




Power Station

Make this power station generate positive and creative energy!


THEMES

 PEACE AND VIOLENCE


 CITIZENSHIP

 GEN. HUMAN RIGHTS


COMPLEXITY

 LEVEL 3

GROUP SIZE

 10 OR MORE

TIME

 90 MINUTES

- Themes** Peace and Violence, Citizenship, General human rights
- Complexity** Level 3
- Group size** 10+
- Time** 90 minutes
- Overview** Power is often associated with violence. This activity uses creative group work to address issues of:
- Violence in the community, and
 - Ways to solve the problems of violence
- Related rights**
- The right to security of the person
 - The right not to be discriminated against
 - The right to privacy and protection of honour and reputation
- Objectives**
- To develop knowledge and understanding about the expressions of violence and their causes
 - To develop co-operation and group work skills
 - To take responsibility for seeking creative solutions to violence
- Materials**
- Long piece of strong wool or string equal to the length of the room.
 - A pair of scissors
 - A4 size sheets of paper; 6 sheets per participant should be sufficient
 - Markers, one per person
 - Bell (optional)
 - Sticky tape
 - 2 rooms (optional, but preferable)
- Preparation**
- Prepare one room to be the “power station”. Clear a space in the middle. Stretch one strand of string across the room and anchor the ends firmly. It is to represent an electrical cable. It should hang about one meter above the floor. Do not make it too tight (you will need some slack for tying the knots when the cable has to be mended after each power failure!)
 - You may wish to put a sign on the door saying Power Station.

Instructions

The activity is in two parts: part one, a brainstorm of expressions of violence (ten minutes) and part 2, working in the power station (sixty minutes).

Part 1. Brainstorm of expressions of violence

1. Ask participants to do a quick personal brainstorm of the expressions of violence in their community (school, youth club, college, neighbourhood, etc.). Explain clearly that they are not going to look at the “big issues” such as terrorism or genocide but

rather for those expressions of violence we all meet in everyday life, for instance, mobbing, bullying, verbal abuse, sarcasm, jokes in poor taste, etc.

2. Ask people to use the markers and to write in big letters. They should use key words or a short phrase and write each idea on a separate piece of paper.
3. Collect the sheets together and do a quick check to see if there are any that repeat the same expression. Discard the duplicates.
4. Give the participants a five-minute break while you prepare for the next part. Fold the sheets of paper over and hang them over the “electric cable”. The papers should be spaced at about 0.5 m intervals from each other. It will be necessary to tape them onto the string so that they stay in position and do not slide.

Part 2. In the power station

1. Now invite the participants into the “power station”, where they are going to work as technicians.
2. Split the participants into 2 groups.
3. Tell them that this power station generates “negative energy” and that because “negative energy” is very heavy there are often power failures. (Your job is to simulate the power failure by cutting the string at a point between two “problem” papers) Their job is to reverse the situation and to put some “positive energy” into the wires.
4. Explain that when a power failure is imminent the lights will flicker and they will hear a bell. As soon as the electricity is cut, one person from each group must run forward to the cable. They each grab a broken end, which they then hold together “to temporarily enable the electricity to flow again”.
5. With their spare hand, each technician takes one of the pieces of paper, which are hanging on either side of the break, and reads the message out loud.
6. Both groups are now responsible for mending the failure. Give them five minutes to come up with a proposal for solutions for the two problems.
7. The groups then share and discuss their proposals and agree the solutions for each problem. These are then written on clean sheets of paper and handed to the technicians.
8. The technicians now knot the ends of the “cable” together and tape the “solutions” pieces of paper over the join to make a permanent repair.
9. Stick the two used “expression of violence” pieces of paper on the wall.
10. Now cut somewhere else along the “cable” and repeat the exercise. The activity finishes when all the “expression of violence” papers have been removed from the wire and are replaced by “solutions” papers.
11. Finally, collect all the “solutions papers” off the wire and stick them on the wall beside the various expressions of violence.

Debriefing and evaluation

Start the debriefing with a review of the activity itself and then go on to discuss each expression of violence and the proposed solutions:

- How did people feel during the activity? Did they enjoy it? Why (not)?
- What are the causes of the particular expressions of violence identified?
- Were the proposed solutions and actions realistic? In the short term? In the longer term?
- What challenges or resistance might people face when trying to implement these solutions?

Key date**20 February**Non-violent
Resistance Day

- How can young people prevent or fight against violence?
- Which human rights are violated by violence?

Tips for facilitators

You will need to allow about 10 minutes for part 1, the brainstorm, about 60 minutes for the work in the power station and 20 minutes for the debriefing and evaluation.

Try to do this exercise quite quickly. Do not let the young people get bored.

If people need a further explanation about how to come up with an idea or slogan that could be a solution to the problems (point 6 in the instructions), you could give the following example. If the one piece of paper reads “bullying” and the other reads “violence on television”, one group might suggest that there should be workshops in schools on how to deal with bullying and that violent films should be broadcast only after 11 p.m. The other group might suggest training peer mediators for the bullying problem and that there should be a 9 p.m. watershed before which violent films should not be shown. The two groups then discuss these proposals and combine or amend them before writing them on the “solutions” pieces of paper. Each group may come with 2 or more proposals, but one is enough.

If the group is small, you can work with one group of “emergency technicians”. The reason for working with two groups is that two groups very often come up with different solutions to the same problem, which widens the options.

The icebreaker “People machine”, on page 57, makes a good, co-operative warm-up.

This technique can be adapted for use with any issue which involves identifying problems and finding solutions.

Suggestions for follow-up

Discrimination or gender issues might have come up in the “power station” Even if they didn’t, you may be interested in exploring issues about identity and the right to equality in dignity and respect. Have a look at the activity “Who are I?”, on page 257.

Ideas for action

Tackle one of the problems identified in this activity. For instance, if bullying was the chosen issue, the group could take forward the proposal to organise a workshop in their school and put it on the agenda of the next school or association council meeting.

Note: “Power station” has been developed from an activity proposed by Dariusz Grzemny, Association for Children and Young People (Chance), Glogow, Poland.