



Toolkit for

Body Acceptance

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<https://www.bodyshining.eu/resources/>
<https://www.youtube.com/@bodyshining>

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Introduction

This toolkit was produced as part of the “Body Shining” Erasmus+ project. It follows on from the Toolkit for the prevention of Body-Shaming (found [here](#)) and aims at offering youth workers art-based training tools to facilitate their workarounds for body acceptance for young people from different cultural and social backgrounds.

This book consists of a collection of methodologies developed by all 5 partner organisations (ANIMUS, ATYPICAL, ELAN, MOH and SMOOTH). Each organisation developed and implemented 2 methodologies relating to encouraging body acceptance in their own city.

The following collection of tools will hopefully inspire and assist youth workers to develop creative practices, discover strategies to encourage young people to own their bodies, gain awareness of how they are uncomfortable/comfortable within their bodies and encourage body acceptance.

Before presenting these tools, it is important to understand some basic concepts related to the subject in question. The following sections begin with a reference to the concept of body acceptance, followed by the reason why this term is used in place of body positivity.

This toolkit will also include a guide on how to work with disabled people, looking at ways to create an accessible environment for youth workers and young people alike. The guide will also include a terminology list when talking about disability.

What does Body Acceptance mean?

In this part of the project, we have focused on the term Body Acceptance rather than Body Positivity. The body positivity movement has received criticisms that it is not as inclusive as it claims and leaves some people behind who are not ready to feel positive about their appearance (MacPhearson, 2022). Body acceptance incorporates body neutrality in that it focuses on what the body can do, not what it looks like. Griffiths defines body acceptance as “accepting one’s body regardless of not being completely satisfied with all aspects of it.” (Griffiths, 2017). According to MacPhearson (2022) body acceptance is about accepting your body to your own standards that are separate from society’s ideals.

General guidelines for workshops on Body Acceptance

1. Introduce a safe space, you can do this by making sure the room is comfortable and create a warm and friendly atmosphere. Give 5 minutes to the participants to write on post-its, what they need to feel safe in the workshop, (e.g. active listening, no judgment, etc.). After they are finished, the facilitator reads them to the whole room, so that each “rule” is followed by everyone in the group;
2. Be aware of the correct pronouns of the participants;
3. Participants may be uncomfortable at expressing first, so warm up activities are a good way to encourage them;
4. If at any point the participants feel uncomfortable during the workshops, allow them to take a break or leave for a few minutes if needed;
5. Overall, the workshops should create a good atmosphere and be about making people feel more comfortable in themselves.

Guide for working with d/Deaf, Disabled and Neurodiverse people

Explanation of the separation of d/Deaf, Disabled and Neurodiverse

This guide refers to the terms d/Deaf, Disabled and Neurodiverse as not everyone who is d/Deaf or Neurodiverse identifies as being disabled. Here is a brief explanation of the terms below:

- d/Deaf = The lower case 'd' refers to people who have become deaf later in life, often after acquiring spoken language. People who identify as Deaf with a capital 'D' are people who are born Deaf before acquiring spoken language and are predominantly sign language users.
- Disabled people = "Using the word 'Disabled' before 'people' signifies identification with a collective cultural identity, and capitalising the 'D' emphasises the term's political significance. Using the term 'Disabled people' or 'Disabled person' is therefore a political description of the shared, disabling experience that people with impairments face in society. It brings together a diverse group of people and helps to identify the causes of our discrimination and oppression, communicate shared experience and knowledge, and create social change."
<https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/social-model-disability-language>
- Neurodiverse = Neurodiversity refers to the different ways the brain can work and interpret information. Specific types of neurodiversity include people on the autism spectrum, who have ADHD/ADD, Dyslexia, Dyspraxia.



Considerations

There are a number of things that are important to consider when working with d/Deaf, Disabled and Neurodiverse people.

1. Ensuring that access requirements are met. This can start when organising events and adding a question about access on booking forms. Access requirements can range from wheelchair access, sign language interpreter, audio description, comfortable seating, regular breaks etc.
2. Awareness of the language you use when speaking about and to d/Deaf, Disabled and Neurodiverse people, which will be detailed further in this document. (Please note that for the purposes of this guide I am referring to UK terms and be aware that the language used in other countries may be different);
3. Awareness of different communication styles;
4. Consider notifying participants on what to expect from a workshop or event. This allows for neurodiverse people in particular to plan their day and will ensure they are prepared, e.g. if a workshop requires physical or eye contact. You can also take a video of the venue to let participants know where the workshop is held and where other facilities are in the building. This is beneficial for a number of people with different disabilities.

Social Model of Disability

The model says;

"People are disabled by barriers in society, not by their impairment or difference"

<https://www.scope.org.uk/about-us/social-model-of-disability/>



Image source:<https://www.inclusionlondon.org.uk/about-us/disability-in-london/social-model/the-social-model-of-disability-and-the-cultural-model-of-deafness/>

You can also find a short video on the subject here.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=24KE__OCKMw&t=163s

Language Guide

The use of language is important when talking about disability. Certain words and phrases can perpetuate stereotypes and cause harm. The guide below shows words to avoid and the correct terms to use. Whilst this is the terminology currently used in the UK it is important to highlight that the words to use might be different in other countries and can also change over time. It's always best to keep having conversations with d/Deaf, Disabled and Neurodiverse people on the preferred terms.

Avoid	Use
the handicapped, the disabled	disabled (people)
afflicted by, suffers from, victim of	has [name of condition or impairment]
confined to a wheelchair, wheelchair-bound	wheelchair user
mentally handicapped, mentally defective, retarded, subnormal	with a learning disability (singular) with learning disabilities (plural)
cripple, invalid	disabled person
spastic	person with cerebral palsy
able-bodied	non-disabled
mental patient, insane, mad	person with a mental health condition
deaf and dumb; deaf mute	deaf, user of British Sign Language (BSL), person with a hearing impairment

Source:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/inclusive-language-words-to-use-and-avoid-when-writing-about-disability>

Workshop Templates

Seeing and Being Seen



**Type of Method/
Artistic disciplines involved:**
Video Making



**Partner
Organisation:**
Elan Interculturel



**Methodology
background/introduction:**

This exercise is inspired by clown techniques that enable a model that integrates and uses contributions from various disciplines to facilitate transformation and growth, both individually and collectively. It focuses on developing a state of consciousness, helping people realise how they perceive and live their experiences, learning to change their approach, and discovering information that they do not notice or marginalise, and that limits their ability to respond.



**Number of
Participants:**
8-12



Time/Duration
30 minutes



**Space &
Equipment/materials:**

- Room large enough to put chairs in a large circle and create the impression of a stage.
- Cellphone (yours, preferably)



**Objectives/Expected learning
outcomes:**

- Practice self-awareness and reflection.
- Understand how the camera channels the gaze of others, and what impact this has on the way we feel about our own bodies.
- Understand how subverting this gaze can be empowering.



Source/Author:
Elianor Oudjedi

Step 1: 5 min

Create the impression of a stage by reuniting everyone in a half circle. If you can have access to an actual stage, it is even better.

For this step, ask everyone to stay silent. Ask for a volunteer to come on stage for 1 minute. Ask this person to state their name in front of everyone and to look each individual present in the audience in the eyes. Repeat this with two other volunteers. If you have a very small group, you can have everyone go.

Step 2: 5 min

Ask for a new volunteer to come on stage and repeat step 1; while they do that, go into the audience and whisper to someone's ear to come on stage too and to film the person who is standing on stage with your/their phone for 1 minute. Repeat this step with two other people, or everyone if your group is very small.

Step 3: 5 minutes

For this step, ask for another volunteer to go on stage and to state their name, staring at the audience. Next, hand them your cell phone and let them use it to film, this time, the audience themselves in silence for one minute, encouraging them to come close to the people, to film everything, anything they want.

Step 4: 15 minutes

Lastly, debrief with your group on the notion of looking at and being looked at. Interrogate the concept of the gaze and the representation of oneself in front of others. When they were filmed, how did they feel? When they filmed others, how did they feel?

Guide them towards considering that the camera can be a metaphor of the gaze and whether you are standing in front of or behind the camera, your relationship toward the look is different. Looking at is empowering while being looked at is a more vulnerable place however, strength and empowerment can come from this position, but it is a relationship one has to build with oneself.

Debriefing/Assessment/Evaluation:

Discuss with participants how they felt about the process.

How was it to be stared at in silence? Did they feel comfortable or not? Were they more self-conscious about their bodies?

Did the ones who were able to film the audience feel empowered, more in control?

Remarks/Pay Attention to:

If you feel like the participants are not really at ease with each other yet and that there is not much group cohesion, you can start by having the first volunteer to turn their back to the audience when they introduce themselves for the first time. That way, they will still be able to feel that the audience is looking at them but will not have to face them directly and might feel more comfortable starting out this way. You can also give a “time out token” to your participants.

If possible, have the participants use your cellphone for filming and not theirs. That way, you can make sure all of the videos are deleted by the end of the activity. If, for some reason, you cannot use your own phone, make sure that whoever used theirs has deleted the videos before they leave the workshop. State that explicitly to the participants too, so that they know that their privacy is respected.

If some of your participants are experiencing resistance with being filmed, reassure them and tell them they can always be the one holding the camera, but also invite them to share with the group why certain people would not feel comfortable being filmed.

Video Installation



**Type of Method/
Artistic disciplines involved:**
Video Making



Partner Organisation:
Elan Interculturel



Tutorial Video



**Number of
Participants:**
8-12



**Methodology
background/introduction:**

Here we use video installation as an artistic mediation medium in order to create an immersive safe space in which participants can connect to bodily sensations and experience their body in a way that is not defined by the gaze of the other. The use of the camera here is in accordance with the notion of the gaze developed in the previous exercise. The act of taking the camera and catching images that interest the participant is empowering and can be understood as looking at one's body in a different way.



Time/Duration:
1 hr 30 minutes



**Space &
Equipment/materials:**

- Dark space
- Cellphones
- Projectors
- Something to dissimulate the light

Video Installation



Objectives/Expected learning outcomes:

- Gain awareness about their shape, colour, voices and abilities
- Practice self-awareness and reflection.
- Explore new ways to move one's body in space
- Gain awareness of one's bodily sensations
- Discover an art practice
- Feel connected to your body



Source/Author:
Elianor Oudjedi

Step 1: 20 min

People are standing in a large room and following your instructions. You can put on soft music to accompany the experience.

Ask participants if they are ok with physical contact before starting (hand, shoulders, etc.)

Connect with your breath.

Close your eyes, feel the weight of your body and how it is distributed on your feet. Feel your breathing, note if it is deep or light, slow or fast. Notice where the air travels in your body. Feel the impact of the breath on your muscles as they relax.

Wake up your body.

You can keep your eyes closed. Move your head and explore all possible movements. Then move your shoulders. Move downwards little by little, guiding the participants: Arms, chest, spine, stomach, hip, buttocks, legs, feet. Invite them to bring their attention to their sensations and to explore all the possibilities of movement, and to test fast, slow, small, large, undulating or jerky movements.

Getting familiar with the space

Eyes opened, start to walk in the room, let go of your thoughts and just let yourself melt in this very simple action of walking. Feel the weight of your feet on the ground. Feel how you are pulled upwards.

In your walk, let yourself become curious and explore all corners, go to places you haven't been before, explore corners, borders. Try different ways of walking, slower and faster, check what feels comfortable for you at this moment.

Occupy space collectively

Try to spread out as much as possible, occupy the room as fully as possible. To check whether participants have really spread out you can clap and ask them to stop and check whether they think they occupy as much space as possible, if not, adjust. You can also try the instruction "go always where there is an empty place". In the next step, invite participants to "go where there is as little space as possible". With such an instruction, participants will possibly congregate in the centre of the room. Ask them to keep on moving even when they are very close to each other.

Place attention on the other people:

When one person stops, everyone should stop. When one person starts to walk again, everyone should walk.

Step 2: 10 min

Getting used to darkness

Create duos. In each duo, one person should close their eyes while the other one guides them by having their arm touching. The guide is in charge of making sure their partner is safe. Invite them to play with heights, levels etc. Do it for 3 minutes, then switch roles.

Step 3: 45 min

Engaging with light, shadow and darkness

Ask everyone to create new duos. Turn off all lights, and turn the video projectors on. Make sure you have projections on every wall. Ask each duo to pick a spot in front of the projector and to play with their images together. Make it last 5 minutes. Break it off.

Explain to the group that in each pair you will need a mover, and you will need a filmmaker.

Ask each pair to create a little moving sequence that lasts 20 minutes that involves change of place, change of movement with their body.

Invite them to keep on playing. While the mover dances, it is good that the filmmaker moves around the shadow, the only rule is that they shouldn't film the body of the mover, they have to only capture their shadow. There is no time limit on the length of the video but advise your group that the video they will choose and share with the group should not exceed 3 minutes.

Encourage your filmmakers to film when it is right for them, when something pops in their eyes, on the image that they see on the screen.

Switch roles.

Step 4: 20 min

Project everyone's videos. Give a warm round of applause for each video.

Debriefing/Assessment/Evaluation:

Discuss with participants how they felt about the process. Did they feel empowered? (10 mins)

Remarks/Pay Attention to: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gdJjc6l6ill>

Vision Image Board



Type of Method/

Artistic disciplines involved:

Tool for daily inspiration, which helps us turn wishes into reality: in life, in relationships and at work



Tutorial Video



Methodology

background/introduction:

The vision board allows you to let your imagination run wild and to reflect and understand what you want. Regarding the specific topic of the body, it is about what you want to hear your body say, what messages you would like to receive from society, and what you would like to feel through your body.

Having an image in front of you will empower the things you want for your body



Partner

Organisation:

MOH



Number of

Participants:

10-15



Time/Duration:

1 hour - to be combined with “Embodiment & centring our body”



Space &

Equipment/materials:

- Medium-sized room
- Cardboard and paper of different sizes and colours
- A4 paper
- Pens, Coloured Markers
- Post-its
- Jamboard

Vision Image Board



Objectives/Expected learning outcomes:

- Practice self-awareness and reflection
- Increase of the self-confidence
- Awareness of our own body, self-perception
- Reflection on goals achieved thanks to our body



Source/Author:

Adaptation of "This Body is Worthy" by Hannah Soyer

Step 1 (15 min) - Warm-up:

Warm-up activity (Ice-breaker): forming a circle, throwing a ball. The facilitator decides the first question that needs to be answered by the participants (e.g. what is your name?) So he/she/they start by throwing a ball randomly at another person in the circle. The person that receives the ball, answers the first question. After all the people present in the circle answer the first question, the facilitator asks the second question (e.g. what is your favourite food?/what did you eat for breakfast?). And so on. *Advice for the facilitator: ask for simple questions, do not ask sensitive/deep ones.*

Step 2 (10 min) - Safe space:

Give 5 min to the participants to write on post-its what they need to feel safe in the workshop. (e.g. active listening, no judgment, etc.). After they are finished, the facilitator read them to the whole room, so that each “rule” is followed by everyone in the group.

Desires:

Center our body: background theory

The body gives us direct access to embodiment and, in so doing, becomes a locus for learning. Internal proprioception (cognizance of the movement and composition of one’s own integrated body) grants us access to our emotions, sensations, and desires. To acknowledge these sensory modes of knowledge is to resist binary oppositions like subject/object, mind/body, and nature/culture.

Bodies are not just skin, muscles, and bones, I realized—they are political battlegrounds.

Centering is at the heart of the practice of being and becoming embodied.

Coming back to our center opens up space in our bodies, affording more options for our actions and decisions.

Step 3 (20 min):

Open discussion:

Reflect with the group on the negative messages that we receive on our body every day (through the work of Hannah Soyer). The facilitator gives a brief introduction on how society tells us that we need to be fixed, hidden, or that we have some parts of our body that aren't good enough. Ask the participants to think about a phrase of their body professing its worth. Give them 10 minutes to think about this phrase.

Step 4 (15 min):

After reflecting on the negative messages we have introduced concerning the body, ask participants to create their own vision board with images/phrases/photos representing all the messages they desire to address to their bodies, you can do it online with Jamboard or in presence with papers. They are free to choose the colours, the shape and the size of the materials.

Step 5 (10 min in pairs):

The facilitators ask the participants to share their vision board in pairs.

Debriefing/Assessment Evaluation:

Closing activity and discussion on the whole workshop experience. **(15 min)**

- Did completing this activity increase your awareness of how you define your body?
- What challenges arose while writing these letters?
- How did this exercise make you feel?

Remarks/ Pay attention to:

It's really important to create a safe space, in order to allow the participants to express themselves safely among the others. Remember to give strict timeframes.

References:

"This Body is Worthy" - <https://www.thisbodyisworthy.com/>

Embodiment & Centering our Body



**Type of Method/
Artistic disciplines involved:**
Embodiment & centering our
body



Partner Organisation:
MOH



Tutorial Video



Number of Participants:
10-15



**Objectives/Expected
learning outcomes:**

- Practice self-awareness and reflection
- Increase of the self-confidence
- Awareness of our own body, self-perception



Time/Duration:
1,5/2 hours - to be combined
with "Vision Board" activity



Space & Equipment/materials:
First part:

**Exercise 1: self-portrait
without looking**

- White paper (A5)
- Marker
- Mirror (or inside camera of a smartphone)

**Exercise 2: "self-Portrait in
the Dark"**

- Black cardboard
- White pencil

**Exercise 3: "portrait without
looking"**

- Two sheets of tracing paper, size A5
- Two coloured pens.

Second part:

- white papers
- marker
- photos of organs: heart, lungs, brain, stomach, kidney



Source/Author:
Isabella Mileti

First part:

Physical awareness of self, internal and surrounding space

- Center our body
- Perceive our body: self-portrait
- Our body in relation with others: portrait

Center our body: background theory

The body gives us direct access to embodiment and, in so doing, becomes a locus for learning. Internal proprioception (cognizance of the movement and composition of one's own integrated body) grants us access to our emotions, sensations, and desires. To acknowledge these sensory modes of knowledge is to resist binary oppositions like subject/object, mind/body, and nature/culture.

Bodies are not just skin, muscles, and bones, I realized—they are political battlegrounds. Centering is at the heart of the practice of being and becoming embodied.

Coming back to our center opens up space in our bodies, affording more options for our actions and decisions.

Sensations

Step 1 (15 min) - Warm-up

Guide participants in the perception of their body: to arrive at the present moment, try to lower your awareness to the level of sensations. Notice your heartbeat, breath, temperature and muscle tension. Depending on your available senses, what do you hear, smell, taste, feel and see? Is your mood heavy or light? Does it disperse evenly, or does it gather in a particular area?

Step 2 (10 min)

Start with the practical exercise, prepare a presentation about artists that work with body: Yves Klein, Ana Mendieta, Marina Abramovic, Luigi Ontani and so on.

Step 3 (30 min)

Perceive our body: self-portrait

- 1) To create a portrait relying on your instinct and your 5 senses
- 2) To make portraits and self-portraits based on instinct

Exercise 1 "Self-portrait without looking"

The exercise is to make your own self-portrait, looking at yourself in the mirror. You have to follow only two rules:

- Never look at the paper (keep your eyes fixed on the mirror)
- Try not to lift the pen from the paper

Exercise 2 "Self-Portrait in the Dark"

The exercise consists of creating your self-portrait while keeping your eyes closed. To draw in the best possible way, touch your face while drawing with your other hand.

Our body in relation with others: portrait

- To liberate the drawing from the expectations of a result

Exercise 3 "Portrait without looking"

(to do it in pairs)

The exercise consists of portraying the person sitting opposite to you. You have to follow the same two rules as before:

- Never look at the paper (keep your eyes fixed on the other face)
- Try not to lift the pen from the paper

The pair make the two portraits simultaneously.

→ at the end you can even overlap the two sheets and observe the result together!

Second part

Emotions

Step 4 (20 min)

Embodiment: start the second part with a presentation of the concept of embodiment and explain why our bodies are not neutral but socialized. If you want, you can focus on these three elements: length = dignity, width = belonging, depth = time.

Step 5 (20 min)

Share a presentation about emotions:

- What are emotions?
- What are their functions?
- Explain what it is: **anger, fear, sadness, happiness, disgust, surprise.**

Step 6 (20 min)

Writing phase, ask each participant to:

- write a memory related to each of these emotions, linked to their body
- to highlight just one word for each story
- for word or episode, ask the participant to identify an organ related to it (you can bring with you some images and ask them to choose it)
- ask them to feel their emotions in their body: when you are happy, which part of your body is involved?

Debriefing/Assessment/ Evaluation:

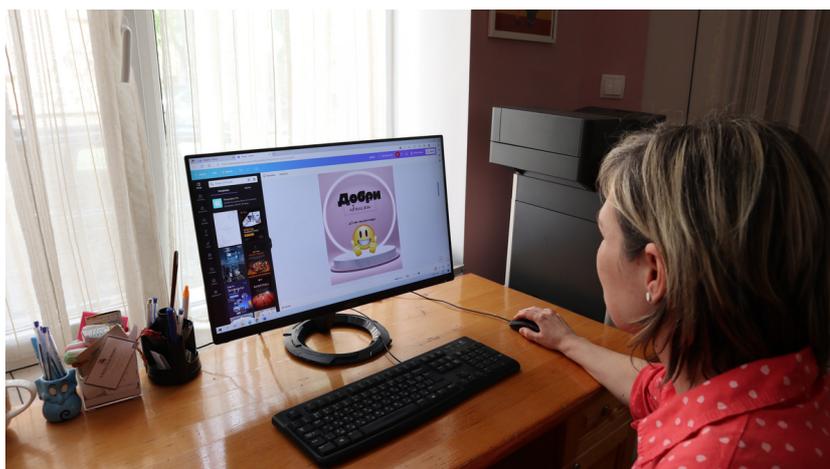
Closing activity and discussion on the whole workshop experience. (15 min)

- Did completing this activity increase your awareness of how you define your body?
- What challenges arose while writing these letters?
- How did this exercise make you feel?

Remarks/ Pay attention to:

It's really important to create a safe space, in order to allow the participants to express themselves safely among the others. Remember to give strict timeframes.

Digital Poster



**Type of Method/
Artistic disciplines involved:**
Digital Art



**Partner
Organisation:**
Animus
Association



Tutorial Video



**Number of
Participants:**
6-12



Methodology background/introduction:
“Hate speech” is a growing problem for people of all ages, but especially for youngsters that come across such contents daily not only in their analogue surrounding but also through their online engagements. Even though a “hate speech” incident can cause serious distress, it is also an opportunity to deflect such comments, by recognizing the addressed issue and offering different interpretations. While this is still a way to accept and recognize one’s criticism, it is also a way to change the narrative and move the focus from the intention to communicate hate or ridicule, without inciting further hostility. The practice is designed to convert offensive comments into a productive outlet.



Time/Duration:
3-4 hours



**Space &
Equipment/
materials:**

- PC, tablet, laptop, mobile phone;
- Testimonies from incidents of hate speech;



Objectives/Expected learning outcomes:

- Learn to analyze body-shaming situations through multiple perspectives;
- Reflect on “hate speech” as a form of body-shaming that allows different interpretations;
- Promote acceptance by transforming offensive statements into smart, satire or funny counter comments.



Source/Author:

Elena
Golemeeva and
Margarita
Rafailova

Phase 1- Warm up

Use an activity that is not related to the main subject of the workshop. Something simple and energetic to warm up participants and involve them in the group activity. If people are not familiar with each other, the exercise can involve getting to know each other (e.g. Two truths and a lie). The goal is for participants to get to know one another in an easy and fun manner, while making the room for positive intention.

Phase 2- Brief introduction of the topic “Hate speech”

Introduction of the main topic of the workshop – ‘Body-shaming’ through ‘Hate speech’. Very general discussion surrounding their idea, attitude and/or experience with ‘hate speech’.

Phase 3- Instructions

Since participants will be asked to create a poster with a slogan that counterbalances hate speech comments, they will be offered basic standards and rules for creating one. For example, discussion regarding compensatory elements to include in the poster, fonts used, images, colors, shapes etc. This is a good starting point for those who are inexperienced in creating such content.

Phase 4- Testimonies

After that, the group will be presented with testimonies/personal accounts of people who have been subjected to ‘hate speech’. Each participant will choose one testimony and the first main task is to think about a counter comment, slogan that transforms the offence into something new that can be funny or offer a different perspective. People can be divided into different groups of 3-4 in order to brainstorm and discuss their ideas. The moderator can assist in the process if necessary.

Phase 5- Navigate, assist, moderate the process

Participants will be presented with the website Canva.com that allows the creation of free for download poster in a user-friendly way. On the one hand, the platform is suitable for beginners, while still offering various options. Here it is important for the moderator to follow the process, make sure participants stick to the main task and receive technical assistance if needed.

Phase 6- Discussion

Once everyone is ready with their final product, the moderator will open a discussion about the entire process and reasoning in creating the poster.

Phase 7- Feedback

At the very end, participants will be asked about their opinion regarding the workshop in terms of *what they liked, what can be changed/improved, what is one thing they will take with them after the workshop.*

**Debriefing/Assessment/
Evaluation:**

Feedback from participants at the end of the activity through an open discussion.

Remarks/ Pay attention to:

The practice can be carried out manually, by making classical (paper) posters, using art and craft techniques, drawing, or sketching. The downfall, however, of not using digital tools is that this can be limiting or discouraging for individuals who do not have artistic abilities.

Masks



**Type of Method/
Artistic disciplines involved:**
Arts and crafts



**Partner
Organisation:**
Animus
Association



Tutorial Video



**Number of
Participants:**
6-12



Methodology background/introduction:

A form of projective technique that allows participants to project their emotions, feelings and ideas through creativity (in this case, making masks). This technique allows for a much more spontaneous and uncensored expression, and followed by a series of guiding questions for reflection allows participants to deepen their self-knowledge. Seeking to know and name aspects of one's own personality in their diversity enables acceptance and integration. Such a practice cannot substitute for deep methods of work leading to awareness of contents unconscious to the personality, but it is a method that would point towards self-reflection and open up a topic significant for everyone. Shame is that experience that makes us feel exposed, watched and judged, provoking us to hide from ourselves as well as from others our external or internal characteristics. Masks serve as a cover. Often, standing behind a mask, we gain the freedom to express an aspect/feeling/idea that may be experienced as unacceptable (by others, but also by ourselves). What if we were to create a mask that shows the face of a person who is not ashamed of themselves. Is it that it will continue to be a mask, or will it be an attempt of everyone involved to portray also what usually remains hidden?

Masks



Objectives/Expected learning outcomes:

- Recognition of individual aspects of personality (external or internal characteristics) linked to feelings of shame.
- Understanding of the expression and consequences of shame.
- Getting in touch with one's own authenticity and its diversity.



Space & Equipment/materials:

Free space; boxes, helmets (to serve as a basis for the construction of the mask); scissors, glue, plasticine, paper, soft pieces, markers, tape, sequins, feathers, and anything else you can possibly think of.



Time/Duration:
3-4 hours



Source/Author:
Elena
Golemeeva and
Margarita
Rafailova

Step 1:

The activity starts with a short warm-up.

Step 2:

Place the materials in the middle of the room. The more varied they are, the richer the final result can be.

Ask the participants to create their own mask on the topic "A person who is not ashamed of themselves".

Step 3:

Open a discussion by asking them to think about the following questions:

What masks do we use in our daily lives, with the people around us? What do we hide behind them? Why do we need them?

NB!! If you think it is appropriate for the group, you can deepen the discussion by giving an example: the fear of being rejected, abandoned, judged.

How do we treat ourselves? Is the ideal version we have chosen for ourselves attainable?

NB!! You can close the discussion by summarizing the thoughts of the group.

Description of the activity

Step 4:

Finally, if the participants want, they can choose names for their masks, or write a short description to accompany their masks at an exhibition or parade.

Debriefing/Assessment/Evaluation:

Each participant has the opportunity to share one thing that is new about themselves, and they will keep after this workshop.

Remarks/ Pay attention to:

Follow up with the group and determine the depth of discussion around this. Participants do not need to share specific examples of what lies behind their mask, it is enough to think about it for themselves.

References:

<https://artincontext.org/mask-artists/>

Dancing Myself



**Type of Method/
Artistic disciplines involved:**
Dance, kinetic improvisation



**Partner
Organisation:**
SMouTH



Tutorial Video



**Number of
Participants:**
Any



**Methodology
background/introduction:**

Body movement, dance as a process without stereotypes and the creation of an original sequence of movements can be an experiential way to connect with one's body, to regain control and to realize the body as a means of expression and communication. This dance experience can fill people with confidence. In addition, dance is a creative way of non-verbal communication that helps people express through movement, things they may be ashamed or afraid to say in words. Dance, especially when it involves improvisation and therefore authentic expression, can be a very liberating experience.



Time/Duration:
60-90 minutes



**Space &
Equipment/mat
erials:**

- Large comfortable space with possibility to use music

Dancing Myself



Objectives/Expected learning outcomes:

- Body Activation
- Body Awareness
- Improving self-awareness
- Improving our perception of our body and its expressive potential
- Expression through the body and movement
- Awareness and expression of feelings about my body
- Creating a sense of liberation of thoughts and body



Source/Author:

Despoina
Bounitsi

Step 1: Warm up

Do a body warm-up to activate and help participants connect to their bodies. You can first focus on breathing and then suggest small rotations of different parts of the body. You can encourage the group to move freely by discovering the space and its possibilities, the different pathways between other bodies and the eye contact with others. You can even ask the participants to gradually increase and decrease the speed of movement in order to activate their bodies even more.

Step 2 : Find my "sphere",

Ask participants to stretch so that their body takes up as much space as possible and then shrink so that their body takes up as little space as possible. Repeat 3 to 4 times, prompting participants to become aware of their body in space and to imagine that they are surrounded by an imaginary "sphere," a bubble that is their personal, safe, imaginary space. Everyone has their own sphere. Ask them to try moving with the idea of the "sphere" to become aware of the boundaries of their personal space among other bodies.

Step 3 : Move inside the “sphere”

Guide the participants like this:

“Find a spot in the space where you feel good and stop there. Continue to have the feeling of the "sphere". Move freely, trying in your own personal way to discover the limits of space, the boundaries of your "sphere". Try to change the speed at which you move, as well as to move on different levels.”

The instructor may suggest to the participants to close their eyes if they feel comfortable with it. The facilitator then asks the participants to react with their body movement to the ideas and words given.

Example:

How would your body show love, pain, freedom, fear, desire, embarrassment, shame, power, change, calm, anger, relationship, need?

When you feel that the participants have started to express themselves through their bodies, ask them to find a comfortable position (to sit or lie down), to trust you for the next few minutes and follow your instructions. They can keep their eyes closed if they are comfortable with that.

Step 4: The body responds

In this safe environment, the facilitator asks participants to answer the questions with their body and movement. Encourage them to be honest, to trust their body movement and to try to incorporate their ideas in their movement.

Questions :

- Do you compare your body to other bodies? What do you feel when you do it?
- Have you apologized for your body? How did you feel?
- What does your body or part of your body do when you feel ashamed of it? How does it react?
- What would you say to your body if you were free of shame?

The facilitator gives participants time, opportunities for repetition, and helps them feel free to answer whatever they wish.

Step 5: My choreography

The guidance below can be as follows:

“I repeat in my mind over and over again the movements - answers to the above questions. I put them in order as I wish. I am trying to expand my movement. I begin to move with the sequence of these four movement-answers. I can slowly open my eyes and move more intensely, following this new personal choreography.”

Step 6: Evolution and Synthesis

Whoever wants can present to the group the choreography they created and perhaps share the thoughts reflected in it. Participants can creatively synthesize small personal choreographies with larger choreographic forms for artistic use and communication.

Debriefing/Assessment/Evaluation:

How did you feel during the process?

What thoughts did you have as you left in relation to the body?

Did you feel there was any change in your thinking?

Remarks/ Pay attention to:**Trust:**

It is important to create a climate of calm and security from the beginning. Ask participants to trust you and to follow you in their own way as long as they feel comfortable. Emphasize that there is no right and wrong and that everyone can react in their own personal way to the instructions.

Continuous Flow:

Ask participants not to interrupt, if possible, to create a common sense of flow. However, if they experience any difficulty, they can leave the process discreetly at any time without interrupting others. If this happens, the facilitator is advised to help them re-engage with the process if they wish.

Calm:

It is considered helpful if the whole process is accompanied by calm music at a low volume and the voice of the facilitator is loud, clear and calm at the same time. In addition, the instructions should be simple, repeated as many times as necessary and leave time for the participants to create their own movement.

Dancing Light



**Type of Method/
Artistic disciplines involved:**
Movement/Dance & Guided
meditation



**Partner
Organisation:**
SMouTH



Tutorial Video



**Number of
Participants:**
Any



Time/Duration:
60-90minutes



Methodology background/introduction:

Movement and dance can be powerful means and experiences when it comes to body acceptance; its embodied character, allows dancers/movers to experience feelings and senses (such as shame, embarrassment, but also pride, confidence) **about** their bodies **with/on** their bodies directly and without any mediation/logical explanation. Dance can also give people the framework and the means to transform any negative feelings/perceptions of their body into a creative process (and possibly an artistic result) of raising awareness, understanding and negotiating those feelings. Moreover, taking a step to expose your body -alone or in front of others- and dance is already one step towards body acceptance; people with a negative narrative of their body tend to hide and confine it. Dance is an applied process rather than a theoretical one. Allowing and inviting oneself to expand their body and move it actively “conquering” space and time, overcoming or at least dealing with fear and shame, can be liberating and even therapeutic. We could roughly sum it up like this: whoever is dancing has to accept their body energetically to some extent.

Dancing Light



Space & Equipment/materials:

- A large space to dance and to be able to lie down
- Optional: yoga mats, cushions
- Music



Source/Author:
Dimitra Zacharouli



Objectives/Expected learning outcomes:

- Explore the sense we have of our bodies; and the different senses we have of different body parts
- "Negotiate" and reconcile with parts of and our whole body
- Facilitate acceptance of our feelings towards our body

Step 1: Warm-up- body awareness and mobilisation (15 min)

Start in a circle and make a brief warm-up of all parts of the body: start from breathing awareness, then add the instruction to slowly and gently move one body part after the other: head, shoulders, arms, ribcage, pelvis, knees, feet. Then, invite the participants to leave the circle and start moving around the room. Give the instruction that the very first step to leave the circle is initiated by the feet, and give them some time to walk around. Then invite them to try to initiate their movement from different parts of their body: from their knee, or their hand, elbow, pelvis, head, eyes, ear and so on. Try to consider your target group as different kinds of disabilities or amputees may need some help in imagining this part of their body leading a movement. Let them, under the sound of music of your choice, move into space as if the specific body part leads their movement and all other parts follow. Gradually, invite them to slow down until they find a nice spot to stop and pause.

Step 2: Guided meditation (20 min)

In their selected spot, they can lie down or sit in a comfortable position. Let them know that they will spend some time in this pause, so they can take their time to find the most comfortable position for them, maybe using cushions or other supporting objects or walls. Remind them that if they feel uncomfortable or get tired of the pose they chose, they can shift their position or go out of the process without disturbing the others. Maybe they are feeling hot after the warm-up, but advise them to put on another layer of clothing, since the meditation will make them cool down, depending on the room temperature. You can play some relaxation music with soft or natural sounds, as they are settling down to their pose.

Guide the group with instructions like these:

“You can close your eyes if it’s ok for you. First thing I want to ask you is to start emptying your mind. It is totally natural that our minds never stop thinking, but for the next few minutes try to release all your thoughts. If you can’t empty your thoughts, try to open your eyes and close them again. You can open and close your eyes as many times as you want, until you feel that your eyelids prefer to stay closed. Then, feel these eyelids grow heavier and softer, feel your whole head falling heavier to the ground.

Bring your attention to your breath: every time you inhale, all your body feels lighter, every time you exhale the whole body feels softer and drops heavier to the ground. Try to imagine this ground and the environment around you: you are now lying on your ideal place.

As you continue to make your body softer and heavier with each breathing out, try to figure out all the details of this ideal place. Where is it? Is it a real place or an imaginary one? What is around you? Is it day or night? Where does the light come from? How is the temperature? Can you hear something? Smell something? How is the surface you are lying on? Are you alone or is there somebody else with you?

When you feel that your whole body is soft, relaxed and heavy, bring your attention to the top of your head. Imagine that there is a beautiful flower growing on the top of your head. Try to envision its shape, colour, odour.

Every time you breathe in, this flower absorbs light from the sun or the moon, every time you breathe out you send this light down to your body. Try to send the light to all parts of your body and observe if you feel any resistance in a specific part. If you face resistance, try a bit more, sending a few more breaths to that part, but never force your body to accept the light. It is ok that we also have some darker parts. The following thoughts may help you lighten a bit any resisting parts:

-Do you remember comparing this part of yours to that of other people? How does that comparison affect your self-esteem or self-confidence? How ready do you feel to stop comparing?

-Can you recall being asked to apologize for this part to others or to yourself? -Do you feel ready to stop apologising for that?

Continue to breathe like this until you can see your body being full of light and take some time to feel and enjoy this state. This light makes your body warmer and softer, it makes you shine from within out. You are now shining, full of light, but there is one part of your body that shines the most. Take your time to find this part and name it, even if you don't feel that there is a part really standing out.

Step 3: Dancing with the light (5 min)

When you find your shiny part, let it help you come out of this relaxation state. You can start moving slowly, starting from this part. You can start stretching your body as if you just woke up, fresh and lucid, and you are ready to send with your movement the light to all the space around you. Now you are not in your ideal place, you are here in the room among other people, but you can share a bit of your dream place through your movement. You can continue to improvise and dance more actively if you want, as if you are telling a story with your body about your body. How does it feel? What are its strong points? Which message does it carry? What does it protest against? What does it fight for?

At this step, you can invite participants to suggest any music they feel like dancing.

Step 4: (optional-in case you work with dancers) (15 min)

You can invite the participants to work for a further 15 min alone or in couples to combine elements of their improvisations to create a short dance routine and present it to the group. Alternatively (or complimentary) they could write down a text or a poem based on their thoughts during the process.

Debriefing/Assessment/Evaluation:

Invite the participants back in a circle and facilitate a debriefing/closing discussion with questions like these:

- How difficult was it for you to send the light in different body parts?
- Can you identify why those parts were resisting?
- Were the instructions helpful for you to release this resistance?
- Do you think that dancing these thoughts out can help body acceptance?

Remarks/ Pay attention to:

Pay attention to your group and their access needs/requirements when you introduce this kind of meditation & movement methodology. Make sure that your verbal instructions are accessible and easy to “translate” for people with diverse mobility and physicality.

References:

<https://thebodyisnotanapology.com/>

The Power of Labels



**Type of Method/
Artistic disciplines involved:**
Visual Art/Photography



Tutorial Video



**Methodology
background/introduction:**

The idea behind this workshop came from reflection on the power of words/names and identity. The names and labels we are given shape the way we feel about ourselves. Negative labels in relation to body-shaming impact on body image and self-esteem. Labels can also shape expectations that are set for other people, creating stereotypes (Starnes, 2021).



**Objectives/Expected learning
outcomes:**

- Practice self-awareness and reflection.
- Understand different perceptions of what a body is.
- How to challenge and respond to negative labels associated with body-shaming.



**Partner
Organisation:**
University of
Atypical



**Number of
Participants:**
8-12



Time/Duration:
1.5-2 hours



**Space &
Equipment/materials:**

- Tin Foil
- Felt
- Markers/Pens
- Paper
- Glue
- Scissors
- Camera



Source/Author:
Deirdre McKenna,
Amy Frazer

Open discussion: What is a body? Participants discuss in a group what their own perception of a body is. (15 mins)

Participants first write their name and discuss the meaning behind it. They can draw around the letters or draw what it means (10 mins)

Participants then write 3 negative things they have been called and 3 positive things. Participants share with the group the negative and positive words they have written down. (15 mins)

Participants take tinfoil and shape it into the negative word. They can shape into a necklace, bracelet or crown. They then cut up pieces of felt into the letters of the positive word and stick it on another piece of square felt. (40 mins)

Participants wear the negative word and hold up the positive word and get their portraits taken. (15 mins)

Debriefing/Assessment/

Evaluation:

Discuss with participants how they felt about the process. Did they feel empowered? (10 mins)

References:

<https://turnersyndromefoundation.org/2021/07/13/the-power-of-labels/#:~:text=Labels%20reflect%20how%20people%20think,needs%2C%20culture%2C%20and%20personalities.>

Body Collage



**Type of Method/
Artistic disciplines involved:**
Visual Art



Tutorial Video



**Methodology
background/introduction:**

The idea behind this workshop is for participants to focus more on the body and what it can do rather than what it looks like. The art method is based on the Cadavre Exquis concept.



Objectives/Expected learning outcomes:

- Practice self-awareness and reflection.
- Understand different perceptions of what a body is.
- Understand and focus on what the body can do.



**Partner
Organisation:**
University of
Atypical



**Number of
Participants:**
8-12



Time/Duration:
2 hours



**Space &
Equipment/
materials:**

- Pens
- Paper



Source/Author:
Amy Frazer

Step 1

Assign a body part for each participant on a piece of paper.

Head

Left eye

Right eye

Nose

Left shoulder

Right shoulder

Left arm

Right arm

Left hand

Right hand

Torso

Left leg

Right leg

Left foot

Right foot

(Participants might be assigned more than one depending on numbers)

Step 2

Participants reflect on what they have been assigned and include a word or phrase that is positive, neutral or significant to them.

Participants draw what they perceive that part to look like.

Step 3

They all piece the body together and discuss the positive, neutral or significant phrases they have included.

Remarks/ Pay attention to:

The topic of disability may arise and perceptions of what a body is. Let the conversation flow naturally and give space to anyone who might discuss their disability or impairment.

References:

<https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/31332/cadavre-exquis-exquisite-corpse>

Thank you for reading!



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