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## *The neighborhood yard*

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### **KEYS WORDS**

Identity, discrimination, empathy, diversity, co-operation and interdependence

### **TARGET AUDIENCES**

Educators, Lifelong learners

### **MATERIALS NEEDED**

A large uncluttered space, stickers of four colours

### **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

- Raise learners' awareness of the psychosocial dynamics of inclusion/exclusion, co-operation/competition, discrimination and prejudice. It
- Develop learners' reflection on their own attitudes, beliefs and values, and to help them gain new skills and develop their knowledge of important concepts related to intercultural competence such as identity, discrimination, otherness, empathy, diversity, co-operation and interdependence.

### **OVERVIEW**

1. In this activity, learners are asked to form a circle. The facilitator gives them the following instructions:

"We are going to start an activity. In this activity you are not allowed to talk at all.

"First I will ask you to close your eyes and then shortly after you will be able to open them again. But you still must not speak. It is very important that you never speak throughout this exercise. Now, please close your eyes."

2. The facilitator then silently sticks small coloured stickers on participants' foreheads. For example, with a group of 20 participants, the distribution may be the following:

- Majority = blue stickers on 8 participants' forehead
- Second majority = green stickers on 6 participants' forehead
- First minority = yellow stickers on 3 participants' forehead
- Second minority = red stickers on 2 participants' forehead
- One participant remains without a sticker

3. The facilitator gives the following instruction to the group:

“When I say so you will open your eyes but you will not be able to talk. Your task will be to group yourselves (the facilitator says this clearly, twice). Now you may open your eyes ...and group.”

The formulation of the question is important. Although participants are not told to group by colour, that is what they are most likely to do as the facilitator has not given any instruction or any criteria for grouping.

Because of people’s habit of classifying things in the surrounding environment, the group will separate into subgroups of blues, greens, yellows and reds, and leave the participant without a sticker all alone.

4. The group works for as long as it is comfortable, while the facilitator observes the participants’ behaviours and attitudes and makes notes to use during the debriefing of the activity.

As participants (adults, children, young people, politicians, etc.) do the exercise, they realise that because they don’t know what is on their forehead, they need to rely on each other to complete the task. It takes trust, co-operation and creativity to complete the assigned task.

5. Participants can remain where they are after the silent grouping activity, but of course they can now speak. The facilitator will introduce some prompts for the debriefing session:

“How did you feel when you had your eyes closed?”

Participants can reflect on their experience during the activity: not being able to use language to communicate, standing without seeing others.

“What was your first reaction when you opened your eyes?”

Discussing our feelings is an important component of intercultural competence development and learning.. As participants express themselves, the facilitator can introduce certain concepts such as identity, discrimination or the notion of otherness and perception of self by the other.

The group will reflect on parallels with real-life situations. Often the conversation will lead the group to discuss the feeling of powerlessness in situations where one cannot make oneself understood, or to discuss language barriers and non-verbal language.

## RESOURCES & REFERENCES

<https://rm.coe.int/developing-intercultural-enfr/16808ce258> p.47-50