

Role play for women politicians

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 (meeting of the assembly)
- 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 government of The City. Read your role (for yourself) and prepare for the meeting of the assembly which is planned for 15 minutes. During the session observe your colleagues carefully.

About the city:

- 3500 inhabitants
- 25 members of local government (20 men and 5 women)
- Public facilities: kindergarten, school, doctor, restaurant with a hall for public events, football stadium, but no playground
- Social life: events organized mainly by local volunteer fire department (balls, Children’s Day), hunter’s association (balls and other social events), local Scout Association

Questions after the role play for participants:

1. What behaviour was not alright? (Writing all incorrect behaviour on a flip chart in order to be able to get back to the examples.)
2. Have you ever encountered similar situation?
3. What are other possible situations that could happen?
4. How is it to be in this position on whom techniques are used?
5. How to react in these situations?

Actors 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 (Jane O’Connor) 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.

Jane O'Connor, local government representative, teacher, 40 years old mother of 2, in her leisure time she takes care of her children and she likes gardening	<u>Your task:</u> Prepare short presentation (5-10 minutes) of a proposal of building children's playground in The City. Present the proposal at the meeting of the local government (beware of potential negative feedback).
Jacob Woods, mayor, elected for the first time, 60 years old father of 2 adult children, hunter	<u>Your task:</u> You are chairing the meeting. You are neither listening nor disturbing the proposal presenter unlike some of the other participants of the meeting.
John Hunter, deputy mayor entrepreneur, 55 years old has no children, hunter	<u>Your task:</u> By making jokes you are disrespecting the presenter. At the end of the meeting you accept Tom Bradley's invitation for a drink.
Elisabeth Chambers, local government representative, on maternity leave, 35 years old mother of 2, in her leisure time she takes care of her children	<u>Your task:</u> You express your support of the presented proposal. Background information: You were unable to attend the last meeting because your child was sick.
Bobby Littleball, local government representative, sports teacher, 35 years old has no children, likes sports, coach of local football team	<u>Your task:</u> You are opposing the presenter. You consider investments in the playground to be unnecessary. You will come out with your own proposal for a reconstruction of a stand on a football stadium.
Ernest Walker, local government representative, engineer, 45 years old father of two, likes sports	<u>Your task:</u> You ignore the presenter. During her presentation you are reading a newspaper.
Richard Caesar, local government representative, vet, 50 years old, father of 1, passionate hiker	<u>Your task:</u> You don't pay attention to the presenter. During her presentation you loudly comment on the size of her breasts.
Paul Newman, local government representative, gynaecologist, 49 years old father of 3, member of local volunteer fire department	<u>Your task:</u> You say (not in a loud voice - just by the way) that you agree with the proposal because you know that the children have no place to play.
Martin Luckyfellar , local government representative, owner of local restaurant, 58 years old father of 1, member of local volunteer fire department	<u>Your task:</u> You play with your mobile phone (games, SMS, e-mails etc.) during the whole presentation.

<p>Jack Black, local government representative, plumber, 46 years old father of 2, hunter</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You talk to your colleagues during the presentation.</p> <p>Note: In case your neighbours are not willing to talk, stand up and go to the other colleagues.</p>
<p>Tom Bradley, local government representative builder, 54 years old</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> At the end of the presentation you turn to your colleague John Hunter and invite him for a drink.</p>
<p>Barnaby Darcy, local government representative lawyer, 45 years old</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You don't pay attention to the presentation, quite the opposite - you are laughing at the presenter and you point out several times that she hasn't got a academic degree.</p>
<p>Rick Fielder, local government representative farmer, 55 years old</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You are in favour of the counter proposal of Bobby Littleball and you stress that The City's priority is investment into sport.</p>
<p>Steve Phillips, local government representative private consultant, 38 years old</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You are openly expressing that you are not interested in the presented proposal. You are not listening your colleague presenting the proposal and you are talking to the other participants.</p> <p>Note: In case your neighbours are not willing to talk, stand up and go to the other colleagues.</p>
<p>Peter Young, local government representative architect, 40 years old</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You will repeatedly make a point that she should have negotiated the proposal with the social committee.</p>
<p>Daniel Cleaver, manager, 43 years old</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You are coming late. You are complaining loud that you couldn't find the room. You are asking what the presentation is about.</p>
<p>Ian Doyle owner of local driving school, 47 years old</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You are joyfully discussing the result of the last night football match with your colleague Mark Bodie. Both of you are fans of the winning team.</p>
<p>Harry Perry, local government representative mathematics and physics teacher, 63 years old</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> You turn to your colleague Elisabeth Chambers in a nasty way and accuse her of ignoring her responsibilities by missing the last meeting.</p>
<p>Kevin Currly, local government representative designer, 32 years old</p>	<p><u>Your task:</u> As soon as you find out the content of the presented proposal you apologize and leave to toilet.</p>

Margaret Cook, local government representative housewife, 52 years old	<u>Your task:</u> You phone starts ringing only few minutes from the beginning of the presentation. You answer the phone and chat with your husband about dinner.
Benjamin Button, local government representative pensioner, 75 years old	<u>Your task:</u> While the presenter is speaking you get up and go very slowly to look out of the window.
Catherin Goldberg, local government representative manager of local youth club, 28 years old	<u>Your task:</u> You are a new member of the local government. You would like to support the proposal but when you see what is going on in the meeting you are not confident enough to do so.
Carol Beer, local government representative nurse, 61 years old	<u>Your task:</u> You are showing pictures of your grandkids on your phone to your colleague Clara Buckingham.
Clara Buckingham, local government representative receptionist, 53 years old	<u>Your task:</u> You don't agree with the proposal. You dislike its presenter so you'd rather watch pictures of your colleagues grandkid on her phone and you express your admiration loudly.
Mark Bodie, local government representative owner of local car service, 43 years old	<u>Your task:</u> You are joyfully discussing the result of the last night football match with your colleague Ian Doyle. Both of you are fans of the winning team.

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 Jane O’Connor, who faces manipulative behaviour while the meeting of the assembly. After the role play has finished, participants of training are encouraged to switch their role with the person who played Jane O’Connor 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.