

Working with people with experiences of fleeing their country, of conflict and war.

You may be using this toolbox with people with experience of being a refugee, of fleeing their country because of poverty, insecurity, conflict or war. Participants who have been lucky enough always to live in times of peace, may still have had difficult home lives, experiences of loss, illness, death or verbal or even physical abuse in their families. Any of the participants may be going through a difficult time in their life. Often stress and trauma is not visible to the outside world.

Here are some important points to always bear in mind.

Creating a safe space

Ask participants not to share the stories they hear in the workshop space with others outside the workshop. If needed, be prepared to make a written contract with participants with this included. There will be space in the workshop for creating stories designed specifically for the public sphere e.g. for sharing on social media – but an agreement must always be reached with the person beforehand. This includes posting photos showing other people, even if they are in a group.

On the first day of the workshop, explain that:

People only should share stories which they want to share – and take their time when telling stories, so they can respect their own borders;

A lot of the exercises are designed to create and enjoy positive and empowering experiences together, some may seem silly, but are still part of the process, a certain amount of trust is needed to complete the workshop;

Some of the journeys which people may choose to share may have been painful or difficult, be open and respectful of everyone's sensibility and vulnerability;

There will be time for reflection in the workshop, at the end of most exercises, and that feedback on your experience of the exercise is welcome;

Taking part in the exercises is voluntary, everyone is allowed to take a break from the exercise whenever they feel the need to. Just make sure that communication is maintained throughout, someone may need a pause from the exercise because they feel triggered or distressed, make sure they are not left alone to guarantee the safety for everyone involved;

Every individual has different limits and trigger levels that they as participants should be careful about. Be mindful of how the listener reacts to the story you are telling them, and when sharing painful memories, be aware that it might be upsetting for them. If in doubt, ask your conversation partner if they are happy for you to continue.

Using the exercises

On the Your Journey website you can find numerous exercises to choose from to use in the workshop.

The exercises are divided in 7 categories that define their main objective and where they could fit in a progression;

The categories are:

Teambuilding or Energizer

These exercises are used to set the mood for the session and to create an enjoyable group dynamic, we suggest to use these exercises at the beginning of a session or soon after a break or whenever the group seems out of focus;

Triggering Creativity

These exercise stimulate the participants and make them think out of the box, these exercise work very well as introduction to the workshop and as “cushion” between challenging exercises;

Triggering Awareness

Exercise to better reflect on oneself, our story and the circumstances we find ourselves in. Best used when the group has established trust; Finding Common Ground: These exercises help to build the sense of community, how the participants are similar to each other and creates opportunities for dialog.

Technical Aspects of Storytelling

Exercises that dive into storytelling techniques to find new interesting ways to tell your own story. some of them require that the participants have chosen a specific memory or story to tell;

Technical Aspects of Photography:

Experiment Photography techniques, so that the participants can be more aware and creative. These exercises can be used more times across sections (if the schedule allows it) to experiment in different moment of the process and different awareness;

Closing

Good exercise to give a closure to the session and or the workshop. They may offer sparks of reflection or evaluation or simply end a session on a lighter mood. as the name implies the exercises are better used as the last. As a facilitator it is up to you to select the exercises that better fit the group and the aims of your workshop, you can also modify the exercise to adapt it to your needs and create your own version. The most important thing to take into account is to guarantee a safe experience for the participants during the process.

The Process

The “Your Journey” workshop has been developed with the preferred duration of 18 hours of activities for a group composed of about 20 people. The total amount of hours can be divided according to the needs of each group to produce a preferred number of shorter sessions. It is up to the facilitator to shorten the total duration of the workshop with full awareness that the less time is dedicated to the process, less results will be achieved at the end.

Throughout the use of the exercises, the “Your Journey” workshop aims at different objectives:

- ① Build a safe environment for the group to share their experience;
Find common ground for an easier interaction among the attendees;
- ② Build up a sense of community to further the integration of the participants with migratory background;
- ③ Bring more awareness towards one’s personal experience, framing it as a Story using storytelling techniques;
- ④ Learning how to use images and photography to better express and represent one’s personal story.

Following these objectives (both in the short and long term) can be used as a reference for the development of the process to follow through the workshop, focusing in the beginning on those exercises that help create the group and build a sense of trust and community. For this aim we suggest starting every session with the “check-in” exercise and, if possible, use it or other form of feedback throughout the whole workshop. A perfect exercise to use earlier in the workshop (maybe in the first 3 hours) is “The contract”, to allow the participants to set their own boundaries and rules to follow throughout the process, put it in between a couple of more “creative” exercises such as those marked as “Energizer” and/or “Triggering Creativity” to soften the impact and seriousness of “the contract” and to present the whole workshop as moment for bonding, creativity, but not without rules and regulations. This will give a good image of the whole process and set up a safe environment of trust.

Through the following hours, introduce more exercises among the category “finding common ground” to allow the participants to share more about themselves; it is during this phase of the workshop that the base concepts of “Home” and “Journey” should be explored and the participants should start focusing on a specific memory/experience (or a selection of) to work on during the workshop. Always use “Energizer” and/or “Triggering Creativity” exercises to lighten the mood and raise energy whenever you feel they fit.

It is in the middle to late hours of the workshop that the exercises from “triggering awareness” start to shine: exercises that allow a different comprehension of ourselves and our experience. In this phase, introduce more exercises from “technical aspects of Storytelling” for the participants to focus more on their “story” and on how they prefer to tell it. Towards the end of the workshop, the group should feel free to share and discuss about themselves, their experiences, their Stories;

they should have a better understanding of their own process and be able to “tell” part of their own Story; They should have been fed with creative inputs to experiment and think out of the box. If you haven’t used “Technical aspects of Photography” yet, use it now and give them the possibility to represent the world they have inside through images; if you already used it, maybe let them try again, let them experiment with their new awareness, and then discuss together on how the photo they took then and now are different and how they feel. Use feedback often, always ask them how they feel, if they are enjoying the process, what their expectations were and how you are measuring up to them. End every session with a “closing” exercise, congratulate and thank the participant for their work and their trust. Make sure they feel this is “their Journey”.

What is a Story?

A story is a series of events set in a specific timeframe.

To satisfy the listener a story has to follow a specific structure:

- 1 The Starting Situation - The moment to present the time, the setting, the character and the common habits in which the story takes place;
- 2 The Beginning - Something sets in motion the events, someone changes the starting situation and makes the story begin;
- 3 The Events - what happens in the story, a series of actions and choices that fit one into the other creating a progression and building expectation in the listeners and/or conflict in the characters
- 4 Resolution - all the conflict is resolved, a final event that bring the story back to a new Starting situation (something may have changed but the “action” has concluded)
- 5 Conclusion - the end of the story, a way to close the narration either with a moral, something learned or a wrap-up of the events narrated.

There are many types of structure that can be used to build your story, this is a simple example (other can be found in the exercises) feel free to look for more examples that may better fit your group.

A short 3-minute story

Telling the experience of one single event, limited in time, place and action with a clear beginning.

Limit the action to one single episode, imagine it as if it was a movie or a series of images in front of you, and describe it in enough detail so your audience can imagine it following your descriptions, while maintaining the dynamics of the story sequence.

What should happen:

The spectator (audience, group or partner) can share in your experience, they take on your perspective for the length of the story, they see what you see, feel what you felt and understand you and your view on the theme at hand better.

Personal Stories

For this workshop we would like for the participants to focus on two core concepts that can spark memories: “**Journey**” and “**Home**”

Any journey They have made, which is important to them.

It may be a physical journey to a different country - they may have chosen to go there for work, or have gone there to find work, not really by choice. Or they may have been forced to go there, fleeing the country because of conflict or war. It may have been an adventure they chose to go on to challenge themselves. The element of choice does make an important difference.

It may be an outward or an inward journey. An example of an inward journey:

“you had a difficult challenge and you coped with it and found a solution. Since then, you find you are calm, while others may get upset. This resilience was a process or a journey you have been on”.

Being free to choose which journeys to undertake is a luxury.

Please be aware of the privilege of travel for leisure. For there are so many people on this planet who have no legal right to travel, as they are stateless and have no passport or travel document and neither do some know when and if they will get access to one in the future.

They cannot choose to travel.

What is a Home, according to them.

Can they describe their ideal home? Is a home the same as a house?

Do they have a memory of a moment where they really felt at home? How was it? What was the situation? Who was there with them?

The concept of Home may be different depending on culture and background, some of us may think of walls and rooftops, while other may think of tents, to someone the first image is an apartment, for other it could be a garden; Don't necessarily focus on the “material”, help the participants focus on the feelings, the sensations, specific memories that they can share regarding their home:

it could be a toy they played with when they were little;

it could be a habit or a tradition of their family;

There may be people that have lost their home and are in the process of rebuilding it or looking for a new one (in some way this project was made to give them new instruments to help them in this search), be mindful of them and remind everyone to be respectful. Some of the memories could bring sadness to the group, be aware that that sadness is not to be shunned and support everyone during the process.

Always give the participants the time to reflect and allow them to keep their memories for themselves, everything they will share is because they want and choose to share.

The YOUR JOURNEY Project



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