by painting as mentioned before, but lively, on stage, using the members of the group or even objects, for the important things they learnt and how this route finishes.
- ▶ In pairs, they leave the class, they may also leave the building if possible, and they wander around for 15', discussing about what they took from the workshop.
  After coming back, each one shares with the group what puts as a goal to do after leaving from here.
- ▶ In small, equal numbered groups, make a short free enactment of what they learnt during this session.
- ▶ All members, except for the leader, form a circle and each one becomes the leader of the group for 10'.
  The leader who stands outside the circle, gives each time the moment to move to the next leader.

From the implementation of some of these experiential exercises and the sharing which will follow, the *leader* will make a self- assessment for the teaching process of the training material, considering the aims and the intended learning outcomes of the module. The way the exercises and activities have been received and performed by the members, will give the answers for the function of the group and the leader.

The *learners* will also make a self- assessment of what they learnt, of how the experiential teaching affected them as being group members, of how this knowledge affects their perception about group work and of how they think they will implement this in their work.

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