



ACTIVITY 5 FORCE THE CIRCLE

This exercise addresses majority/minority relationships and the social and political mechanisms which divide society. It aims at experiencing being part of a majority group and being in the minority as well as analysing the strategies we use to be accepted by the majority group.

INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Divide the group into subgroups of 6 to 8 people.
2. Ask each group to choose one person to be the 'observer' and a second to be the 'outsider'.
3. Tell the other members of the group to stand shoulder to shoulder to form as tight a circle as possible so as not to leave any space between them.
4. Explain that the 'outsider' must try to get into the circle while those who form the circle must try to keep them out.
5. Tell the observers to make notes on the strategies used both by the 'outsider' and those in the circle and give them the task to also act as timekeeper.
6. After two or three minutes, and regardless of whether they managed to enter the circle or not, 'outsider' joins the circle and another member has a turn. The activity is over once all the members of the group who wish to have tried to 'force the circle'.

DEBRIEFING AND EVALUATION: Bring everyone together to discuss what happened, and how they felt. Start by asking the players: How did you feel when you were part of the circle? How did you feel when you were the 'outsider'? Do those who succeeded in "forcing the circle" feel differently from those who didn't manage it?

VARIATIONS: If there are enough people to play with several circles you can, at the very beginning, ask each group to give themselves a name. This will reinforce the feeling of group identity. You can then play so that the outsider always comes from a different group. At the end of each round the 'outsider' should return to their original group whether or not they 'force the circle'. This may also stress the feeling of loneliness when being the 'outsider'.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FOLLOW UP: Suggest the participants say how they could be more aware of their own behaviour and when they may, without wanting to, exclude others from the 'group'. For example, are there representatives from all sections of the local community involved in local groups, clubs, societies or organisations? Could they join if they wanted to? What stops them? What would encourage them to join? Decide what action you could take to ensure the opportunity to participate is open to everyone.