

Role play for girls

An effective way to show master-suppression techniques and at the same time engage participants of your training is to use role play. Below are detailed instructions for trainers including time frame, setting of the role play, characters of the role play and suggested debriefing activities.

Time frame of the activity

- 15 minutes – preparation of participants for role play
- 15 - 20 minutes – actual role play (discussion on who will give a speech during an environmental protest)
- 40 - 60 minutes – debriefing (debriefing questions, innovative method “Theatre of the Oppressed”)

Setting of the role play + instructions for participants

You could screen it at PowerPoint presentation or you could print it.

You are members of local activists' group, who are preparing an environmental protest. Read your role/task (for yourself, do not show it to anybody) and prepare for the discussion on who should give a speech during the protest. Throughout the session observe your colleagues carefully.

About the protest scene:

- it is organised by a group of young activists (both boys and girls), and Emilia is the one who not only was preparing it from the beginning, but also the one who registered it
- Emilia is engaged in the movement for several years, but she was never considered a leader as she is engaged in different roles, including technical ones
 - while preparing it, you did not plan to give a speech during the protest, but media coverage is unexpectedly high and the journalists are pushing for a statement
- from some quite of time girls are unhappy with the way environmental actions are being organised – they are given less important roles while in public but always are responsible for “invisible” work like preparation of banners, cleaning afterwards and other necessary things.
- Kris is a new boy in town, he is popular soccer player, a captain of school's team, he is willing to give a speech as he wants to impress his girlfriend

Characters of the role play

You could modify/decrease number of characters in the role play according to your group's size. Print the description of characters and their roles (tasks), separate them (one character with task per slip of paper) and let the participants randomly draw them. Participants are not supposed to share their roles among themselves. Give the main character of the role play (Emilia Woods) 5 to 10 minutes for preparation. Since she will be the one in the rough position of dealing with different master-suppression techniques, let her know that she has the possibility to say "stop" and end the role play any time when she feels it is too much to handle.

<p><i>Emilia Woods</i>, local activist, 20 years old, always present while preparing protests and often backing it up as 'technical support'. Many think she should take on a leader's role more as she is very good in organising things as well as dealing with people.</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> During the protest the media ask for a short statement they want to record, some people pointed at you as the one who should give it, but you have an opponent – Kris who will fight for the mike (beware of potential negative feedback).</p>
<p>Kris Hunter, new boy in town, 21 years old, good-looking and confident, plays soccer and also a captain of school's team.</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You are arguing that you should be the one giving speech, as you have experience with media as a soccer player. In fact, you want to impress your girlfriend, who may see you in News on TV.</p>
<p>John Bolton, deputy captain in a soccer team that Kris is playing for. You want to support your teammate, as Kris called you to join the protest and support his position in the discussion.</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> By making jokes you are disrespecting Emilia. Whenever you can, you say that she cannot compare to Kris.</p>
<p>Elisabeth Chambers, local activists, 32 years old, mother of a 2-years old child who is with her on the meeting.</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You express your support of the proposal of Emilia speaking to the press, but you are unable to attend the whole meeting because your child keeps crying and you need to leave to calm her down.</p>
<p>Mary Littleball, local activist, 15 years old, shy, it is one of your first protests.</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You are willing to support Emilia as you've heard a lot about her, but you are afraid to take a stand against such popular boy as Kris.</p>
<p>Dana Walker, local activist, 19 years old, you are secretly in love with Kris, so this discussion is an opportunity he noticed you.</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You support the proposal of Kris giving the speech, ignoring Emilia's merit. You openly say that Kris is good-looking so no matter what he will say it will look good on TV.</p>

<p>Lara Caesar, local activist, 21 years old, she would also like to give a speech but no one mentioned her as a proposition, so she is trying to discredit both candidates.</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> During the discussion you loudly comment on the size of Emilia's breasts and claim that Kris is only good at kicking a ball.</p>
<p>Paula Newman, a schoolgirl aged 17, who is active in organizing protests since few years ago.</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You say (not in a loud voice - just by the way) that you support Emilia because she is the one who is always involved in all activities and she knows the most about the protest.</p>
<p>Martin Luckyfellar, local activist, 21 years old, he is engaged only to pick up girls during protests.</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You play with your mobile phone (games, SMS, e-mails etc.) during the whole discussion.</p>
<p>Jennifer Black, local school teacher, aged 42, who attended the protest at its beginning but left to meet her friends and now got back as Mary Littleball called for her support.</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You talk on the phone to your colleagues during parts of the discussion. From time to time you try to back-up Emilia, but yet again you are on the phone...</p>
<p>Bob Bradley, local activist, 27 years old, experienced in the environmental movement but also known for never be able to prepare and organise events. So called "blue bird", people cannot count on him.</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You are deeply interested in the discussion, but it is obvious that Emilia should not represent the whole movement as she is a woman. You use stereotypical arguments like her being too emotional and indecisive to discredit her as a speaker.</p>
<p>Barnaby Darcy, local activist 20 years old.</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You got here with your friend Rick Fielder and both of you are interested in where to go after the protest, not in the discussion. You exchange opinions about bars nearby.</p>
<p>Rick Fielder, local activist 21 years old.</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You got here with your friend Barnaby Darcy and both of you are interested in where to go after the protest, not in the discussion. You exchange opinions about bars nearby.</p>
<p>Peter Young, local activist and academic, 27 years old</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You will repeatedly make a point that no one should talk to the press, as they will manipulate the message anyway.</p>

Debriefing

Questions after the role play for participants:

- What behaviour was not alright? (*Writing all incorrect behaviour on a flip chart in order to be able to get back to the examples.*)
- Have you ever encountered similar situation?
- What are other possible situations that could happen?
- How is it to be in this position on whom techniques are used?
- Who could possibly be your ally?
- Why is it important to look for allies?
- How to react in these situations – what can you do, if you are being under master suppression techniques?
- How to react if you see that master suppression techniques are being used on someone else?

Method Theatre of the Oppressed

The goal of this debriefing activity is to actually play different counter-strategies and not just talk about them in theory (“In this situation I would do that”, “I would ignore his behaviour”, etc.).

The roots of Theatre of the Oppressed refer to the Pedagogy of the Oppressed developed by Paulo Freire in the 60s of the 20th century in Brazil as a response to the then military and elitist regime. The aim was to develop critical thinking in humans, but also through the creation of critical literacy, through dialogue leading to an awareness of their own life situation. Brazilian playwright and director Augusto Boal subsequently transferred the pedagogy of the oppressed into a theatrical language – along with other established and developed the concept of Theatre of the Oppressed. Theatre of the Oppressed is a set of techniques, games and exercises, whose main idea is to restore a dialogue between people through the art form – theatre. It deals with themes of oppression – external and internal. We can use it for detecting the mechanisms of oppression that we face in our everyday lives. It can lead to the transformation of our society, with an emphasis on solidarity with the oppressed.

The Theatre of the Oppressed presents to an audience a short theatrical story of an oppressed protagonist. After the story is played, viewers are asked if somebody wants to come on the stage, take the position of the oppressed protagonist and try to play it differently. The idea is to explore different counter-strategies and ideas and directly engage audience into the story. The aim is to show that we are able to change the storyline for better and that we may be able to do the same in our lives.

In our case short theatrical story is the role play and oppressed protagonist is Emilia Woods who faces manipulative behaviour while discussing whether she should give a speech during the protest. After the role play has finished, participants of training are encouraged to switch their role with the person who played Emilia Woods and to come up with new counter-strategies while replaying the whole situation. It could be repeated if more participants want to play the main protagonist and have more ideas what could be changed in the behaviour and reactions of main protagonist.