

PARTICIPANT HANDBOOK

Cirque du Monde Training - Part 2

This awesome Participant Handbook belongs to:



SOCIAL CIRCUS PROGRAM OF
CIRQUE DU SOLEIL.

FOREWORD

Ever since *Cirque du Soleil* has had the resources to follow its dreams, it has chosen to be involved with at-risk youth through its social circus program, *Cirque du Monde*. With the objective of encouraging the personal and social development of these young people, *Cirque du Monde*'s actions take the form of social circus workshops, training, support and consulting, networking and raising awareness.

Most recently, in order to support the development of social circus, *Cirque du Monde* has invested in the production of a series of educational tools. The *Participant Handbook* is an integral part of this series and is based on the expertise developed by *Cirque du Soleil* and its numerous partners and collaborators since 1995.

Both a notebook and a reference manual, the *Participant Handbook* aims to prepare the instructors and community workers taking part in *Cirque du Monde* training sessions. Furthermore, in order to promote the professional development of a greater number of practitioners, *Cirque du Monde* has decided to make this handbook available to the social circus community, thereby allowing both individuals and organizations offering training activities to take full advantage of it. They will, however, note that using this handbook does not give them the right to provide training on behalf of the *Cirque du Soleil*.

The *Participant Handbook* is a product of the *Social Circus Trainer's Guide*, which is the educational reference document for *Cirque du Monde* Training. The handbook brings together all thematics that will be addressed during the training session. For each thematic, we have listed objectives, basic notions and related key messages. In the appendix, you will find a collection of various documents and practical grids related to social circus project planning and follow-up. Furthermore, we have taken care to leave you plenty of room for additional notes, so that you can summarize what you have learned during the training session in your own words.

Have a great training session!

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SOCIAL CIRCUS BASIC TRAINING

The social circus basic training program of *Cirque du Soleil* purpose is to prepare circus instructors and community workers for conducting social circus workshops with at-risk people. The training also seeks to help them better understand the overall context of social circus intervention. It also aims to develop the skills needed to intervene appropriately with partners in a varied and multicultural context.

GENERAL TRAINING OBJECTIVES

- Develop strong personal and professional ethics;
- Introduce the fundamentals of an innovative and participative teaching method;
- Develop a community-based learning environment;
- Turn art into a personal development tool.

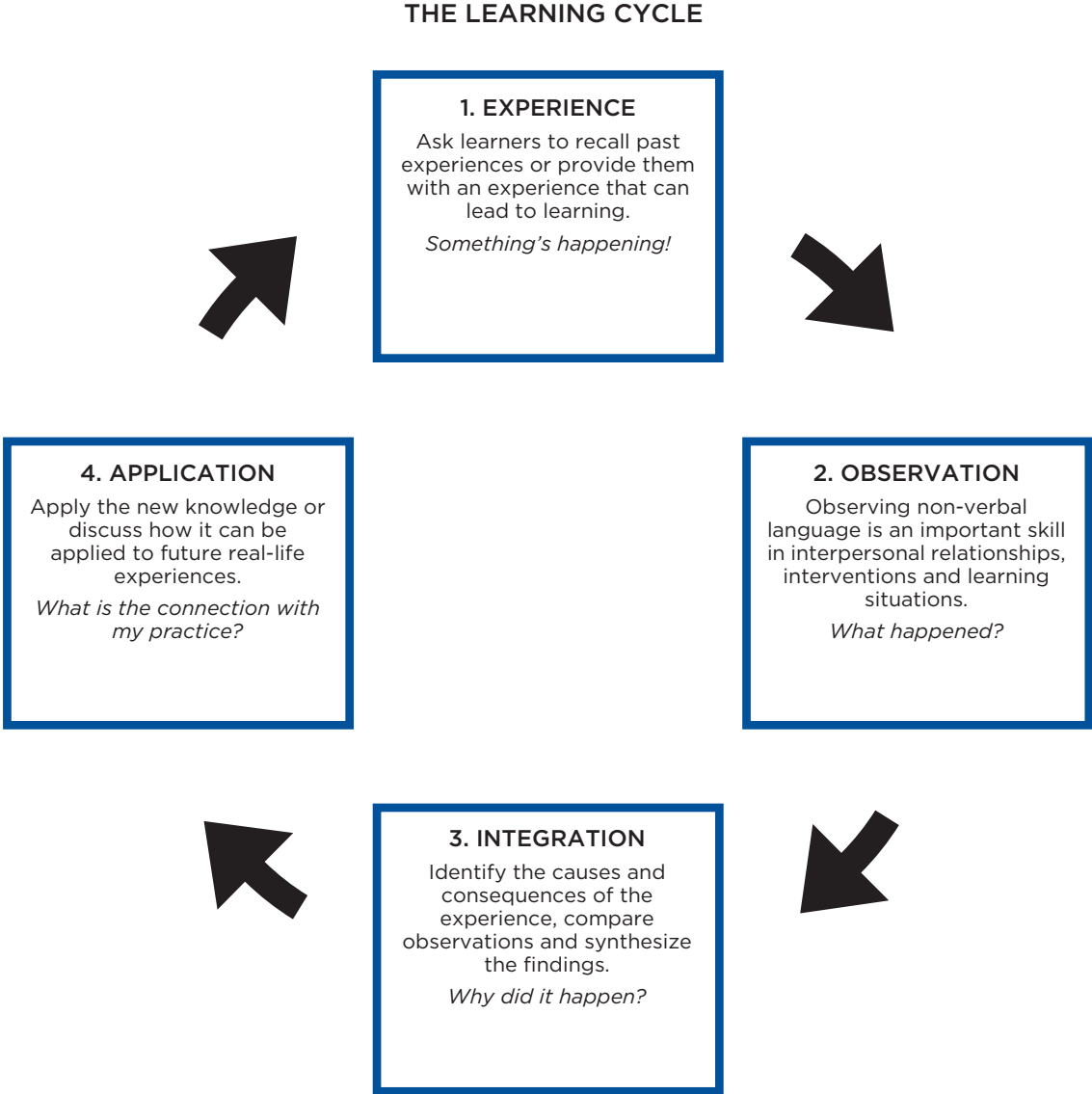
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THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE

In this text, we focus on the four stages of the experiential learning cycle: experience, observation, integration and application. Each stage reflects the different ways in which individuals learn. For example, some need to feel what they're learning - to be touched emotionally - some prefer to observe, reflect, analyze and question, while still others learn through action. By applying all four stages of the model, all types of learners can find meaning.

The activities proposed during this training are arranged according to the four stages of the experiential learning cycle.



EDUCATIONAL APPROACH

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this module, the instructor and community worker will be able to do the following:

- 1. Recognize the approaches that influence the pedagogy behind social circus.**
- 2. Understand the links between the principles of social circus and its educational approach.**
- 3. Define the strengths and challenges of a good educator.**
- 4. Recognize the conditions that create an environment that is conducive to learning.**

Part of the educational approach consists of creating an environment that is welcoming, reliable and unconditional, that is not menacing or upsetting, and that allows youth to take part whenever they're ready. I remember one young man who visited our Los Angeles circus workshops for two years without ever participating in the activities. His curiosity piqued, he would look around but never got involved. When he finally decided to participate, he quickly became fascinated by juggling. Today, he is one of our most advanced and dedicated participants, able to juggle five clubs and seven balls. If we had pressured him to participate or insisted too much, he would have certainly

run away. But because we stayed cool, open and aware of his presence without imposing any conditions, he was able to approach us in his own way and when he was ready. This is how we were able to reach him

Philip Solomon, Social Circus Instructor
Cirque du Monde, Los Angeles



RELATED EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES

1. EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

- Process by which an individual, after having a direct experience, begins a reflective process that will then lead to action.
- Experience can only lead to learning when that experience is accompanied by reflection.
- Experiential learning happens in a cycle comprising four stages: experience, observation, interpretation and application.
- All experience arises from the interaction between the individual's subjectivity (history, economic condition, emotional state) and the objective realities of their physical and social environment (the reality in which the experience is happening).

Example

2. CONTEXTUAL LEARNING

- Contextual learning proposes placing participants in real situations in order to help them transfer the knowledge they've gained into an appropriate frame of reference.
- Once an individual has learned something in a "real" and meaningful situation, the individual is then in a better position to acquire knowledge.
- Knowledge must thus be transferred back to the social and cultural context in which they were generated.

Example

3. COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

- Collaborative learning helps develop social communication and problem-solving skills by emphasizing the importance of mutual aid in the learning process.
- Teamwork and debating ideas enable participants to quickly learn the benefits of opening up to other perspectives and learning how to assert oneself while still respecting the opinions of others.
- Participants learn that there is no single easy fix for everything, and, as a result, they learn how to adapt to circumstances, groups, cultures or regions.

Example

4. STRATEGIC LEARNING

- The strategic teaching and learning approach centres on the role that mental processes play in learning.
- The educator must first take into consideration the participant's previous knowledge and relate it to the new material to facilitate the acquisition process.
- Good educators know how to show genuine interest in the lives of participants and give meaning to what they're teaching by creating associations with the cultural context.

Example

5. CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS

- Critical consciousness proposes an educational model that seeks to foster decision-making abilities and social responsibility. To achieve these goals, individuals must become more aware of their culture and why it's important for each person to participate in the collective and democratic act of building culture and history.
- This approach has many facets, including the importance of establishing dialogue, which creates an egalitarian relationship between individuals and encourages communication and exchange.
- It is also crucial that learning be rooted in reality and relate to real-life experiences – that is, to concrete and common situations – and that it lead to social action.

Example

SUMMARY

Evidently, it is difficult to create a direct and exclusive link between the educational approach used in social circus and already existing approaches. It is more practical to discuss the affinities between these many approaches, all the while emphasizing the unique and innovative features of the social circus model. This approach also adds a creative and original dimension to the important work of educating at-risk individuals by using the arts – specifically the circus arts – as an important teaching tool.

There are nevertheless many commonalities with the majority of educational approaches mentioned. The instructor and community worker sharing tandem facilitation must:

- **Take the participants' previous knowledge into consideration.**
- **Tie learning into the cultural and social realities of participants whenever possible.**
- **Help participants transfer lessons learned to other parts of their lives.**
- **Encourage active participation within the group by including every member in the process.**
- **Be experts in the process (rather than masters of the material) and pay particular attention to the personal relationships nurtured with participants.**
- **Be ready to call upon various creative strategies in order to reach goals.**

These elements are touchstones that can lead to a deeper reflection on the educational approach developed for social circus. Balanced between alternative education and social intervention, and given the profile of participants and the situations in which it is used, this approach will undoubtedly face new challenges. Consequently, in order to continue evolving, the social circus approach must integrate existing knowledge, all the while being extremely creative in stimulating the search for new directions.

THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS¹

By Lorenzo Zanetti

Spontaneity, humour, a little theory, facilitation, free expression, interaction and mutual trust are the essential elements of the educational process. However, because of their age, participants will still need to be free and to transgress, so instructors must also establish clear ground rules and discipline. The best way to maintain discipline is to give youth the power to apply and control the rules that they themselves define. In this process, the instructor acts as a mediator, ensuring that activities are always pursued with full respect for others and with a focus on working together.

To guarantee the success of the educational process, educators must do the following:

- Know how young persons are different and never assume that they are all alike.
- Be sensitive to socio-cultural differences.
- Prepare before taking action.
- Plan activities that take the participants' varying stages of physical, psychological and intellectual development into consideration.
- Demonstrate spontaneity and participate in games with youth.
- Recognize progress that has already been made, and reinforce participants' youthful optimism.
- Be consistent in every action.
- Respect the rules set by the group.

Students need the following to have a safe starting point for learning: well-structured and well-organized activities, equipment that is reliable and properly maintained, well-defined roles and functions, and clear and consistent instructions. It is also important that students participate in the educational process. To achieve this goal, educators should ask youth to participate in activity planning and the resolution of everyday problems. Also, it's vital to praise responsible behaviour and remind students of positive moments and past successes, as this helps to raise their self-esteem and increase feelings of security. Educators must avoid situations in which they'll be forced to impose their will, as youth are very self-critical and fear ridicule. They must be respected.

For the educational process to be successful, educators must create a climate - or intimate space - promoting flexibility, good humour, warmth, reflection and affection. This encourages debate, creativity and self-esteem, which in turn inspires youth to pursue new experiences. It is also important for educators to express their feelings and remind youth frequently how much they care about and appreciate them. They must support a young person's need to feel a part of society. Educators must be particularly open and receptive.

In addition to being aware of the differences between young people in the group, educators must also understand and respect these differences. More specifically, educators must endeavour to know the living conditions and social milieu of each participant, as that information will guide their work.

Obviously, the guidelines presented here are merely general recommendations that can be used in our practice, as long as we keep in mind the different temperaments of youth. It is therefore important for educators to use their experiences with young persons to try and determine their personalities. This will help them to increase their understanding and respect differences, as well as to guide their own conduct when confronted with these differences.

¹ Excerpt from the *Actes de la première rencontre internationale portant sur la formation de l'instructeur de cirque social* (internal document, Montreal, International Network for Social Circus Training, June 25-27, 2002), pp. 45-46.



Instructors and community workers must adapt their educational approach to support the evolution of the group, which is influenced by many factors (length of project, group energy, attendance, etc.)

The educational process is more important than artistic or technical performance.

The educational approach adopted by *Cirque du Monde* is inspired by many approaches, including experiential learning.

In the context of social intervention, *Cirque du Monde* favours the instructor-community worker tandem facilitation approach.

WORKSHOP PLANNING

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this module, the instructor and community worker will be able to do the following:

- 1. Understand the planning process for social circus workshops.**
- 2. Determine what elements must be considered when planning workshops.**
- 3. Understand how to align technical and social goals, as part of the educational process.**
- 4. Recognize the advantages of working in the instructor-community worker tandem when planning workshops.**

When planning workshops, it's crucial to listen to what the community workers have to say, because they frequently interact with these youth and take care of them day after day. Generally, as instructors, we are only present at a workshop for a few hours a week. So it's often truly impossible to understand what youth are interested in during such a short period of time. We had this experience at the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center, where we struggled for weeks to come up with a plan, but couldn't find the elements to make it work. Frustrated and confused, I went to see the human resources person and asked if he had any suggestions for how to make it happen. He told me that a lot of people at the Center loved putting on makeup and doing theatre, so he suggested face painting. The following week, we held a makeup workshop. Not only was it the most successful workshop held there, but it also allowed many obstacles to be overcome. It made a profound impression on many participants and improved the atmosphere of subsequent workshops.

Philip Solomon, Social Circus Instructor
Cirque du Monde, Los Angeles





PLANNING A SOCIAL CIRCUS PROJECT

THE ADVANTAGES OF PLANNING

Tandem facilitation with a group of young persons incurs some major organizational challenges. To avoid having to improvise, meticulous workshop planning is recommended. This preparatory step helps to resolve or even eliminates the numerous issues that could come up during workshops: it also helps to transition between activities, determine the rhythm of the workshop, provide a framework for measuring learning progress and reduce the amount of discipline required. Furthermore, planning encourages the achievement of long-term goals, such as the performance. So planning in advance supports both short-term (individual workshop) and the long-term (full session) objectives.

PLANNING THE SESSION

Planning the session makes it easier to set general objectives and foresee the different stages that must be implemented in order to achieve them. This planning must therefore take place before the session starts. Before each workshop, a meeting should also be held for all facilitators to discuss goals and specific activities. During this time, the community worker and instructor must clearly define the goals of each workshop and the methods necessary for achieving these goals. This is also an opportunity to get to know one another by sharing experiences and visions, and by trading information about individual skills and methods.

PLANNING EACH WORKSHOP

Preparation for a workshop enables facilitators to determine how much time will be needed for each activity. It's also an opportunity for them to adapt the content to whatever motivates participants and to the group dynamic. Facilitators have the option of re-evaluating the relevance of their goals and interventions. The flow of the workshop must be carefully outlined, including the content and schedule, and the responsibilities of each facilitator must be clearly defined. These responsibilities not only cover working with the participants, but also related tasks, such as updating files, checking materials and locations, buying materials and so on. The definition of roles clarifies responsibilities and, in so doing, diminishes tensions, frustrations, misunderstandings and the risk of injury. Having a plan gives a sense of security to both facilitators and participants, who are reassured when they see that the instructor and community worker are on an equal footing.

PLANNING MUST BE FLEXIBLE, YET RIGOROUS

Although meticulous by nature, planning does not necessarily have to be rigid. A plan must evolve during the course of the workshop, according to the individual and collective needs of participants, as well as the relationships between them. This flexibility is key to the success of a workshop and to participants' development.

This grid is a sample plan for a session of 15 workshops, broken down into two three-hour workshops a week. Modify the grid according to the circumstances and situation in your community.

PLANNING A SOCIAL CIRCUS SESSION

GENERAL OBJECTIVE OF THE SESSION: For example: Create a cohesive group. – Improve relations between participants and their community. – Improve relations between girls and boys. – Boost the self-affirmation of participants. – Encourage participants to take control of their own bodies. – Raise awareness about HIV prevention. – Help participants reduce their drug or alcohol use.

WEEK	TECHNICAL GOALS <i>Circus lessons</i>	SOCIAL GOALS <i>Life lessons</i>
1	<p>BLOCK 1 – INTRODUCING CIRCUS TECHNIQUES 4 weeks</p> <p><i>Introduce circus techniques as they relate to the goal to form a group.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate the physical abilities of participants. Use increasingly challenging activities, all the while being sensitive to aspects that require physical contact. 	<p>BLOCK 1 – FORMING A GROUP 4 weeks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcome participants, and foster mutual support and new relationships. Evaluate the group's composition and its needs (e.g. leaders? interaction models?). Establish a code of conduct.
2		
3		
4		
5	<p>BLOCK 2 – GAINING A GREATER COMMAND OF CIRCUS TECHNIQUES 6 weeks</p> <p><i>Teach participants a greater command of circus techniques, while fostering group cohesion.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take a deeper look at all techniques. Intensify the use of techniques requiring greater trust (e.g. pyramid building or hand-to-hand). Emphasize creative exercises and theatrics. 	<p>BLOCK 2 – ESTABLISHING GROUP COHESION 6 weeks</p> <p><i>Continue with exercises that foster cohesion and togetherness in the group.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stimulate interaction during formal and informal gatherings. Feature exercises promoting personal and social growth (e.g. self-affirmation, confidence building). Help develop a certain degree of physical comfort between participants. Use the group's resources for learning and social support.
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11	<p>BLOCK 3 – CONCENTRATING ON ONE CIRCUS TECHNIQUE 3 weeks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create numbers for the performance. Rehearse and run through numbers. 	<p>BLOCK 3 – INTENSIFYING THE GROUP PROCESS 3 weeks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage the development of skills that contribute to the completion of the group project: manage decision making and stress management for the performance.
12		
13		
14	BLOCK 4 – FINAL RUN-THROUGH AND PERFORMANCE	
15	<p>BLOCK 5 – REVIEWING WHAT'S BEEN LEARNED 1 workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the performance (e.g. watching a video recording). Evaluate the techniques learned. 	<p>BLOCK 5 – REVIEWING THE GROUP'S EXPERIENCE 1 workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the progress of the group and individuals. Share information for the next session or refer to other resources.

This grid is a sample plan for a three-hour workshop in the second week of a session.

PLANNING A SOCIAL CIRCUS WORKSHOP

WORKSHOP: #2	LENGTH: 3 hours	ATTENDANCE: 7 girls 14 boys
INSTRUCTOR(S): Mamoudou, Genevieve	COMMUNITY WORKER(S): Alice	OTHERS: n/a

GENERAL OBJECTIVE OF THE SESSION:

Change the community's perception of the participants and the participants' perception of the community.

TECHNICAL GOALS FOR THE WORKSHOP

Circus lessons

- Establish a warm-up ritual.
- Explore some of the circus arts: pyramid building, hand-to-hand, juggling.

SOCIAL GOALS FOR THE WORKSHOP

Life lessons

- Create links and encourage new relationships (group and trust games).
- Motivate the group, have fun and foster success.

SCHEDULE

APPROX. LENGTH	ACTIVITIES <i>(list all activities, including the greeting, breaks and the review/closing)</i>	ACTIVITY LEADER(S) <i>(first names)</i>	WHAT'S NEEDED FOR THE ACTIVITY <i>(materials, safety, warm-up, creating teams, discussion of themes, etc.)</i>	ACTIVITY COMPLETED?	
				YES	NO
10 min.	Greet participants	All	Be mentally prepared to begin	X	
5 min.	Introduce the workshop	Alice		X	
15 min.	Name game: Jump higher (use names to encourage them)	Mamoudou	Chalk	X	
15 min.	Game: The trio gets carried away	Genevieve	3 balls, 3 teams	X	
15 min.	Warm-up	Mamoudou, Genevieve	Gym mat	X	
20 min.	Build team spirit: Under the Rope!	Alice	3 teams, gym mat, rope	X	
10 min.	Break	All	Juice and snacks, assisting the participants and encouraging informal talk	X	
45 min.	2 alternating activities: Juggling and hand-to-hand	Mamoudou (juggling) Genevieve (hand-to-hand)	2 teams, balls, gym mat Mamoudou=responsible for timing + rotation of groups	X	
25 min.	Pyramid building	Genevieve	Mat, notebook, drawings of pyramids		X
5 min.	Putting equipment away	All		X	
10 min.	Review: Talking Club (juggling club as microphone)	Alice	1 juggling club	X	
5 min.	Closing	Mamoudou	1 strong rope, the ends knotted tightly together		X

FOLLOW-UP

GENERAL COMMENTS:

(group dynamic, challenges faced, social interventions, modifications to consider, etc.)

- Nice group dynamic, numerous bonds. When creating smaller groups, remember to separate friends and allies.
- For some, hand-to-hand exercises create a bit of discomfort, shyness. Find a more comfortable range.
- In the next workshop, allow more time for pyramid building.
- Minor intervention required when some participants made negative comments about others.
- Check in with Valentino, who left during the break.
- Jonathan and Rebecca tend to shy away from the group.

OBJECTIVES FOR THE NEXT WORKSHOP:

- Continue with juggling and hand-to-hand (progression). Introduce pyramids and rola bola.
- Continue to encourage ties between participants. Make a particular effort to integrate Jonathan and Rebecca.



The technical goals of circus are set in accordance with the desired social goals.

Evaluating the physical and psychological condition of participants will help generate a plan that is better adapted to their individual needs.

Implementing progressive and well-paced educational activities is an important component of the learning process.

Planning a workshop promotes a stronger bond between the tandem animation team, participants and all others involved in the project, and minimizes the need for discipline.

Planning is not synonymous with rigidity, so it's crucial to demonstrate flexibility.

FACILITATION AND GROUP MANAGEMENT

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this module, the instructor and community worker will be able to do the following:

- 1. Identify their strengths, as well as areas needing improvement.**
- 2. Recognize the elements that create a strong group dynamic.**
- 3. Define the strategies for managing a group and encouraging interaction.**
- 4. Determine which elements can be used to stimulate a climate of self-regulation in the group.**

The first time I visited the Atikamekw community of Manawan, it was winter. The community worker that was supposed to meet us couldn't be there because there had been a suicide in the community. We decided to run the workshop anyway to give the kids an activity that would help keep them distracted. My assistant and I soon found ourselves standing in front of 40 youth in a school gymnasium. They were all sitting, they spoke only Atikamekw, they were laughing at us and they refused to take off their boots. They were testing us, of course. It took us 30 minutes to get them to take off their boots. We were able to identify the leader and convinced him to take off his boots. Once his boots were off, two seconds later, everyone else had their boots off too. It was instantaneous. Oftentimes, getting the leaders involved will yield positive results.

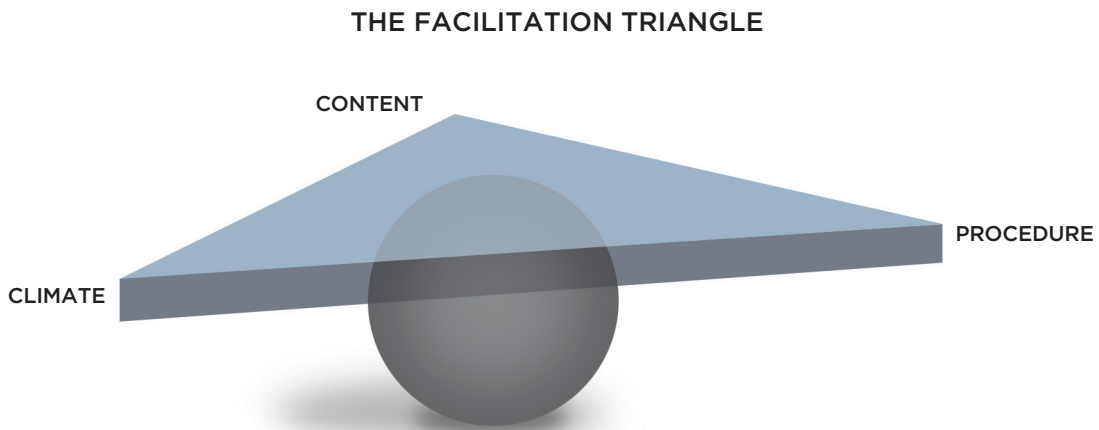
Karine Lavoie, Social Circus Instructor
Cirque du Monde, Montreal





THE FACILITATION TRIANGLE

The main role of instructors and community workers who are facilitating a group of participants is to guide the group as it gradually matures and assumes responsibility. To ensure the optimal conditions for sharing the knowledge necessary to help participants mature, instructors and community workers must carefully plan content, adopt a process that is conducive to sharing knowledge and be sensitive to the socio-affective climate within the group.



• Content

The group's intended goal promotes cohesion and is the main driver of motivation and development. The instructor and community worker must ensure that lessons and ideas circulate properly and are understood by all. To do so, they are responsible for the following:

- Defining content
- Making content accessible to all
- Creating bonds
- Summarizing and synthesizing acquired knowledge, lessons and opinions

• Procedure

The methods and rules adopted to help the group achieve its goals must be clear and accepted by all members of the group. The instructor and community worker are responsible for the following:

- Stimulating participation
- Curbing energy levels when they escalate
- Managing time
- Encouraging individual participation

PROBLEMATIC BEHAVIOURS

The following table presents an overview of different individual behaviours labelled as problematic. These behaviours hinder group development and create roadblocks in the pursuit of the intended goal. This is why these behaviours are, in general, severely judged by other members of the group. Sooner or later, members displaying these behaviours will be ignored or rejected, unless the group uses their attitude to express certain feelings of malaise and thus assign those members a dysfunctional role.

When these behaviours are observed, the facilitator must take a central role and structure discussions that will enable all members to participate in a more enriching manner. This sometimes means organizing activities in subgroups or directing special attention to each individual for a fixed period of time in order to reduce the amount of space occupied by certain members. On other occasions, it might be more appropriate to make a comment, while being careful not to contradict the opinions of the members concerned or belittle them in front of others. Some examples include: “Your ideas are interesting, but I’d like to know what others think”; “I get the feeling that you’re insisting on this because you want others to agree with you, but I would like to hear other points of view on this question”; and “The discussion seems to be slowing down right now. Does anyone have anything to contribute and get it moving again?”

CATEGORIES OF PROBLEMATIC INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOURS AND PROFILES

CATEGORY	PROFILE	CHARACTERISTICS	INTERVENTIONS
The Deterrents	The Chatterbox	Thinks out loud, talks non-stop	
	The Distractor	Derails the conversation, abruptly changes the topic	
	The Fusspot	Gets bogged down in the details	
	The Clown	Avoids all serious topics, turns everything into a joke	
	The Specialist	Acts like an expert who knows everything	
The Opponents	The Mule	Stubbornly sticks to ideas	
	The Objector	Criticizes non-stop	
	The Strong Will	Imposes ideas, knows everything	
	The Aggressor	Instills a hostile atmosphere	
On the sidelines	The Downer	Does not speak due to disagreement	
	The Wallflower	Lacks confidence	
The Dead Weights	The Snob	Has no interest in debate	
	The Yawner	Feels indifferent	
	The Conformist	Has no personal opinions	

FACILITATOR OBSERVATION GRID

Circle the number that best represents your assessment of each facilitation element.

	Not applicable	Unsatisfactory	Weak	Good	Very good	Excellent
VERBAL COMMUNICATION						
Clarity and precision of instructions	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Relevance of interventions during facilitation	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
PARAVERBAL COMMUNICATION						
Tone of voice	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Rhythm of speech	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION						
Physical presence	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Gestures	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Eye contact	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIOURS						
Equal sharing of facilitation tasks	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to adapt to the group	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Ability to form a trusting bond	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
FACILITATION STRUCTURE						
Introduction	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Sequencing	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Conclusion	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Evaluation	N/A	1	2	3	4	5
Time management	N/A	1	2	3	4	5

Comments

Two things I liked about the facilitation:

Two areas that need improvement:



When facilitating, equal attention must be paid to content, procedures and climate.

The use of facilitation strategies that foster participation help create and maintain a positive group dynamic.

It's important to respect the development rhythm and culture of each group.

When faced with difficult situations, instructors and community workers must react quickly in order to prevent deterioration of the group dynamic and conflicts between participants.

PARTNERSHIPS

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this module, the instructor and community worker will be able to do the following:

- 1. Identify the responsibilities of instructors and community workers in a partner relationship.**
- 2. Recognize the benefits and challenges of working in a partnership.**

In Montreal, Cirque du Monde could not have had such a remarkable impact without the huge collaboration of our four partners: C.A.C.T.U.S. Montréal, Le Bon Dieu dans la rue, En Marge 12-17 and Plein Milieu. Although these organizations have different approaches, client bases and operating procedures, they still found a common platform for the Cirque du Monde workshops. Their participants came together to create one united group; community workers helped each other to cover the workshop time slots; everyone agreed on a code of conduct and even established joint recruitment strategies. Briefly put, all the partners deployed their resources and made the necessary compromises to ensure that workshops went well. In the end, all their work enabled youth to benefit from high-quality social circus workshops.

Michel Lafortune, Social Circus Director
Cirque du Soleil, Montreal





A strong partnership allows for actions with greater scope.

A partnership must be win-win for both parties involved.

Having an open and collaborative attitude is the most important factor in the success of any partnership.

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this module, the instructor and community worker will be able to do the following:

- 1. Understand the components and evolution of a conflict.**
- 2. Define strategies for managing conflict and diminishing its effects.**
- 3. Determine the steps for resolving conflict or mediation.**

If I sense there's something happening in the group, it's important for me to take the time and sit down with them. If someone is suffering, we sit down together to see what can be done to alleviate that suffering. It's automatic now: they know that when I call a circle, it's time to talk. They help one another quite a bit, and I frequently base my interventions on this fact. We once had a huge crisis in the group while preparing a show to be given in Montreal in November. One of the young men, from the beginning of the school year, was always showing up high. He smoked pot and drank beer. The other youth didn't want him participating in the workshops. I told them that if we wanted to help him, we had to accept him regardless. This tactic helped him, and he showed up to each workshop a little less drunk. But one week before the show, another youth in the group told him, "You're just a druggie." He didn't like that, the situation got worse, and everyone wanted to quit. I was the only one leading the group – there were twelve of them in my care. I was discouraged. Finally, I told them, "We've started something. We've put together a really good show. We should at least finish it together. After that, you can do what you like, you can continue with circus or you can quit. But I just want you to know what it feels like to finish what you've started." They managed the crisis themselves, and it worked out well. I'm trying to teach them tactics for managing conflicts.

Alice Echaquan, Special Education Technician
Cirque du Monde, Manawan



HOW TO INTERVENE IN A CONFLICT SITUATION

In the case of a group conflict, instructors and community workers must get actively involved in order to find a satisfactory solution. This solution will not always be the fastest or the easiest option, so it's important to focus on finding a meaningful solution that will help everyone move forward and learn. There could be numerous issues involved in a conflict: for example, reconciling the parties involved or finding a compromise, common ground or solution that will enable the whole group to continue. Instructors and community workers are thus asked to play the role of mediator in order to maintain stability within the group.

There is a general consensus on how to approach a conflict situation. This intervention happens in three stages. The following is a detailed explanation of each stage to help facilitate the mediation of a conflict.

Stage 1: Explain personal view of the facts.

- All parties must describe how they view the situation by presenting the observable facts, consequences that affect them, their personal interpretation of the causes and needs they wish to fulfill.
- Each party must listen attentively to the other's point of view.

Stage 2: Encourage mutual understanding.

- All parties paraphrase their understanding of the other's problem.
- Positions are clarified during a question period.
- Paraphrasing is necessary when there's a misunderstanding.

Stage 3: Look for a solution.

- Parties explore numerous possible solutions (e.g. procedures, rules of conduct).
- Parties evaluate the possibilities and identify the win-win solution most apt to prevent future conflicts.
- The best solution is agreed upon and eventually implemented.

Throughout this process, each party must stay focused on the issues at hand rather than attack the other party. Comments should not allude to the past, unless they contribute to a better understanding of the present circumstances. The proposed changes must address observable behaviours. Also, each party must use body language consistent with what is being said. At all times, the meeting must be adjourned if the discussion starts to escalate.





There are always two parties involved in a conflict: the responsibility never lies with just one.

The role of the instructor and community worker does not involve finding the quickest and easiest solution, but rather finding the most appropriate solution that will provide everyone with a learning opportunity.

The energy put into avoiding a conflict is sometimes greater than the energy required to resolve it.

When resolving a conflict, both parties must get involved and show good faith.

INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS

OBJECTIVES

At the end of this module, the instructor and community worker will be able to do the following:

- 1. Recognize the skills that promote intercultural communication.**
- 2. Adapt the social circus programme to the cultural context in which it will be delivered.**
- 3. Find tools to better adapt to and be aware of the cultural realities experienced by the group targeted by the intervention.**

There's this game called Zip Zap Bong. It's a concentration game to which you can add other rules. I added one called Disco Disco Time: whenever a participant made a mistake, all the others had to clap their hands, tap their feet and sing, "Disco, disco, disco time." The participant who made the mistake then had to walk into the middle of the circle and do some dance steps. In general, it helps youth concentrate more, because they don't want to dance in front of everyone. It works really well in Europe and North America. But not in Brazil! Young Brazilians so love dancing that for them, it became a reward, and they would make mistakes on purpose just so they could show off their dance moves.

Emmanuel Bochud, Social Circus Trainer
Cirque du Soleil, Montreal





CULTURE IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL CIRCUS

When instructors and community workers are asked to work in communities with a different socio-cultural background than their own, intercultural relations can represent a huge challenge. Discovering a new culture means learning about other ways of being and doing, which inevitably leads us to redefine who we are and who we want to be. Before beginning this process, it's important to understand the notion of culture.

DEFINITION OF CULTURE

Culture can be defined as a set of human characteristics that are not innate; rather, they are learned while living in a society. Some, such as language, behaviours and customs, are easily identifiable, whereas others, such as worldview, beliefs, values and mindset, are less evident. The latter nonetheless acts as a filter that constantly influences our perceptions.

KOHL'S CULTURAL ICEBERG MODEL



INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS

In today's world, it's become increasingly useful to know how to communicate with those from a different culture. To learn this skill, we must leverage our intelligence and creativity, while also employing certain basic skills that we will now discuss.

Learn to know yourself:

- Explore your own culture as well as that of others.
- Understand how your own culture influences how you interpret.

Steer clear of stereotypes:

- Evaluate how accurately you perceive reality.
- Be wary of generalizations: Don't assume that accent or colour of skin, for example, imply a certain set of values or behaviours.

Avoid snap judgments:

- Take the time to analyze a situation before jumping to conclusions.
- Ask questions and seek out additional information to increase understanding.

Discover others' frames of reference:

- Be open to learning from others.
- Look for more than one interpretation when dealing with intercultural communication.

Learn to negotiate:

- Identify similarities between cultures, rather than focusing on differences.
- Try to find an explanation that enables parties to step back from the problem.
- Look for a compromise to resolve differences.

Develop communication skills:

- Formulate messages that are precise, organized and structured.
- Learn how to use your voice, as well as your body, to convey a message.
- Explain the verbal and non-verbal messages being sent.
- Take the communication context into consideration: be aware of the moment and place in which it is taking place.

Take the time to communicate:

- Learn to respect the communication rhythm and style of each culture.
- Be patient: time can be a powerful ally when it comes to intercultural communication.
- Try to establish ties with those that play a large role in the social universe of these individuals.





Every kind of culture has its own rules, codes, regulations and values.

Social circus can offer opportunities for inclusion and cultural openness; a place where differences converge into a common goal.

It is important for instructors and community workers to recognize their own cultural principles and values, as well as those of the community in which they'll be working.

Being open to differences and diversity means being open to all differences, whether it be cultural, physical, intellectual, social, economic, ethnic, gender, sexual orientation or others.

APPENDICES

SOCIAL CIRCUS GLOSSARY OF *CIRQUE DU MONDE*

The following glossary provides definitions specific to the social circus terminology, as used by *Cirque du Monde*. These definitions ensure common understanding of the terms and expressions used in all educational documentation produced by *Cirque du Monde*.

At-risk individual

Individual deprived of one or more security factors that normally enable persons to assume their basic responsibilities in full enjoyment of their fundamental rights. At-risk individuals are often victims of socio-economic hardships, including poverty or lack of schooling. Many of these individuals have difficulty developing a balanced social and family life, and because they typically live on the edges of society, at-risk populations can suffer from fragile mental or physical health as well. Drug and alcohol addictions are also frequent.

Cirque du Monde

The group of young creators and ordinary citizens who contributed to the birth of *Cirque du Soleil* never forgot where they came from. Rather than attempting to embrace a wide range of causes, the *Cirque du Soleil* chose to commit itself to at-risk youth through its social circus program, *Cirque du Monde*.

With the objective of encouraging the personal and social development of these young people, *Cirque du Monde*'s actions take the form of social circus workshops, training, support and consulting, networking and raising awareness.

Code of conduct

Shared set of rules of conduct that are democratically agreed upon by the tandem facilitation team and the participants at the beginning of each social circus session. They are established to ensure that workshops run smoothly. These rules address the premises and equipment (storage, maintenance, repairs, loans, using materials), as well as schedules, safety procedures, etc. Simply put, the code of conduct establishes the foundation for respectful communication and outlines consequences for infractions.

Social circus

Social circus is an innovative social intervention approach, which uses the circus arts as a tool for fostering the personal and social development of at-risk individuals.

It targets various at-risk groups living in precarious personal and social situations, including street or detained youth and female survivors of violence. The primary goal of this approach is not merely to learn circus arts. Rather, it's designed to help participants achieve personal and social development by nurturing their self-esteem and trust in others, teaching them social skills, inspiring them to become active citizens, and helping them to express their creativity and explore their potential.

Social circus is a powerful catalyst for creating social change, because it helps marginalized people to assume citizenship within a community and enrich that community with their personality.

Social circus community worker

Social intervention specialists who generally come from the local organization. Their main role is to intervene with participants in social circus workshops, and guide them through the process of personal and social development.

The social circus community worker has roots in the community, which helps him or her to engage and maintain the interest of participants for the social circus project, as well as to establish a trusting relationship with them. The community worker is also called upon to work in tandem with a social circus instructor in complementarity and harmony.

One of the community worker's duties is to prepare the social circus session: i.e. recruit participants, find suitable premises and plan the workshops. During workshops, he or she main responsibility is to develop bonds of trust with participants, an indispensable condition for the effectiveness of the social circus approach. The community worker must also ensure that the content and pace of the workshops are adapted to the capacities and needs of participants and that these elements fit in with the particular character of the community. Lastly, this person must make sure everyone understands and respects the rules of the workshops. This last aspect is crucial to the development of a trusting relationship, as it conveys the importance of mutual respect, fairness and safety for all.

Cirque du Monde educational material

To support their training activities, *Cirque du Soleil* wanted to provide trainers, community workers and instructors with suitable training material. Three educational documents have already been completed: *Community Worker's Guide*, *Basic Techniques in Circus Arts* and *Social Circus Trainer's Guide*.

Community Worker's Guide: This document is a summary of the social circus approach, as well as a practical guide, and will help community workers with the fundamentals and guiding principles of this mode of intervention, as well as support them in organizing, planning and evaluating social circus workshops.

Basic Techniques in Circus Arts: As both a technical guide and an educational tool, this document illustrates 177 technical elements drawn from 17 basic circus arts disciplines. Accompanied by video documents, this work offers in-depth expertise and technical content that will enable the delivery of progressive and specialized instruction in a safe environment.

Social Circus Trainer's Guide: Designed for trainers, this 14-module document covers the essential components of basic training for social circus instructors and community workers. Each module outlines objectives, key messages and testimonials from social circus practitioners. It also provides pertinent reference texts and facilitation activities to help training participants explore the educational aspects of the social circus approach developed by *Cirque du Monde*. The *Social Circus Trainer's Guide* comprises the following modules: social circus, the roles of instructor and community worker, at-risk youth, ethics, safety, creativity, communication, teamwork, educational approach, workshop planning, facilitation and group management, partnerships, conflict management and intercultural relations.

Participant Handbook: Both a notebook and a reference manual, the *Participant Handbook* aims to equip the instructors and community workers taking part in *Cirque du Monde* training sessions. For each thematic addressed during the training sessions, the *Participant Handbook* lists the objectives, basic notions and related key messages. The appendix contains a collection of various documents and practical grids related to social circus project planning and follow-up.

Social circus instructor

Circus artist whose main role is to teach various circus disciplines to social circus workshop participants.

Instructors must adapt their educational approach to suit the unique needs of the community, participants and local organizations they will be working with. In this role, instructors will also be required to work in tandem with a social circus community worker in complementarity and harmony.

The instructor's main duties consist of: teaching circus techniques; organizing, planning, facilitating and evaluating workshops; and, coordinating the project with the community worker and the local partner. Other responsibilities include establishing a good relationship with partner organizations, interacting with the community in order to encourage community members to change their perception of workshop participants, and occasionally participating in social interventions – all the while being conscious of the social impact of their own actions. The instructor is a true artist, but one who chooses to use his or her talents to help at-risk individuals.

Social circus session

Series of social circus workshops delivered to the same group of (20 or so) participants. The session usually ends with a public performance.

Generally, a session lasts between two and ten months, and it tends to follow the school calendar. Workshops are planned according to the group participating and available resources. The goal of the session is to help participants achieve personal and social development by nurturing their self-esteem and trust in others, as well as helping them to express their creativity and explore their potential.

Following the public performance, participants gather for one last group discussion to talk about the future and how they can apply what they learned during the session to their real lives. In some ways: How to turn circus lessons into life lessons?

Social circus trainer

Professional who teaches circus instructors and community workers the basic or advanced concepts of social circus.

Trainers are usually circus artists or community workers with a strong background in social circus. They are required to lead training sessions in tandem with another circus specialist/social intervention specialist. Together, they can more concretely illustrate what it means to work in a complementary way. Trainers use activities and moments for reflection to help instructors and community workers develop a clear understanding of the social circus approach, all the while adapting their teaching to better suit the cultural and social realities of the training group and of their community.

Cirque du Monde Training

In 2000, *Cirque du Monde* created a training program to help social circus instructors and community workers improve their educational skills. Launched in partnership with local organizations, this *Cirque du Monde Training* was designed to develop a high level of personal and professional ethics, share the fundamentals of this innovative and participatory educational approach, create a bridge between the lessons taught and the realities of the community, and position the circus arts as a unique personal development tool.

Since the program was launched, more than 3,000 instructors and community workers from over 30 countries worldwide have participated in *Cirque du Monde Training*. In fact, this program has impacted more than 100 different organizations.

A social circus training session is generally given by two trainers (one circus instructor and one community worker), who lead a group of about 20-25 social circus instructors and community workers. This session lasts about a week and offers a series of activities built around specific themes, such as: roles within the tandem facilitation team, working with at-risk youth, ethics, safety, creativity, communication, teamwork, educational approach, workshop planning, working with partners, conflict management and intercultural relations. Training might also include periods of time focussing on how to teach the circus arts and group games.

Social circus workshop

Given once or twice a week, social circus workshops generally run an average of three hours long. These workshops, which typically have 20 or so participants, are usually led by a tandem facilitation team composed of one social circus instructor and one community worker.

Workshops introduce participants to various circus techniques (juggling, acrobatics, stilts, unicycle, trampoline, etc.), as well as theatrical and clown acting. Participants also take part in discussion periods at the beginning and end of the workshops in order to share their opinions on various topics and learn how to express themselves.

Tandem facilitation

Within the social circus context, tandem refers to the pair formed by the social circus instructor and the community worker, who work together in complementarity and harmony.

The educational approach favoured by *Cirque du Monde* is based on this facilitation model.

PLANNING A SOCIAL CIRCUS SESSION

GENERAL OBJECTIVE OF THE SESSION:

WEEK	TECHNICAL GOALS <i>Circus lessons</i>	SOCIAL GOALS <i>Life lessons</i>
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		

ACTIVITY



ACTIVITY

THEME

SEQUENCE

REFLECTION

ACTIVITY



ACTIVITY

THEME

1. EXPERIENCE

Something's happening!

Lined writing area for the '1. EXPERIENCE' section, containing 10 horizontal blue lines.



4. APPLICATION

What is the connection with my practice?

Lined writing area for the '4. APPLICATION' section, containing 10 horizontal blue lines.

2. OBSERVATION

What happened?

Lined writing area for the '2. OBSERVATION' section, containing 10 horizontal blue lines.



3. INTEGRATION

Why did it happen?

Lined writing area for the '3. INTEGRATION' section, containing 10 horizontal blue lines.

GAME PROPOSAL

NAME OF THE GAME:

LENGTH OF GAME:

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:

MAIN OBJECTIVE:

(FOR EXAMPLE: WARM-UP, TEAM WORK, COORDINATION, CONCENTRATION, ENERGIZER, OPENING, CLOSING, ETC.)

MATERIAL:

SEQUENCE:

COMMENTS AND GAME ALTERNATIVES:

NAME OF THE PARTICIPANT PROPOSING THE GAME:

GAME PROPOSAL

NAME OF THE GAME:

LENGTH OF GAME:

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS:

MAIN OBJECTIVE:

(FOR EXAMPLE: WARM-UP, TEAM WORK, COORDINATION, CONCENTRATION, ENERGIZER, OPENING, CLOSING, ETC.)

MATERIAL:

SEQUENCE:

COMMENTS AND GAME ALTERNATIVES:

NAME OF THE PARTICIPANT PROPOSING THE GAME:

Ever since Cirque du Soleil has had the resources to follow its dreams, it has chosen to be involved with at-risk youth through its social circus program, Cirque du Monde. With the objective of encouraging the personal and social development of these young people, Cirque du Monde's actions take the form of social circus workshops, training, support and consulting, networking and raising awareness.

Most recently, in order to support the development of social circus, Cirque du Monde has invested in the production of a series of educational tools. The Participant Handbook is an integral part of this series and is based on the expertise developed by Cirque du Soleil and its numerous partners and collaborators since 1995.

Both a notebook and a reference manual, the Participant Handbook aims to prepare the instructors and community workers taking part in Cirque du Monde training sessions. For each thematic addressed during a training session, the Participant Handbook lists objectives, basic notions and related key messages. In the appendix, various documents and practical grids related to social circus project planning and follow-up are also presented.

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL™

