

IO3. COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION



Exercise name: Breathing

Methods: breathing practice

Duration: 15 minutes

Material: -

Nr of participants: any number of people

Introduction:

Breathing is the first emotion regulation technique that is to be learned. Breathing helps to balance the sympathetic and para sympathetic nervous system very fast. In situations of emotional highjack, the sympathetic nervous system is activated. In order to gain control of the emotional reaction in this situation breathing techniques are very powerful.

Directions:

- Balancing breathing: breathe in at 4 counts and breathe out at 4 counts. Do this 10 times. This breathing will help balance your emotions.
- Calming breathing: in case of emergency, if you feel you are getting into panic or also if you need help falling asleep: breathe in at 4 counts and breathe out at 8 counts.

Discussion and debrief:

Be careful, you can do the balancing breathing anytime, but you have to be careful with the calming breathing, because it will lower your heart rate and may cause you to fall asleep and your energy to drop down. That is why it is to be used only in situations of emergency and/or when you are going to sleep.

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Self-management – emotional self-regulation

Exercise name: Influencing our own emotions, by taking the right non-verbal coding

Methods: learning by doing

Duration: 15 minutes

Material: pens

Nr of participants: any number of people

Introduction:

After explaining the theoretical background on how our nonverbal communication influences our own feelings, explain that we are going to now experiment and feel this influence on ourselves and also practice boosting our self-confidence via nonverbal gestures.

Directions:

All participants exercise:

- Taking the right posture associated with self-confidence – the body is straight, shoulders back, legs apart at the level shoulders, head is up looking straight ahead.
- Walking with confidence – while maintaining the confident posture walk briskly with large confident steps.
- Smiling (the group may try the “false smile” exercise – hold a pen between the lips, forcing a false smile and report how they feel after forcing a false smile for 60 seconds).
- Open and confident hand gestures.

Discussion and debrief:

Ask the participants how they felt before the exercise and how they feel after it. Did something make a particular impression on them? Which of the non-verbal cues was most powerful: posture, walk, gesture or smile? How they felt while doing it?

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Self-management – emotional self-regulation

Exercise name: Reframe the situation*

Methods: learning by doing, self-reflection

Duration: 45 minutes

Material: paper, pens

Nr of participants: 8-24

Introduction:

You're experiencing life and all that happens to you, based on your subjective interpretation of reality. This is called subjective reality. Your subjective reality comes from your beliefs, values, past experiences, expectations. They are like your personal lens through which you see the world. As a result, no two people experience or react to the same event in completely the same way. For example, when two people see a homeless dog on the street, one gets scared and tries to avoid the dog, while the other runs straight to the dog and starts to pat him and show him love. Reframing is by changing a little bit the lens to be able to steer your emotions in a positive direction. You take a specific situation from your life and you develop a more positive view on it – with that, you influence your thinking pattern and feelings about that particular situation, but you also change your subjective reality in a more positive way.

Directions:

The moderator gives step by step the following instructions to the participants.

- **Step 1:** Think of an event or life situation that bothers you and causes you to experience negative feelings. As accurately as possible describe this negative event or situation. The event that bothers you and leads to dysfunctional thinking is called an activating event.
- **Step 2:** Identify your beliefs about the event or situation. Try to identify as many as possible. The following questions can help you:
 - What caused the situation to happen?
 - What do you think should happen and why?
 - What does the event say about you?

*The level of difficulty should be adjusted to the group with the help of changing the helping questions at each step

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- **Step 3:** What are the thoughts and feelings that you experience as a result of this event:

- Write down all of your automatic thoughts. (this person is so mean...)
- Identify all the negative emotions that situation causes you to feel. Write down the feeling and intensity on a scale from 0 % to 100% (for example Anger - 80 %).
- What's your automatic behavioural reaction on the situation (I get into a fight).

- **Step 4:** Now challenge your thoughts and beliefs. Find a better frame (personal lens) that helps you to neutralize the situational emotions and act more rationally. The following questions may help you:

- If the same thing happened to your best friend or someone you love, what would be your interpretation of the event then?
- How would [enter the name of someone you admire as a role model] interpret this situation?
- What are other potential explanations besides the other person being mean?
- What was under your control and you could have done better, and what was completely out of your control?
- What are all the counterarguments to your underlying beliefs?
- What's the worst thing that could realistically happen as a result of the situation and how bad would that be?
- What difference will this one-time event make in a month, a year or a decade?
- List all the moves you can make to get yourself in a better position without getting into a fight.
- Is thinking this way helping the situation or making it worse?

- **Step 5:** The new frame:

- What is the most positive and constructive interpretation of the event or situation that you can think of? Write it down.

- **Step 6:** What is the final effect. It should be a more accurate view of the situation with more positive thoughts and feelings, and an action plan for performing better:

- Write down all of your new thoughts about the event.
- Write down your new feelings about the event (feeling, intensity).
- Write down the action plan you will put in motion.

Discussion and debrief:

Ask the participants if the exercise was difficult to do and if they felt positive effect from it. Discuss with them that the more often they do it the easier it will get for them to do it. The goal is to be able to use this technique quickly in their minds in cases of urgent need to calm down.

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Self-management – emotional self-regulation

Exercise name: Emotional Hijack

Methods: learning by doing, self-reflection, group discussion

Duration: 45 minutes

Material: worksheet “Emotional Hijack”, pen

Nr of participants: any number of people

Introduction:

The emotional hijack has the following components:

1. Trigger – what causes the reaction.
2. Reaction (spontaneous).
3. Strong emotion.
4. Feeling of regret after that.

Directions:

Part 1: Individual task

Remember 2 situations when you were emotionally hijacked:

1. Describe the situations.
2. What caused the situations (trigger)?
3. How did you react? How did other people react?
4. What was the result?
5. What could you have done in a different way?

Part 2: Group work

Divide the participants in groups of 2-3 people. Ask them to discuss the situations in the groups:

- What is common between them?
- What is the resemblance between the triggers (causes for them)?
- What can be concluded from that?
- What can be done in a different way in order to manage the situation better?

Discussion and debrief:

Ask the participants if they found similarities of between the triggers of the two situations they described. Ask if the group discussion was helpful to figure out how future emotional highjacks can be avoided. Discuss with the participants that it is OK to ask for an external point of view and support to help solve future situations with emotional triggers.

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"EMOTIONAL HIJACK" WORKSHEET

Part 1: Individual task

Remember 2 situations when you were emotionally hijacked.

Situation 1. Please, describe it:

What caused the situation (trigger)?

How did you react? How did other people react?

What was the result?

What could you have done in a different way?

Situation 2. Please, describe it:

What caused the situation (trigger)?

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How did you react? How did other people react?

What was the result?

What could you have done in a different way?

Part 2: Group work

In your group, discuss the described situations.

What is common between them? What is the resemblance between the triggers (causes for them)?

What can you conclude from that?

What can be done in a different way in order to manage the situation better?
