

WHAT MATTERS?

Learning Path with a group of deaf persons (adults and seniors) illustrating usefulness of visual and nonverbal narration for learners with language/communication problems. Warm-up exercises, group game and closing discussion circle are used as forms of “learning by doing” activities.

	Learning Path WHAT MATTERS?
<i>Author's Name contact</i>	Maria Schejbal maria@teatrgrodzki.pl
<i>Target group</i>	This learning path was successfully tested with the group of deaf persons (adults and seniors) but in fact it can be used with different kinds of workshop participants. During our workshop we were supported by a sign language interpreter to discuss the whole working process but one can imagine that even without verbal communication the following exercises should be useful for the group facing language/ /communication problems.
<i>Description of the challenges</i>	No major problems have been encountered during implementation of the exercises presented here. However, certain difficulties might occur depending on personal or group factors. For instance, sharing impressions and reflection in a circle can be difficult for some people, also due to language problems mentioned above. However, the reflection circle – the last part of the process – generally meant for talking includes also a non-verbal component. Sometimes it also happens that workshop participant's express resistance towards manual work (“I am not good at making things with my hands” attitude). Moreover, any kind of physical contact (drawing on people`s back) is problematic for some persons.
<i>Training Point Or How does this challenge effect motivation and achievement in your group?</i>	This learning path is meant for introducing workshop participants to the principles of visual/non-verbal narration. Thanks to its playful character it should grasp participants` attention and encourage them to further explore this specific way of conveying messages and expressing their needs, opinions, difficulties. This is why it can be a good starting point for the training in communication skills.

<p><i>Description of the activities</i></p> <p><i>Suggestions:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <i>1. Break the main activities down into manageable tasks and simple steps</i> <i>2. Define the expertise required to undertake the activities and tasks</i> <i>3. Estimate the duration and the time frame of this activity</i> <i>4. Describe risks and uncertainties that could affect the implementation of activities</i> <i>5. Describe shortly essential basic human, physical and financial resources to implement this activity</i> 	<p>This learning path includes two warm-up exercises, a group game and a closing discussion in a circle. It should take 1,5-2 hours. The number of participants in the group can be from 8 up to 20 persons. No specific equipment/space is needed – a regular classroom with chairs and perhaps tables will be sufficient. However, the trainer should gather a collection of different materials and props (paper, old newspapers, fabric, kitchen utensils, toys, etc.) to stimulate participants` creativity and let them play with objects.</p> <p>The implementation of this learning path requires basic understanding of visual narration principles and general knowledge of theatre art from the trainer, since he/she needs to lead the discussions and to support participants in their exploration.</p> <p>Workshop process step by step:</p> <p>I. WARM-UP: What do we see? What do we feel?</p> <p>1. All participants sit in a circle surrounding collection of different materials previously arranged by the trainer. They are asked to share their impressions on the central image with each other and to answer the leading question: WHAT MATTERS IN THIS PICTURE? Is it possible to “translate” it into a story? What does it tell us? What messages we get from it? How the colours and shapes and mutual relation between individual objects influence the meaning of the whole image? In case of working with deaf people with no sign language interpretation available, the participants can simply write their answers down and exchange them with each other.</p>
--	--

2. The group is divided into 2 sub-groups. The participants form two rows, standing one after another. The trainer has two simple drawings prepared in advance. He/she draws with a finger one image on the back of the last person in one row and the second picture on the back of the last participant in the second row. Then, participants, one by one, try to reproduce the image on the back of the person preceding them in the row. When everybody completes this task, the first person in each row draws the image on a piece of paper. At the end, the trainer shows the original pictures to participants and they discuss their experience and the lesson learned from it.

II. GROUP GAME: What matters?

The group is divided into 2 or 3 sub-groups (4-6 persons in each). Each group receives a task to create a visual representation of a specific place – a church, a bus or train station, a school, a stadium. The task is written on a piece of paper and given to each group secretly. Both groups work separately, trying to find the most characteristic details defining their image. The trainer helps them by drawing their attention to the meaning of every element of their composition.

For instance he/she can ask what makes the train station different from a bus station. After a while (10-15 minutes), both groups visit the place created by another team and guess what it represents. The importance of specific elements of each creation should be discussed.

III. REFLECTION CIRCLE

The last phase of the whole working process is devoted to analysing together the non-verbal way of conveying messages as an introduction to the “grammar” of visual narration. It is also worth encouraging participants to share their feelings and emotions connected with the workshop experience. In order to keep the continuity of non-verbal expression, the participants are asked to use also the objects and materials available to illustrate their reflections (newspapers work very well). It is a good idea that the leader writes down the topics to be reflected on and places such notices in the centre of a circle. These can be for instance “Personal,” “Professional,” “Group Process,” “Me and the group,” “Positive,” “Negative.” Thus, the participant, by placing their objects next to individual catchwords will create an image together.

<i>Learning Outcomes</i>	<p>As a result of the implementation of this workshop process, the participants should learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how to convey messages through visual expression; • how to work in a group and reach a compromise; • about the importance of precision and clarity of each element of the images created on stage and crucial for any communication channel.
<i>Foreseen impact on the direct beneficiaries</i> <i>Foreseen impact on the indirect beneficiaries</i>	<p>The implementation of the above exercises proved to be interesting and inspiring for the members of different workshop groups. In particular, they emphasized the importance of discovering that each message can be interpreted in many different ways by other people which is important for communication in general. What we think that is obvious will not necessarily mean the same for someone else. It has been also stressed that thanks to the task-oriented actions, people forget about their shyness, fears and other personal barriers and find their way to cooperate with the others. In consequence, this seemingly not serious game proves to be useful in everyday life and in facing communication challenges.</p>
<i>Documentation and web resources useful to implement the scenario</i>	<p>Video materials illustrating three activities described above:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warm-up exercise: "What do we feel?"; • Group game: "What matters?"; • Reflection circle.