

ROLE PLAYS: ALL-IN FORMAT

Purpose: All-in Role plays offer a way to work out many solutions at once to a single problem and to study those which are of interest as successes and as failures. They are good practice for role playing, as people feel safer working in groups, especially when others are doing the same thing. They also give people practice in thinking quickly while "in the thick of it," and in not getting frightened under pressure. They also allow participants to practice active listening and I-messaging in order to resolve conflicts.

Major Elements: This design incorporates the major elements of Hassle Lines, the Listening exercise and the group processing of exercises. It differs from the typical facilitated role plays in that debriefing is primarily in either small groups or pairs. All participants are equally and actively involved in all stages of the exercise at the same time: role playing, debriefing, and processing. This format is flexible and can be easily modified to fulfill the needs of the group.

Requirements: At least one facilitator for every four participants.

Time: Variable. Allow about 30 minutes for each scenario.

Sequence:

1. Explain why we are using role plays: to find solutions to real life problems and practice conflict resolutions skills. Describe all the steps of this role play exercise. Have the I-Message formula and the debriefing questions posted prior to debriefing.
2. This exercise can be used to allow participants to practice I-Messages and Active Listening skills. It would be best if those exercises had been conducted earlier in the workshop. Review I-Messages and Active Listening skills if necessary and appropriate.
3. Choosing scenarios. Methods:
 - a. Have the participants brainstorm and choose scenarios depending on the number of role plays planned, usually 2 or 3 (one way is to give each participant three votes; they cast one vote on three different scenarios. Then use the top three scenarios; this allows everyone a good deal buy-in without a lengthy process);
 - b. The facilitator chooses scenarios from the Hassle Lines exercise (see those at the end of these instructions); or, from the "I-Messages Version 3 in Pairs" exercise can be used in this format.
 - c. The team decides on scenarios that they think would best suit the needs of the participants in their particular workshop. See note 1 for examples.
 - d. a combination of the above.
4. Have the group count off by twos and form two lines of partners facing each other, the ones in Line 1, the twos in Line 2. Explain that each line will have a different role to play. State clearly how you will begin and end the role playing. When one says 'stop', simply stop acting out the role." [Note: Groups of three can be used if they fit the scenario.]
5. Describe the scenario twice. Then entertain questions, but leave ambiguities unqualified, as they often are in real life. Give the role players a minute or so to think about and settle into their roles.

6. Call 'Begin.' The facilitator(s) will watch the action and monitor it carefully for significant behavior and for possible danger (feigned anger turning real, etc.)
7. This format works somewhat differently from typical role plays in that many role plays are going on at the same, and all role plays start and officially end at the same time (however, some role plays end naturally because most role players find a resolution to the conflict before lead facilitator of the exercise calls stop). The lead facilitator of the exercise makes the call as to when to call a stop to all ongoing role plays, unless another facilitator sees a serious problem occurring before the lead facilitator calls "stop". The assistant facilitators will help monitor the role plays by watching to see if things get out of control, or are becoming violent or harmful to participants. However, they do not have to monitor them as closely or direct them as they would in the typical role play. If they see a problem with a certain pair then they should stop that pair from continuing.
8. End the scene when all the role plays are resolved or when you think sufficient time has passed (usually no more than 5 minutes), or if a danger arises, when a serious issue is uncovered, or when action slows. If a dangerous situation develops, stop the action and debrief the actors.
9. It is usually best to process after each role play; however, if energy and interest levels warrant it, replay the scenario, switching roles from one line to another, so that Line 1 will play the role that Line 2 played previously and vice-versa. (Note: The feelings and thoughts related to first role play will often get superceded by the second one if roles are switched before processing. Moving on to debriefing the current role play and then on to another scenario seems to work best; however, the line that was the "antagonists" should now become the "protagonists", and vice versa.)
10. After completing each scenario, process the exercise. The exercise can be processed in pairs or in quads with a facilitator guiding it. The facilitator decides which format fits the scenario and its effect on the participants. If the participants are more emotionally charged and conflicted as a result of the role play, groups of four with a facilitator are probably best. Some creativity will have to be used if the number of participants in the workshop isn't divisible by 2 or 4.

Debriefing/Deroling

In Groups:

Process the exercise in groups of four - composed of two pairs of role players. However, if there are an odd number of pairs, then you may have a group of two role players with one facilitator. This debriefing stage should be completed in about 20 minutes, with each participant only speaking about an average of one minute per debriefing question. This process should be done rapidly. Have everyone answer one question at a time as in a gathering without discussion or interruption from other participants, A facilitator should guide the process:

The I-Message Formula provides a good guide for the stages of the process:

I feel.... (state the emotion)

When....(describe the situation)

Because....(state the tangible effect the situation has)

Would you be willing to....? (state a possible solution to the problem; what did solve or might have solved the conflict)

Remind participants of the I-Messages formula. Have the I-Message formula and the debriefing questions posted prior to debriefing.

1. Begin by allowing a quick ventilation of feelings---one or two words from each one who wishes. Ask:
“What emotions are you feeling in this role?”
2. What happened in your skit? Was the conflict resolved?
3. Are you satisfied with what happened? How do you about it?
4. What was the solution? If the conflict was resolved, what helped do it? If the conflict wasn't resolved, might you have done differently to do so?

Facilitators should be aware of the same issues that are of concern in a facilitated role plays are relevant during this group debriefing: Have the role players discharged all negative energy related to being in the role play? Have the role players returned to their normal self and composure? If a person has not moved on from their role and related emotions, it may help to ask them to give advice as themselves to their role play character.

In Pairs: (Works well with unresolved conflicts)

Attempting to practice Active Listening and I-Messaging skills, each person in the pair will have a chance to speak on the topic:

“What I feel and think about what happened (in the role play).”

Emphasize that participants are to attempt to use Active Listening and I-Messaging skills. Each sequence is 3, 2, and 1. Three minutes for the speaker, two minutes for the listener to feed back to the speaker what she or he heard, and one minute for the speaker to correct or clarify anything for the listener. Then partners switch roles. Afterward, have the participants gather in the large circle, have pairs report on their experience.

Alternative (less complicated format for pairs): Give each participant two minutes each to tell their partner how they felt about what happened in the role play while still in role, followed by two minutes of open dialogue between them.

11. Do another scenario if desired.
12. After all role plays are completed, have all participants return to the large circle. These questions are to be asked to the whole group:
 - Does anyone have any especially good or unusual solutions to share with us?
 - What Transforming Power did you see?

Allow the participants to ask questions of each other.

Note 1:

Possible Scenarios relevant to groups consisting of the incarcerated or formerly incarcerated:

- (1) Back on the Block: A recently released parolee who wishes to lead a new life returns to the old neighborhood and is tempted or pushed to get back into bad habits (for example, crime or drugs) by an old associate.
- (2) Falsely Accused: A formerly incarcerated person is called into the boss's office to be questioned over stolen items. The formerly incarcerated person is innocent and wants to keep his /her job.
- (3) "Who house is it anyway?": Family dispute occurs among two siblings when a recently released parolee returns to the family house to live and the more conservative and domineering sibling doesn't like it. The house was left to both of them by their parents, but the conservative sibling has been taking care of things and thinks of the house as his/hers.

Note 2:

In this version, the facilitators will be more involved in the processing stage than in traditional "hassle lines," because they will help facilitate the groups of four. This is the new part added to this exercise. In the regular version of hassle lines, the processing proved difficult and some of the participants were not heard from. However, in this exercise the processing should be quicker and less of a drag or as artificial as debriefing and deroling sometimes proves to be in traditional role plays.

The main advantage of this version of role plays is that all participants are involved in all stages of the role plays, and it gives them all a chance to work on their skills more deliberately. It is livelier, more scenarios can be used, and less time is spent in setting up, debriefing, and deroling. Many participants report finding that the debriefing and deroling process in "facilitated role plays" is either unnatural and/or tedious for them.