

Facilitating Role Plays

09.01.11 revised 04/05/19

Introduction to Role Plays

Be sure to include all of the following points in your introduction to role plays.

- We all experience conflict. To be alive means that we will be in conflict. How we choose to handle the conflict is what matters.
- You will be in small groups. Within your group, talk about the conflicts that are either current or in the recent past for you. As a group, choose one of the conflicts that the group will act out.
- Each person in your group will take on the role of a character in the conflict that the group chooses. You will choose a name (not your own) as your character's name. You will write that name on a piece of masking tape and tape it to your clothing.
- It is very important that if this conflict is one that is real for you, please do not play the character of yourself in the role play. Play your adversary. You can learn a lot about that person by taking on his or her role and see the conflict from his or her perspective.
- It is very important that you do not determine the outcome of the conflict. As a group you decide what the conflict is and then you will act out the conflict. Do not plan how the scenario will end. This is so the roles are not stiff and scripted but rather created in the moment and therefore as real as possible.
- A facilitator will call "cut" and at that point you will stop all action and the facilitator will give you instruction.
- One person in your group may be a narrator. So that in addition to playing a character in the role play, he or she will set the scene for the audience.
- You may ask a facilitator to play a character in your role play if you need more people.

Count off by the number of groups you want to end up with. There should be between three and five people in each group.

Give the groups not more than 15 minutes to plan. You do not want them to "solve" the conflict.

Each group has a facilitator that will facilitate the role play. It is not necessary that the facilitator be familiar with the conflict their group will act out but they should check-in with the group to ask if there are any questions that the group has.

Running Role Plays.

The person who is facilitating the role play is watching very carefully to understand the conflict and each character's role in it—watching and listening—for body language, for threats, for insinuations—Who is escalating the conflict? What are they doing or saying? Who is seeking to de-escalate the conflict? What are they doing or saying?

When either:

1. the conflict escalates to the point of either verbal violence (threats) or is approaching physical violence or
2. the conflict is not going anywhere and the characters are stuck and are repeating themselves

Then the facilitator calls "cut".

Then the facilitator:

1. states that “Transforming Power can work through any one of us at anytime.”
2. asks the characters to “Think about what your character might do or say differently so that this conflict might have a win-win outcome.”

Then the facilitator asks the group to run the role play again from the beginning.

If the conflict has a better outcome than the first time and one that feels realistic, the group is done. If not, the facilitator says, “This still doesn’t feel like a good outcome” or if it seems unrealistic she can ask the group, “Does this feel like it is a realistic outcome?” And they can run it a third time.

When they have come to a good outcome, the facilitator

1. tells the characters “You are still in character.” and
2. asks the characters to sit, still on the “stage”

Beginning with the character that was most upset in the role play:

1. ask him or her “Are you okay with the outcome of the second (or third) scenario?”
2. If he or she is not okay or has reservations, ask if he would like to speak to any of the other characters.
3. You might ask what the character was feeling or why he or she acted as he or she did either in the first or second scenario.

Please keep this part brief and to the point. We want to make sure the characters are okay with the outcome. We do not need to know the details of the scenario—they are not important. What is important is the cause of the conflict and how it was dealt with and if all parties feel like they were heard and their needs addressed. Do not turn it into an interrogation of the characters or a putting of people on “trial”. Do not try to psychoanalyze the participant in any way. They have played a role. It has nothing to do with who they are as a person in their own lives. Participants need to feel safe that they can play a role and that it will be understood as a role, and not taken to be who or how they are or reflective of their underlying feelings etc.

Then move to the character who was the next most upset in the role play and repeat the de-brief process (1, 2, and 3 above). And then with the next most upset character et cetera until all of the characters have been debriefed.

Then go back to the first character and

1. ask if he or she is ready to come out of character.
2. If he is, remove or ask him to remove his name tag.
3. ask **“Who are you now?” It is very important that the person say his or her adjective name. Do not tell him what his name is. He must tell you so that he is fully out of the character role and back to being himself.**
4. repeat this process with all of the characters.

Then the facilitator tells the whole group of participants that the group is out of character so you may refer to their character but do not refer to them as their character. **It is very important that no one call the person by their character’s name after they have been de-roled.**

Ask the whole group:

1. if they have comments about the role play and
2. **“Where did you see transforming power in this role play?”** Ask people to be specific about what piece of the mandala or what TP Guide they saw at work.

Then the facilitator of the next group asks their group to run their role play.