

Parallel stories

Downloadable guidance notes for group facilitators of activists or campaigners

To be used in conjunction with *“inspiring action – a guide for practitioners”* created by the everyone foundation with Oxfam and the WI

Title: Parallel stories

Purpose

To enable people to identify more closely with others who are different in some way, and establish a connection.

Context

It is sometimes hard to relate to people who appear very different to us – and this can be because we can't see past that difference.

This exercise is about looking for parallels in our own lives that will throw a light on our similarities and enable us to feel a stronger connection.

It is ideal for activists who would benefit from finding a stronger connection with the issues that they are working on.

Objectives

- To find connections between our lives and others who are less familiar to us
- To identify with the connections in our shared lives
- To recognize the universality of our human condition

Instructions

This is an exercise that can be done in a group, but will probably benefit from some single or paired reflection before the group share.

1. Introduce the idea that we are all the same – that regardless of our differences, each of us have some experiences that are really common.
2. Encourage the group to think about some of the key people that they are campaigning for
3. Flipchart some of the characters, relationships and situations that they will find themselves in. Don't restrict yourselves to the most dramatic ones, but include a wide range
 - a. Mother, Son, Brother, Father, Daughter, Grand daughter, Uncle, Doing the washing, doing the shopping, caring for sick relatives, worrying about the children's future, helping kids to read, gathering fuel, saving for the future, giving birth, celebrating religious holidays, taking a new job, getting married, having a birthday, returning home after time away, worrying about their health, telling a bed time story... etc
4. Ask the group to work in pairs or alone, and think about their own lives. Ask them to think about
 - a. When have they experienced one of these things?
 - b. How did it feel?
 - c. What impact did it have on your life?
 - d. How do you feel about it now?

- e. What impact does this have on you in this context
5. When the group have identified powerful stories from their own lives, encourage them to share them with the wider group.
6. Debrief by asking questions like,
 - a. What did it feel like to share your story?
 - b. What impact did it have on you in relation to the topics that we are working on?
 - c. How do you feel about the people that you are thinking about today?
 - d. What impact did it have on other people to hear your story?
7. Encourage the group to connect with and share some of these stories and experiences when they are campaigning – in order to keep emotionally real with the people they interact with. Authentic examples like this can cut through the complacency we sometimes face, and enable members of the public to listen with fresh ears.
8. Review the other tools and resources that are available on the everyonefoundation.org website, including the 'connectedness' workshop and 'facilitation skills to create deeper connections' workshops or speak to the team about what the next steps might be in this conversation by calling 0207 836 8142