

Title

Perpetrator - Victim - Helper - Triangle

Source

Method presented during the International Trainers Laboratory, October 2001 by Julia Moras and Ike Schaeffer (Switzerland); exercise originally taken from: "Konflikte selber lösen", Faller, Kerntke, Wackmann 1996. For further information on the International Trainers Laboratory, please contact IJAB, Kerstin Giebel, E-Mail: giebel@ijab.de.

Field/Content

Conflict analysis

Duration

Instructions: 10 minutes

Game: 15 minutes

Evaluation: 30 minutes

Participants

Between 9 and 18 players or perhaps more. For larger groups, it is recommended to work with at least two trainers. Participants from 12 years old.

Aims

- Experiencing the different roles
- Trying out alternative stereotype roles
- Identifying with the various roles in conflict situations
- As an introduction to handling players' own conflicts

Background

What is a conflict?

- We have different opinions.
- We don't understand each other.
- We have a problem with each other.
- We threaten each other.
- We hurt each other with word or even acts.

The difficult but accepted definition is:

A social conflict is an interaction
between parties (groups, organisations, individual persons)
in which at least one party has **inconsistent**
thoughts
ideas
perceptions
feelings
intentions
with another party

in a way
that the parties
interfere in the realisation.

The conflict triangle

In situations of violence and conflict, there are perpetrators and victims. We don't want to be either – preferably we are the helpers who are there to help the victims. Put very simply, we can talk about three different roles which in a conflict situation form a sort of triangle: Perpetrator, Victim, Helper.

These roles can change, depending on developments in the conflict. This means that a victim might turn into a perpetrator, and a helper may become a victim, and so on.

Role profiles:

Perpetrator

Behaviour: speaks in orders, stands with feet apart, etc.
Voice: loud, steady, confident, etc.
Body language: firm, self-assured, forceful, etc.
Typical expression: "Just stop it!"

Victim

Behaviour: fragile, inconspicuous, etc.
Voice: quiet, unconfident, stuttering, etc.
Body language: cowering, etc.
Typical expression: "I didn't mean it."

helper

Behaviour: conciliatory, helpful, brave, etc.
Voice: understanding, kind, caring, etc.
Body language: open, careful, firm and yet reserved, etc.
Typical expression: "It'll be alright."

In a conflict situation it is often helpful to be aware which role we are in. You can then decide whether you want to continue to play that role or want to find ways to get out of it.

Materials / Resources

- Perpetrator – Victim – Helper sheets
- Stopwatch

Preparation

This exercise is intellectually demanding which is why we recommend that you always work through the conflict triangle first.

Sets with one sheet each for Perpetrator, Victim and Helper – one set for each group of three. Develop conflict situations with three roles presenting a theme which is present in the group's everyday lives.

The profiles of the three roles are to be developed in the preparation for the exercise.

Methodology

Explain the conflict situation for the group, possibly with the aid of a flipchart.

Have the players form groups of three.

Each group then receives a set of sheets which they should arrange in a triangle. They should then form a triangle themselves.

In the first round the above roles are distributed in each group and for two minutes (stop-watch) the three players in each group try to deal with the problem depending on which sheet they are standing on. The same people play the roles allocated at the beginning throughout the game.

In the second round, each person in the group of three shifts to the next position, for example from the Victim sheet to the Perpetrator sheet, from the Perpetrator sheet to the Helper sheet and from the Helper sheet to the Victim Sheet. Then the conflict is played out in this new situation once again for two minutes. The players must try to adopt behaviour appropriate to the position they are in (Victim, Perpetrator or Helper).

In the third round, the players shift round one again. And once again they try to develop the conflict for two more minutes.

The game is over when all three players in each group have played each of the roles in the triangle.

Evaluation / Debriefing

Evaluation round: ideally in two small groups, and the results are finally presented to the whole group.

- Which role was the most difficult / easiest to play? Why?
- Which role do the players most often find themselves in? Why?
- What must each player change in his or her behaviour in order to play another (possibly preferable) role?

Variants