

SOCIAL CIRCUS TRAINER'S GUIDE

BASIC TRAINING



Version April 2013

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL™



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FOREWORD

Cirque du Soleil[™] is an international company from Quebec dedicated to the creation, production and distribution of artistic works. Our mission is to invoke the imagination, provoke the senses and evoke people's emotions. Ever since it has had the resources to follow its dreams and to present shows around the world, *Cirque du Soleil* has chosen to be involved in communities, and, more particularly, with youth at risk. Currently focusing its attention on more global issues such as the fight against poverty, the **Global Citizenship Service of Cirque du Soleil**, in collaboration with its partners, is involved in nearly 80 communities worldwide.

The beginning of the 1990s saw the emergence of the idea of creating an intervention approach by using circus arts as an educational alternative to help at-risk youth, an approach that today has come to be known as **social circus**. As part of this trend, *Cirque du Soleil* and the international cooperation agency Jeunesse du Monde set up the **Cirque du Monde**[™] program, offering its first workshops in 1995. By 2010, more than 30 sites, spread over five continents, were involved in this program.

Interest in social circus has been steadily increasing over the last 15 years, thanks in large part to the leadership and financial and human involvement of *Cirque du Soleil*. We are now witnessing a profusion of innovative social intervention projects using the arts and aimed at different groups facing a wide range of problems (youth with mental-health problems, women survivors of violence, prison inmates and refugees, the physically disabled). These projects are attracting growing interest from more traditional sectors, such as education, mental health and the courts, which see them as a creative and dynamic form of social intervention. Finally, the academic community, through their various university research groups, is also showing interest in exploring and further developing a knowledge base around this emerging approach.

In an effort to assist and abet this development, *Cirque du Soleil* created a social circus training program in 2000 aimed at circus instructors and community workers. These instructors and community workers interact with thousands of young people, using the circus arts to help them regain their self-confidence, change their life path and grow both personally and socially.

Developing the educational skills required of social circus instructors and community workers is thus understood to be a necessary step for the long-term continuity of the *Cirque du Monde* program and crucial for encouraging the development of social circus in other networks. In fact, it was the difficulty of finding circus instructors able to work in a social context, as well as the need to improve the skills of those already involved in the program and the desire to connect existing projects, that inspired this initiative.

The years spent in the field for *Cirque du Monde* engendered certain convictions that motivated the creation of this program:

- This approach to dealing with at-risk youth is pertinent and innovative, and should be consolidated and disseminated.
- Instructors and community workers must have advanced technical and social skills to establish their credibility and maintain participants' interest.



- Instructors and community workers must adopt behaviours and attitudes well-suited to working with at-risk individuals.
- It's important to connect with other organizations developing social circus projects elsewhere in the world and offer training to their instructors and community workers.

Since the beginning of the program, these training courses have enabled hundreds of instructors and community workers to familiarize themselves with the social circus approach. Faced with such widespread interest and in response to the many expressed needs of our collaborators and partners, it became necessary for *Cirque du Soleil* - via the *Social Circus Service* - to provide trainers, community workers and instructors with training material suited to the expanding role of social circus. This guide is part of a series of educational tools designed to enable the numerous organizations interested in social circus to benefit from the expertise developed by *Cirque du Soleil* and its partners since 1995.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION		7
TRAINING AND THE TRAINER CONCEPTS, ROLES AND SCHEDULING		10
PART 1		
MODULE 1	SOCIAL CIRCUS	26
TEXT	The Circus and Social Intervention	29
ACTIVITY	What Is Circus?	40
MODULE 2	THE ROLES OF INSTRUCTOR AND COMMUNITY WORKER	44
TEXTS	The Community Worker-Instructor Tandem, the Mainstay of Social Circus	47
	The Instructor's Role in Social Circus	55
ACTIVITY	Profiles	58
MODULE 3	AT-RISK YOUTH	62
TEXTS	Working with At-risk Youth	65
	At-risk Youth – Here and Abroad	78
	The Main Stages of Development in Young People	83
ACTIVITIES	The Scale	93
	Group Travel	96
MODULE 4	ETHICS	100
TEXT	Code of Ethics for Social Circus Instructors	103
ACTIVITIES	Snap Judgment	108
	Sabotage	111
MODULE 5	SAFETY	114
TEXTS	Safety in Social Circus Workshops	117
	Safety Measures for Social Circus Workshops	122
ACTIVITIES	Pyramids	127
	Sketches	129
MODULE 6	CREATIVITY	134
TEXTS	Creativity in the Social Circus Context	137
	The Role of Performance in Social Circus	142
ACTIVITIES	Depicting a Moving Object	145
	Be Creative!	147
MODULE 7	COMMUNICATION	152
TEXTS	The Communication Skills of a Good Educator	155
	The Elements of Non-verbal Communication	161
ACTIVITIES	Drawing Back-to-back	164
	Bottle and String	168



MODULE 8	TEAMWORK	172
TEXTS	Working as a Team	175
	The Flow of Energy for Good Teamwork	179
ACTIVITIES	Squares Game	182
	Under the Rope!	188
	Drawing for Two	190
PART 2		
MODULE 9	EDUCATIONAL APPROACH	194
TEXTS	The Social Circus Educational Approach	197
	Teaching Skills of the Social Circus Instructor	207
	The Educational Process	214
	Educating for Full Citizenship	216
ACTIVITIES	The Successful Workshop	221
	Coat of Arms	223
MODULE 10	WORKSHOP PLANNING	228
TEXTS	Practical Guide for Community Workers	231
	Preparing for Workshops	240
	Planning Tools	243
ACTIVITIES	Planning Together	250
	The Puzzle	252
MODULE 11	FACILITATION AND GROUP MANAGEMENT	256
TEXTS	Facilitation and Group Management	259
	Managing Problematic Situations	267
	Facilitation Essentials	272
ACTIVITIES	Facilitating a Game	274
	Telling a Story	278
MODULE 12	PARTNERSHIPS	282
TEXTS	The Body and the Soul Supply the Potential, the Community Supplies the Opportunities	285
	Local Organization, Challenges and Responsibilities	293
	Sample Partnership Agreement between a <i>Cirque du Monde</i> Program of <i>Cirque du Soleil</i> and a Community Organization	297
ACTIVITY	Forum Theatre	302
MODULE 13	CONFLICT MANAGEMENT	306
TEXT	Conflict Management	309
ACTIVITY	Conflict under the Big Top	315
MODULE 14	INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS	320
TEXT	Intercultural Basics	323
ACTIVITIES	Anthropologists	329
	Signature	333



INTRODUCTION

Social circus training program

The social circus training program of *Cirque du Soleil* has three parts. **Basic Training for Social Circus Instructors**, the subject of this guide, constitutes the first part. Separated into two parts, this part seeks to prepare circus instructors and community workers to facilitate social circus workshops for at-risk individuals. The second part – **Training for Social Circus Trainers** – was created for experienced instructors and community workers who would like to train other social circus instructors and community workers. Lastly, the flexible **Themed Social Circus Seminars** are offered periodically to deliver specific training on topics that can enrich the practice of social circus.

Basic social circus training

Over a decade ago, we itemized the theoretical and practical know-how that we felt constituted the fundamental skills and knowledge that every social circus instructor and community worker must possess. These items were discussed during meetings organized by the International Network for Social Circus Training (INSCT), and were subsequently tested and validated during hundreds of training sessions delivered in collaboration with our partners in some 22 countries. The definition of this know-how serves to provide a more refined understanding of the language of social circus, an elaboration of innovative concepts, as well as the exploration of new paths for development.

In acquiring this basic know-how, social circus instructors and community workers will be able to practice with mastery what will henceforth be recognized as a real profession. We consider this know-how to make up the essential components of basic training, ultimately allowing greater understanding of the issues surrounding this practice and the creation of a stimulating and safe environment conducive to participants' global development.

Basic social circus training has two parts:

- **Part 1**

The first part of basic training helps instructors and community workers gain a better understanding of the global context of social circus interventions by addressing themes such as *social circus, the roles of instructor and community worker, at-risk youth, ethics, safety* and *creativity*. It also allows instructors and community workers to develop basic facilitation skills by addressing such themes as *communication* and *teamwork*. The lessons of this first part must be acquired before advancing to the second part.

- **Part 2**

The second part of basic training focuses on developing educational and interpersonal skills. Topics covered are: *educational approach, workshop planning, facilitation and group management, partnerships, conflict management* and *intercultural relationships*. Instructors and community workers who pass this second part will have completed their basic training.

Educational approach in the *Trainer's Guide*

The pedagogy underpinning social circus has emerged from numerous discussions between the trainers, instructors and community workers who have facilitated training sessions all over the globe. It has also been influenced by other approaches developed in the fields of education and social intervention.

For the purposes of the basic training of instructors and community workers, the educational approach promoted by this guide is experiential learning. This approach is based on concrete learning situations that emphasize participation and the knowledge that participants already possess. In this model, trainers serve as facilitators as opposed to experts. Thus, trainers must learn how to ask the right question at the right time in order to help instructors and community workers feel or share an experience, observe, reflect, engage in dialogue and extract lessons from their experiences that can be integrated into their practice. Instructors and community workers participating in this training will thus learn by experiencing the components of learning.

Tandem facilitation, a mainstay of social circus, is also the approach favoured in the basic training of instructors and community workers. The activities in this guide have a specific, predetermined theme and are generally led by two trainers: one circus artist and one community worker. This approach, with the role of each facilitator clearly defined, helps to illustrate concretely the complementary skills that distinguish social circus.

How the guide is structured

Each of the 14 modules included in basic training has the following elements:

- **Testimonial from a social circus practitioner**

Individuals who work as instructors, community workers or trainers speak about their experiences in terms of the theme being addressed in that particular module.

- **Introduction**

Main ideas to be presented in the module are placed in context and summarized.

- **Objectives**

The main learning objectives of the module are outlined.

- **Reference texts**

Each module contains reference texts that provide a knowledge base for the theme being addressed. Some texts were written specifically for social circus training. Others excerpts from existing texts written in other domains, were chosen based on the value and relevance of their content. While some texts offer a more practical point of view, others take a more theoretical approach. This variety of styles allows the guide to deliver concrete information and strategies, while also stimulating deep reflection. Instructors and community workers should read these texts and make use of them according to social circus pedagogy.

- **Aspects to keep in mind**

Reference texts frequently feature additional content in a text box, illuminating the theme being discussed by presenting one or more situations that can lead to ambiguities, awkwardness or even conflicts if they go unaddressed. For each situation, we touch on different aspects that trainers should keep in mind and then offer possible solutions.



- **Activities**

Each module contains one to three facilitation activities, some of which are fun, while others are more reflexive, artistic or even physical. Trainers can choose which activity best addresses the theme being discussed, according to the objectives, group dynamic and other activities being used that day or over the course of the training.

The proposed activities are aligned with the four stages of the experiential learning approach: experience, observation, integration and application.¹ For each stage of the experiential cycle, trainers will use the suggested questions – or even reword the questions – to help the group reach its objectives.

Each activity closes with a section offering trainers additional relevant information. These tips touch on a variety of subjects, ranging from practical advice for keeping the activity running smoothly to thoughtful commentary that could stimulate discussion.

Trainers should supplement the activities in this guide with other types of activities that will promote the basic components of social circus, including energizing games, trust games and activities with circus techniques (e.g. how to use juggling in the context of social circus).

- **Key messages**

The key messages are conclusions that should be derived from the module and retained by instructors and community workers. The trainers must do their best to emphasize these messages.

In developing this educational tool, we wanted to provide trainers with a clear direction. This guide does not prescribe a strict formula that must be followed to the letter. Rather, it is both authoritative and flexible, offering a framework for reflection so that trainers become more involved in the learning process. In reading the texts and acquiring the facilitation techniques, trainers learn how to identify the key elements to be shared and how to adapt them to the cultural and social context in which they are working. We believe that this content, created specifically for trainers, will feed this approach and help it reach its full potential, ensuring its ongoing development and ultimately contributing to the training of better social circus instructors and community workers.

¹ See the section entitled “The Experiential Learning Cycle” in this introduction, p. 11.



TRAINING AND THE TRAINER CONCEPTS, ROLES AND SCHEDULING



This document was created specifically for social circus trainers to help them better fulfil their professional duties. *Training and the Trainer: Concepts, Roles and Scheduling* goes beyond the thematic content contained in the guide's 14 modules. In the following pages, you'll find some specific elements relating to the trainer's role and to the *Social Circus Basic Training Program of Cirque du Soleil*. The first section covers basic training notions that apply well to the context of social circus. The second section explains the three roles that trainers must play: teacher, facilitator and role model. The third and last section, more practical than theoretical, touches on the different stages involved in social circus training, from starting the planning process to submitting the final report.



SOME TRAINING NOTIONS

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE PARTICIPANT AND TRAINING BASICS

There are several characteristics that differentiate adult learners, or in our case, adult participants in a social circus workshop from youth participants. As adults learn in a very particular fashion, it's crucial for the trainer to respect certain basic concepts in order to successfully teach them.

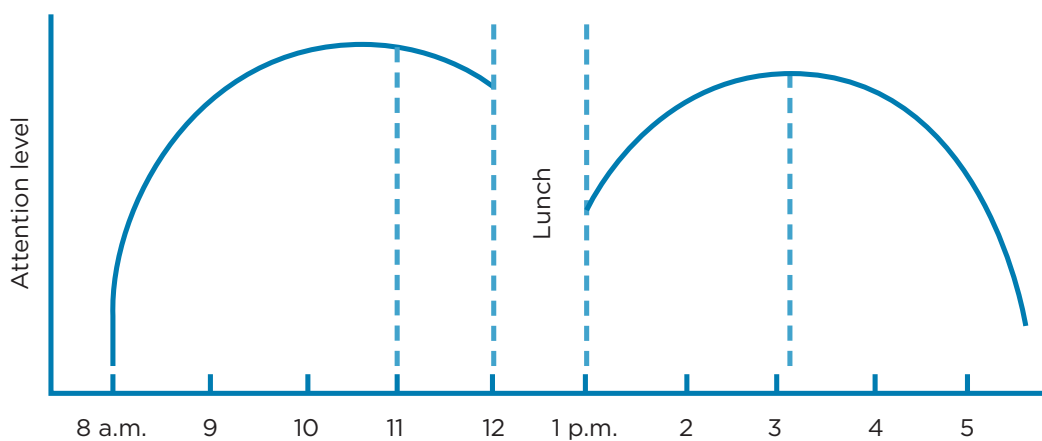
CHARACTERISTICS	TRAINING BASICS
<p>Participants already have work experience Participants already have many life and work experiences, which give them «maturity». This represents an asset to the group and they know it. Participants will relate their experiences to content presented during the session.</p>	<p>Leverage this work experience and build on it Trainers must take the participants' experience into consideration and highlight what they know in order for the whole group to benefit.</p>
<p>Participants place importance on hierarchy Some participants, depending on their social status, will consider themselves to be superior or inferior to others.</p>	<p>Treat participants according to their abilities and not their social status Trainers must treat all participants equally. A trainer should not differentiate according to a participant's title or social class, as each individual has something valuable to contribute.</p>
<p>Participants may feel as if they don't need training In light of their previous experience, some participants may feel as if training won't be useful to them. These participants may seem resistant to the lessons or methods being introduced by the trainer.</p>	<p>Help them to understand why they're there It's important for the trainer to underline the value of the lessons and skills that participants will acquire through this training. The trainer may also get participants involved in the process by asking them to facilitate or propose an activity.</p>
<p>Participants immediately want to «do» Driven by their previous experiences, participants may want to immediately practice what they've learned. They may grow weary of explanations and theoretical presentations.</p>	<p>Allow for practical applications of skills The trainer must allow participants to practice what they have learned by allotting certain periods of time for this throughout the session.</p>
<p>Participants have minds that will stray Participants may have other things on their minds during training. Although they are physically present during the workshop, their thoughts may not be.</p>	<p>Capture and keep their attention Trainers must work to capture and keep the attention of participants by getting them to use their skills and encouraging them to actively participate.</p>
<p>Participants learn in different ways Different people have different ways of learning; some are more visual or auditory, while others respond better to theoretical or practical training. It's also important to remember that participants learn at different speeds.</p>	<p>Vary methods used Trainers must adapt their educational methods to the group and use various techniques to capture and maintain the attention of all learner types. Furthermore, trainers must remember to repeat and reformulate content in order to help participants better retain what's being taught.</p>
<p>Participants want to develop their own network A training session offers a unique opportunity for participants to meet members of other organizations. Naturally, they will want to share and build relationships with others.</p>	<p>Set aside time for exchange Trainers must be aware of this need and set aside times for formal (icebreaker games, discussions about practices, etc.) and informal (group dinners, cocktail hour, etc.) exchanges that will allow participants to meet and connect.</p>



LEVELS OF ALERTNESS AND CONCENTRATION DURING THE TRAINING DAY

The figure below illustrates the different levels of alertness and concentration demonstrated by participants during a training day. Although relatively low at the beginning of the day, levels will slowly increase and peak in the late morning. After lunch, alertness levels will significantly diminish. Stimulated by discussion and activities, levels will once again rise until mid-afternoon, when a new peak will be reached. Following this point, levels will gradually drop until the end of the training day.

WHEN IS THE BEST TIME OF DAY FOR LEARNING?



Training basics

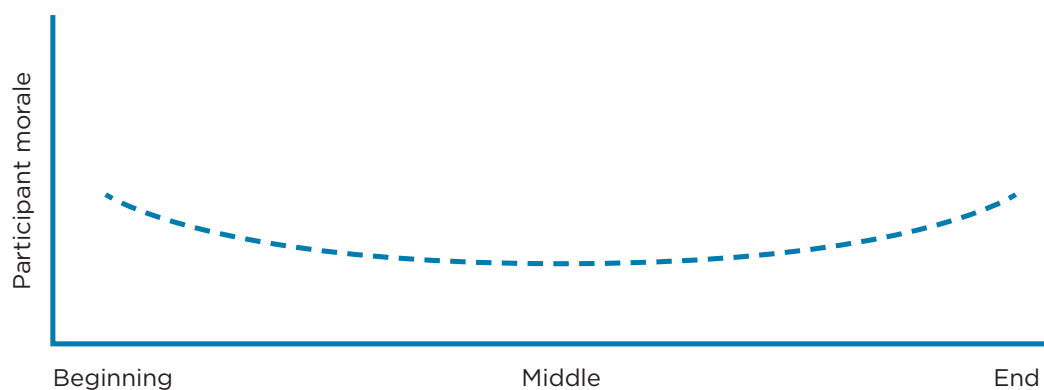
- Do not start the training day with content that is too complex or activities that are very demanding. The day should also conclude with activities that require less concentration from participants.
- When peak concentration levels have been reached, it's an ideal opportunity to dive into more demanding content, launch a group discussion or wrap-up the theme being explored.
- The periods immediately before or after lunch should preferably be reserved for activities or group games.
- Do not introduce too many themes in the same day. Limit the focus to 2-3 themes each day.



PARTICIPANT MORALE DURING A TRAINING WEEK

The figure below charts the motivation levels of participants throughout the training week. Generally, participant morale is high at the beginning of this period and will gradually drop until mid-week, when motivation hits its absolute low. Following this dip, participant morale will again begin to increase, until the end of the week, when it should attain levels similar to the beginning of the week.

HOW MOTIVATED ARE PARTICIPANTS DURING THE TRAINING WEEK?

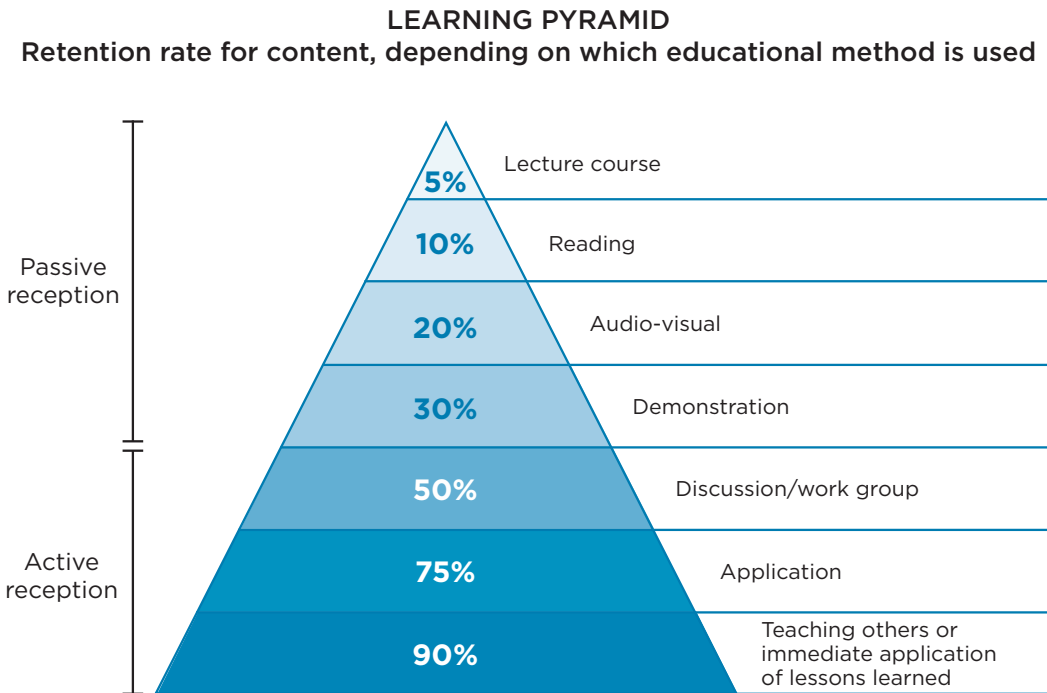


Training basics

- The trainer must be aware of how the group's motivation levels will fluctuate throughout the training session and adapt activities and methods accordingly.
- Positive reinforcement (encouragement) is recommended as a tool for maintaining the morale of participants.
- When motivation is low, trainers should initiate activities to stimulate the interest of participants (workshops, educational games, discussions, etc.).

LEARNING AND RETENTION CAPACITY

The learning pyramid below demonstrates how retention levels fluctuate depending on which educational method is being used by trainers. Generally speaking, during a training session, the more varied the educational methods being used, the higher retention levels for learning will go – and significantly so.



Training basics

- To maximize the transfer of knowledge, trainers must use relevant educational methods that will encourage participation and stimulate learning.
- If the training session is a long one, the trainer should use a greater variety of techniques to stimulate learning, especially during periods when concentration and motivation are at their lowest (mid-week, beginning of the day, after lunch, etc.).
- Educational methods that encourage active participation and application of skills learned are the most effective tools to ensuring learning retention.



THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE

Experiential learning is the educational approach favoured by the Social Circus Basic Training Program of Cirque du Soleil because it requires a high level of active participation. Based on their own background or through the training experience itself, participants are encouraged to learn through action by engaging in games and creative projects, sharing thoughts with the group and reflecting on how they can concretely apply what they've learned to their own projects. By asking participants to engage their perceptions and participate, the experiential approach ensures maximum retention of the material presented in training.

The activities proposed in each module of this guide are arranged according to the four stages of the experiential learning cycle.

The experiential learning cycle contains four stages: 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.



1. EXPERIENCE: *Something's happening!*

Trainers create an experience for learners or ask learners to remember a past experience. This experience is a situation that appeals to the senses and actively and personally engages the participant. For instance, it can involve role playing, discussing a case study or watching a video. The activity must stimulate the learners' interest and hold it throughout the learning cycle. This activity generates data that can anchor future reflections.



2. OBSERVATION: *What happened?*

Observation is the second stage in the learning cycle, giving participants an opportunity to share observations made during the experience. This stage serves to develop the participants' ability to identify the facts upon which their interpretation of events will be based.

Intentions or feelings are sometimes too quickly attributed to an action or attitude. Is that person really disgusted? Or is that simply a frown? In this example, we must start by observing the frown and only then attempt to interpret its meaning. The frown may express disgust, pain, disapproval or even derision. Observation allows participants to examine as many relevant factual elements as possible, which will eventually become the basis for an analysis of their experience.

In order to maximize the collection of information, trainers can ask the following types of questions:

- What did you observe?
- What did you see or hear?
- Who made similar observations?
- What else did you observe?



Observing non-verbal language is an important skill in interpersonal relationships, interventions and learning situations. This skill also lends itself to the social circus context; for example, when creating characters or learning a specific move for a circus technique.



3. INTEGRATION: *Why did it happen?*

Integration, the third step in the learning cycle, continues the reflection started in the observation stage. Integration helps learners to identify the causes and consequences of the experience, formulate questions and draw conclusions. It allows participants to compare their reflections with those of their peers and synthesize their findings. The group can then use this synthesis to define criteria that will make the experience easier to understand, such as the elements that promoted or hindered learning.

To prompt such reflections, trainers can ask questions that explore the following perceptions, connections and conclusions:

- How can we explain what happened?
- Was it “good” or “bad”? If so, how?
- How could things have been different? Or better? Why?
- What does this experience mean to you?
- Why is it important?
- How are all of these elements related?
- What conclusions can be drawn?
- What principles does it illustrate?
- Generally, what does the experience suggest about... ? Why?



4. APPLICATION: *What is the connection with my practice?*

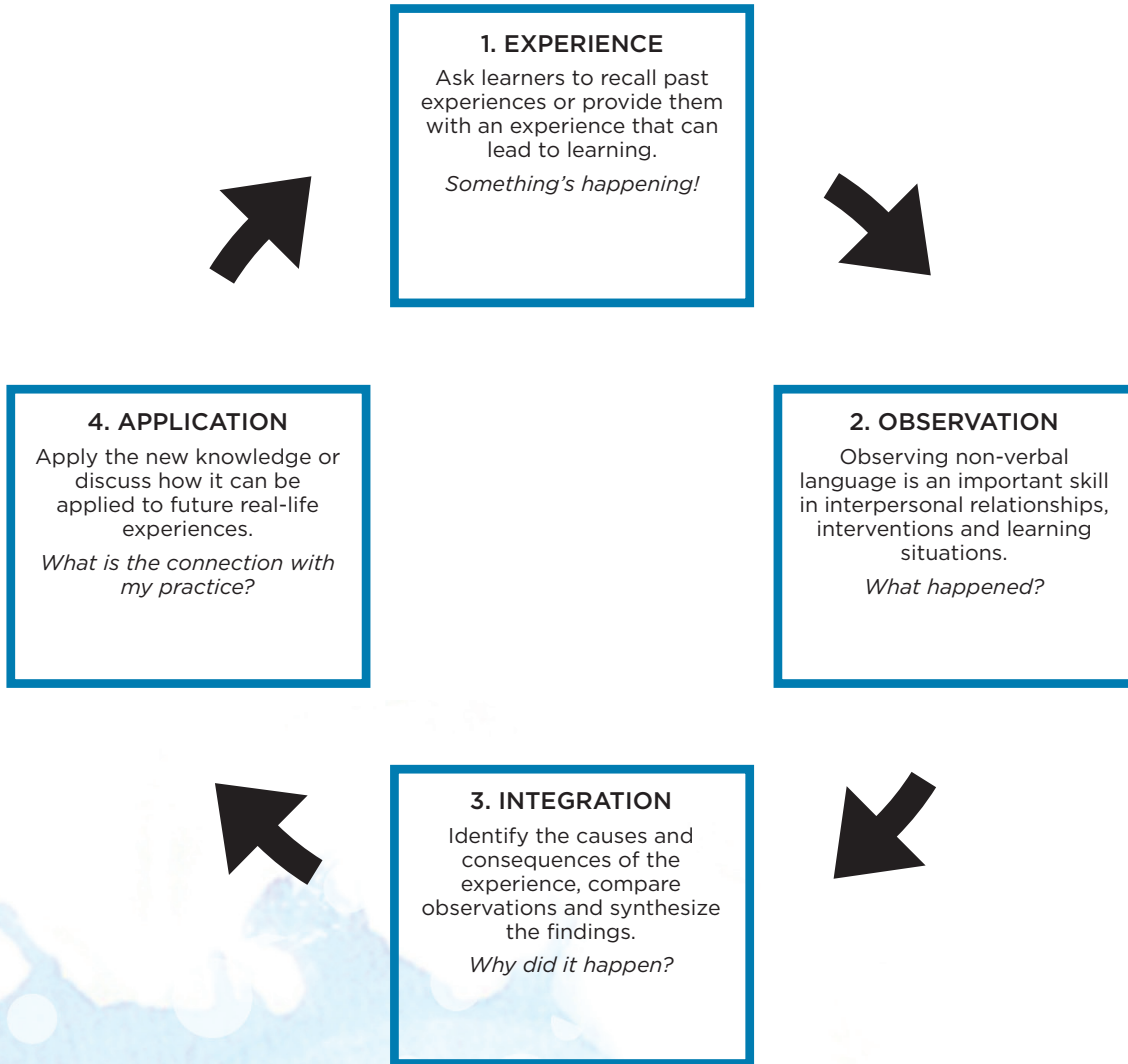
The application activity constitutes the last step in the learning cycle. Application allows learners to transfer the knowledge, skills and attitudes stemming from the group reflection to their work context or personal life. They can thus put their conclusions into practice or foresee their application in a real-life context. The group’s creativity may be used to identify innovative solutions or unconventional approaches to problems as they arise.

To facilitate the process, trainers can ask:

- What is the usefulness of this knowledge, or these skills and attitudes, in your workplace? In your personal life?
- What are the application possibilities?
- How can application be facilitated?



THE EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING CYCLE



ROLE OF A TRAINER

In the context of social circus training, the trainer is expected to assume three roles: teacher, facilitator and model.

THE TEACHER ROLE

Trainers are called upon to take the role of teacher when communicating their theoretical knowledge and expertise. As a general rule, in more traditional training environments, the teacher role is very dominant. In the case of the *Social Circus Basic Training Program of Cirque du Soleil*, the focus on experiential learning changes the dynamic between the trainer's different roles. Although trainers must show total mastery of the content, they are also oftentimes asked to put aside the role of teacher and take up that of facilitator. It is mainly by nurturing free expression and by animating discussions that trainers can optimize the transfer of knowledge. Guided by the directions proposed by the trainer, participants can then draw, piece by piece – like a quilt – important lessons from their experiences and discussions. Only in the last stages of this process does the trainer step back into the role of teacher. At this point, they must give greater meaning to this quilt by connecting various parts of the discussion with a clear overview and adding new elements or more theoretical content, as needed. Generally speaking, in this role, the trainer is expected to:

Share knowledge

- Master the material
- Structure the presentation in a logical order
- Adopt simple language that is suited to participants
- Emphasize the key messages of each module

Capture and keep the attention of participants

- Support learning with examples that speak to the reality of participants
- Maintain visual contact and vary the educational methods used (audio-visual, demonstrations, etc.)
- Ask the group to share their knowledge and expertise

Ensure that participants understand

- Be aware of non-verbal signs
- Spark questions
- Ask participants to summarize, reformulate or give examples of what they have just learned



THE FACILITATOR ROLE

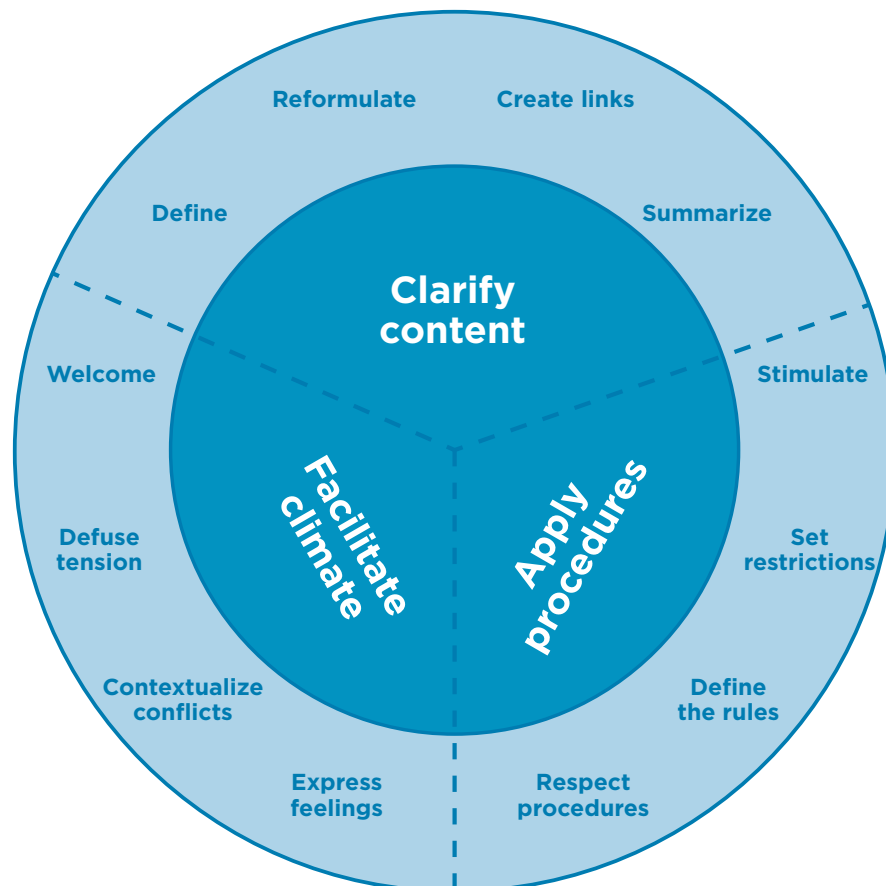
Trainers adopt this role when they wish to stimulate discussion and mediate debates in order to make the experiences of one benefit all. As part of the Social Circus Basic Training Program of Cirque du Soleil, trainers will act more as a facilitator than as an expert. Trainers must know how to ask the right question at the right time so that instructors and community workers can fully experience the moment or share an experience; so that they can observe, reflect and discuss, and draw lessons from their experiences that can be integrated into their future practices. The trainer's role as facilitator is thus, in this context, essential to achieving the group's overall goals. More specifically, in this role, the trainer is expected to:

Clarify CONTENT

- Define concepts and vocabulary specific to the approach
- Reformulate interventions to make them more clear
- Create links between ideas and opinions being expressed
- Summarize and synthesize ideas

Apply PROCEDURES

- Encourage everyone to participate
- Instruct participants on procedures (sequence of events, scheduling, etc.)
- Define rules for how to speak up



Create an appropriate SOCIO-EMOTIONAL CLIMATE

- Welcome people and their ideas and questions
- Keep the ambience relaxed
- Put conflict into its proper context by focussing on facts and not people
- Express feelings and enable participants to express how they feel when things get tense

THE MODEL ROLE

Trainers must maintain this role throughout the training session. In this role, trainers must demonstrate exemplary human qualities, develop positive relationships with participants and put forth the best image of tandem facilitation. Trainers must also embody all the values and practices that they promote during the training session, as well as the values of the organization they are working for. More specifically, in this role, the trainer is expected to:

Demonstrate exemplary human qualities

- Practice strict personal and professional ethics
- Be a source of inspiration to participants
- Show themselves to be transparent, humble and self-critical
- Be dynamic and express enthusiasm
- Express humour and be able to laugh at themselves

Develop a positive relationship with participants

- Listen to participants and welcome their ideas and concerns
- Show confidence in others and their ability to learn
- Recognize the talents, skills and progress of participants
- Be accessible
- Show sensitivity and adapt to the needs of each group

Put forth the best image of tandem facilitation

- Prove the value of working in a tandem team, of social circus and of social interventions, all the cornerstones of the social circus approach
- Work in harmony with other trainers
- Acknowledge the strengths and limits of each person
- Make compromises
- Integrate with the team and co-operate by making useful contributions

Embody the values and unique practices of social circus

- Know about the organizations they are working for and be conscious that their words and actions represent this organization well
- Adopt the fundamental values and approaches of social circus and set the example for how to apply its values
- Be consistent in word and deed



THE TRAINING SCHEDULE

When delivering social circus training, the trainer's mandate is divided into three stages: planning, delivery and evaluation.

1. PLANNING

Social circus training is not improvised; rather, it requires meticulous preparation. The schedule of each session must be precisely defined, both in terms of content and timing, and the responsibilities of each trainer must also be firmly established beforehand. Additionally, the planning stage gives trainers the opportunity to learn more about each other, share their visions and goals, and begin to build the crucial bond that will keep them united throughout the training session.

Planning OBJECTIVES

- What are the training objectives?
- What are the objectives for each module?
- What are the expectations of participants and partner organizations in relation to the whole training session?
- As a trainer, do you have any personal or professional objectives that you would like to achieve?

Planning CONTENT

- **Consult the relevant training documents**
 - Trainer's guide
 - Participant's manual
 - Profile information for each participant
 - Information about the history of social circus training in the region where the training will be delivered
 - Other visual and audio-visual documents
- **Clarify your own understanding**
 - Learn the educational concepts supporting the training program
 - Consult with peers and training organizers
- **Develop content for each module to be covered**
 - Define the objectives and key messages for each module
 - Select relevant activities
 - Beyond the thematic activities, foresee group games to help pick up their energy, build trust or teach circus techniques
- **Adapt the content to the reality of participants**
 - Become familiar with local culture and the partner organization in order to adapt the content accordingly
 - Find pertinent examples that will illustrate the material being taught by connecting it to the real-life experiences of participants
 - Foresee possible questions and resistances from participants



Planning METHODS

- Adapt the training schedule to the restrictions and specific needs of the participants and the premises being used
- Create a weekly schedule and prepare logistical documents, including a list of materials needed for training
- Visit the facilities where the training will take place

2. DELIVERY

Once the training has been planned, trainers can begin the training. This is the moment when trainers adopt the roles of teacher, facilitator and model. Despite having meticulously planned the session, trainers must never forget that content must nonetheless be adapted to the needs of participants. All of this must be approached with flexibility, an open spirit and creativity. Trainers must also regularly re-evaluate their plans and make any necessary adjustments.

Welcome participants and «lay the cards on the table»

- Try to establish a relationship with participants from the very beginning
- Get participants involved from the get-go by opening the session with games that will build a group dynamic
- State the training objectives and have an open discussion with participants about their expectations
- Set aside time on that first day to explain the logistical details to participants: scheduling, organizing for meals and breaks, ground rules (use of cameras, mobile, etc.).

Present and facilitate the thematic content

- Listen to and observe participants, both as individuals and as a group, in order to adjust the training content and rhythm accordingly
- This step will require the trainers to adopt the roles of teacher and facilitator. For more information, see pages 18-20 of this document.
- For trainers using the experiential learning approach (experience, observation, integration and application), see page 17 of this document.

Concluding the training session

- Ask participants to summarize the themes explored during the training. The trainer will then wrap-up the exercise by adding any points that were missed and making a final summary. An activity could even be designed to help deliver the conclusion.
- Confirm that set objectives were met and determine if participants' expectations were fulfilled



3. EVALUATION

Following the session, trainers must evaluate the satisfaction of participants, evaluate their own performance and write a final report. Evaluation is a crucial aspect of every training session. It contributes to the trainers' ongoing efforts to improve their skills and the quality of the training given.

Evaluating participant satisfaction

- Trainers must set aside time at the end of the session to let participants complete a satisfaction evaluation survey.
- This step consists of collecting feedback from participants about the training. This feedback will help identify areas of improvement for the organization, the content and the facilitation.
- Trainers must not view this last step as an evaluation of their performance alone. This evaluation also enables them to determine whether the training objectives were achieved.

Self-evaluation


- Self-evaluation consists of critically looking at one's own work. It's an opportunity for trainers to reflect on and discuss their strengths, as well as their weaknesses.
- The quality of any self-evaluation depends on the trainer's ability to be honest and introspective. A successful self-evaluation exercise will help trainers identify areas needing improvement and strategies to be implemented.
- If more than one trainer delivered the training, it is recommended that this exercise be done as a team. This practice reinforces the purpose of self-evaluation and helps everyone to conclude the relationship they built throughout the session in a more satisfactory way.
- Creating a self-evaluation grid helps to systemize the self-evaluation process and ensures that trainers assess every aspect of their work.

Writing the final report


Following the end of the session, the trainer must write a report and submit it to the coordinators responsible for the project. This report must cover:

- **The participants:** how many and where they came from, degree of motivation, ability to learn, dynamic within the group, levels of participation
- **Themes covered:** Participants' level of satisfaction, sequencing and time allotted to each theme, comments addressing the relevance and selection of activities, recommendations for future improvements
- **Overall organization of the session:** quality of support offered by the local partner, condition of the premises and available equipment, time allotted to the training content
- **Recommendations or suggestions for future training sessions**





MODULE 1	SOCIAL CIRCUS
MODULE 2	THE ROLES OF INSTRUCTOR AND COMMUNITY WORKER
MODULE 3	AT-RISK YOUTH
MODULE 4	ETHICS
MODULE 5	SAFETY
MODULE 6	CREATIVITY
MODULE 7	COMMUNICATION
MODULE 8	TEAMWORK





We were at the annual meeting of Cirque du Monde in Baie-Saint-Paul in 2009. It was one o'clock in the morning when I started talking with the youth about the great day we had just spent together. One of them asked me to read a poem that he had written during the day. It went: "Circus has influenced me and changed my life. It's helped me to learn new techniques and discover my strengths, my potential. I want to do circus all my life – I want to live it. It's given me the desire to build new dreams." I have had the privilege of hearing similar comments in countries all over the world, of watching youth explore their strengths and find inspiration. Whenever I hear these testimonials, I more fully understand how this experience can become a powerful catalyst for personal and social change. All across the globe, there are young people stepping on stage and choosing to build their futures. For these young people, social circus is a tremendous springboard.

Lino De Giovanni, Social Circus Training Manager
Cirque du Soleil, Montreal



MODULE 1 - OBJECTIVES

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

1. Adopt the notion of social circus.
2. Recognize the principles and objectives that define social circus.
3. Understand how social circus is a type of social intervention.

CONTENTS OF THIS MODULE

REFERENCE TEXT

- The Circus and Social Intervention

ACTIVITY

- What Is Circus?

MODULE 1 | INTRODUCTION

Social circus is an innovative social intervention approach based on the circus arts. It targets various at-risk groups living in precarious personal and social situations, including street or detained youth and women survivors of violence. In this approach, the primary goal is not to learn the circus arts, but rather to assist with participants' personal and social development by nurturing their self-esteem and trust in others, as well as by helping them to acquire social skills, become active citizens, express their creativity and realize their potential. Social circus is a powerful catalyst for creating social change because it helps marginalized individuals assume their place as citizens within a community and enrich that community with their talents.

The social circus approach is built on fundamental principles that make it an innovative and effective tool for social intervention. Social circus favours tandem facilitation, with workshops ideally led by a team of two people: one community worker who is very familiar with the community, its realities and challenges; and one instructor who has mastered the teaching of circus techniques, who has the awareness required for working in this particular context and who has extensive experience working with groups. The decision to work in tandem, deliberately made, is a cornerstone of social circus, based on the belief that goals are more easily attained when the skills of the instructor and the community worker are complementary and reinforce one another.

Other fundamental principles of social circus include establishing a fun and safe space where the freedom to speak up, creative expression and social learning are possible. This special space enables participants to take risks in a safe environment, build self-confidence and develop trust in themselves and in one another. It is also a place for reconciliation and discovery. Lastly, social circus is remarkable for the way in which it builds a sustainable relationship with local organizations. This aspect is key to the success of any project, as it helps to anchor the initiative within a community context and ensures continuity, all the while encouraging participants to feel a sense of belonging and interact with the community.



MODULE 1 | REFERENCE TEXT 1

THE CIRCUS AND SOCIAL INTERVENTION¹

By Michel Lafortune and Annie Bouchard

A) FROM CIRCUS AS ENTERTAINMENT TO SOCIAL CIRCUS

1. The circus as a focus of universal fascination and appeal to young people

• History of the circus

The circus seems as old as humanity. Chinese circus tradition goes back thousands of years, and was used for diplomatic purposes from the Han dynasty, 2000 years ago, with the emperor providing acrobatic entertainment for Western emissaries. Pharaonic Egypt was also familiar with a form of circus, as depicted in paintings dating back several thousand years.

On the other hand, notwithstanding the obvious etymological connection, the circus arts have very little in common with the Roman circus, which mainly involved chariot races and gladiatorial combat. In Europe, the roots of the circus can be found among the troubadours, public entertainers and other itinerant tumblers and jugglers who wandered from city to city to present a variety of shows: music, performing animals, plays, acrobatics and so on.

Indeed, this idea of itinerancy is an essential element of the circus's identity. Coming from elsewhere, ever in transit, ever in movement, since time immemorial circus artists have brought with them novelty, knowledge, skills and openness to other cultures. Furthermore, they mastered the art of balance, defied gravity, made animals obey them and changed identity with costumes and makeup.

From its beginnings in England at the end of the 18th century, the modern circus spread rapidly across Europe, then to America and elsewhere in the world. Organized in mostly travelling professional troupes, it enjoyed great popularity up to the middle of the 20th century, before going into a period of decline. During the 1970s and 1980s, a new trend, known today as contemporary circus, renewed this ancient art by giving it more artistic creativity and encouraging multidisciplinary. Harbingers of this movement include *Cirque du Soleil* (Canada), Circus Oz (Australia), Archaos Circus (France) and Plume Circus (France).

• The circus's appeal to young people

The fascination exerted by circus artists, travelling artists, bearers of unknown knowledge, gifted with strength and skills, is particularly strong among youths, including at-risk youth. Indeed, it is not uncommon for them to adopt ways of expressing their differences and apartness that are not too far removed from circus disciplines. Some of them practice juggling, unicycling or acrobatic hobbies, such as skateboarding or breakdancing. Others change their appearance with makeup and hairstyles, piercings or unconventional clothing. By seeking to provoke or set themselves apart, many of them discover their own talents and creativity.

¹ Excerpt by Michel Lafortune and Annie Bouchard, *Community Worker's Guide: When Circus Lessons Become Life Lessons*, Social Circus Training (Montreal: Cirque du Soleil, 2011), pp. 13-23.



2. The circus as a tool of social intervention

• Definition of social circus

Social circus is a way of approaching social problems derived from an innovative fusion between circus arts and social intervention. Social circus aims to ensure the all around development and social inclusion of people at risk, especially youth. Precisely because it leaves room for freedom and creativity while demanding tenacity, perseverance and discipline, social circus empowers participants to use their marginality to express themselves and establish a new relationship with a society that has often excluded them.

Since its inception in the 1990s, social circus has spread around the world and today inspires a large number of projects aimed at different types of people (at-risk youth, women survivors of violence, prison inmates, refugees, etc.).

This intervention approach prioritizes the personal and social growth of participants. It encourages the development of self-esteem and the acquisition of social skills, artistic expression and occupational integration. It gives participants the chance to express themselves and be listened to, to realize their own potential and to make their own contribution as citizens of the world. In countries gripped by conflicts or communal tensions, social circus can even be a vehicle of understanding and reconciliation between rival communities.

Social circus is distinct from what we might call the professional circus or even the recreational circus insofar as it gives more importance to the experience had by the participants than to the artistic result of this experience, and it establishes a relationship between the participants and the community that goes beyond the aesthetic and entertaining role of the traditional circus.

With an approach centred on the circus arts and social intervention, social circus acts as a powerful agent of social transformation.

• The principles of social circus

The social circus approach is based on seven principles: creation of a safe, fun space; links with the community; expression, creation and performance; collaboration between social intervention and circus; duration over time, continuity; a participant-centred process; and partnerships. These principles will be developed in Part C of this text.

Unlike other methods of social action, social circus carries out its group interventions with a joint team of circus instructors and community workers. These interventions take the form of sessions made up of a series of regular workshops. Social circus sessions are set up and supported by organizations within the local community (government or community organizations, among others) and can last several months.

• Players and beneficiaries of social circus

Apart from the *Cirque du Monde* program, which targets at-risk youth, several projects throughout the world use the social circus approach. In Australia, Women's Circus began by offering circus workshops to women who survived sexual assault, before opening its doors to all women. In one Barcelona neighbourhood, social circus was the catalyst for the Ateneu² to inspire the residents of that neighbourhood to set up a cultural centre. For Circus in Ethiopia, social circus uses its shows as a grassroots educational tool to help HIV prevention. Belfast Community Circus has been working since 1985 with youth from Northern Ireland in a context of highly inflamed intercommunity tensions. In 1991,

² Ateneu's full name is Ateneu Popular 9barris.



in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, an awareness-building campaign carried out by four non-governmental organizations gave birth to the organization *Se Essa Rua Fosse Minha* that, with the help of *Intrépida Trupe*, was among the first to use circus arts as an intervention approach. In France, the organization *Atoucirque* caters to inmates and in Buenos Aires several dozen children at risk have been attending social circus workshops at *El Circo Social del Sur* since 2004.

3. *Cirque du Monde*: The social circus program of *Cirque du Soleil*

In Quebec, the idea to use circus arts as an educational alternative to create an intervention program for at-risk youth took shape in 1993. The *Cirque du Monde* program, founded by *Cirque du Soleil* and the international cooperation agency *Jeunesse du Monde*, began to form partnerships with Chilean, Brazilian and Canadian community organizations, and the first social circus workshops began in 1995. It was joined by another international development agency, *Oxfam-Québec*, in 1997, and the *Cirque du Monde* program continued to expand into several other countries around the world. In 2011, over 80 communities were involved in this program in Africa (Burkina Faso, Cameroon, South Africa), Europe (Netherlands), the Middle East (Lebanon), Asia (Mongolia, Singapore), Oceania (Australia), Latin America (Brazil, Chile, Mexico, Honduras) and North America (Canada, United States).

Modelled on *Cirque du Monde*, social circus workshops are organized by the local partner who is supported by *Cirque du Soleil* financially, materially (donation of circus equipment) and organizationally. *Cirque du Soleil* also provides the local partner with specific expertise in social circus, and may also extend its support to the recruitment and training of social circus instructors. In several countries, local organizations have felt the need to join forces and create networks, allowing them to share information and expertise about shared issues, such as safety or financing. Such networks now exist in Brazil, Australia, the United States, Europe and Quebec.

In Brazil, inspired by the success of projects such as *Se Essa Rua Fosse Minha*, the local partners of *Cirque du Monde* now offer independent circus workshops in over 20 communities.

Cirque du Monde does not claim to be a cure-all for the various social problems, but neither is it some vague pastime that only succeeds in distracting young people from their real situation. It wants to offer young participants, be they from Montreal, Rio, Singapore or elsewhere, a springboard toward a new stage in their lives. For the participants, going professional is not ruled out, but it is not the central concern or the prime objective.

4. Training of social circus instructors and community workers

In 2000, *Cirque du Soleil* came up with a training program intended to develop the teaching skills of social circus instructors. It was indeed at that time that the term “social circus” was definitively adopted, and today it is used by consensus to define circus projects used for social intervention. The program is given jointly with existing circus schools, such as the NCS (National Circus School) and the NICA (National Institute of Circus Arts), and interested partners, and hopes to encourage international networking that revolves around training social circus instructors and social intervention for young people.

This initiative was motivated by the difficulty of finding circus instructors capable of working in a social intervention setting, the necessity of raising the skills of those already involved and the desire to develop connections and some cohesion between existing projects. Setting up a training program in social circus seemed a logical step to ensuring the continuity of the *Cirque du Monde* program and encouraging the development of social circus in other networks.

[...]

B) SOCIAL CIRCUS INTERVENTION: OBJECTIVES AND RELEVANCE

Since its appearance in the 1990s, social circus has become an innovative tool for social intervention; it is still in its early days and therefore relatively undocumented on a theoretical level. The pioneers of this form of social intervention began by getting involved with passion, enthusiasm and the desire to help suffering populations. However, they did not have the required resources to collect qualitative research data demonstrating the full potential of this approach. Today, even though its approach is based on teaching methods backed up by some 15 years of experience, the grassroots influence and mechanisms of social circus have not yet all been determined. Its usefulness as a mode of social intervention is recognized, but much more work remains to be done in assessment and research before it can be proven.

In 2008, in an interview with *Juggling Magazine*, an Italian magazine started in 1998 to promulgate contemporary circus arts, Michel Lafortune, then Social Circus Director of *Cirque du Soleil*, maintained:

“For us, social circus not only allows young people to acquire circus skills, but also to develop their self-esteem and express their personalities, be more creative, change their habits as well as their status from that of victim to that of protagonist, from the role of onlooker to that of artist. It gives them the opportunity to become active players in their own lives. The totally new teaching methods of social circus go beyond circus arts to stimulate interest in reading, help open minds to culture and create a connection between society and persons in need. They thus acquire the opportunity to express themselves and be heard, to become aware of their own potential and to make their contribution as citizens of the world.

The objective is not rehabilitation we hope above all that their marginality can enrich the social fabric. These young people first need to learn a language that will help them be a part of society. The circus, just like dance, theatre or any other artistic discipline, is an instrument that will allow them to form a relationship with the adult world by living a different experience. All we ask of society is to come and listen, and look at these young people in a different light. We are an interface; we have built a bridge between these two realities.

We often use the concept of resilience, developed by Boris Cyrulnik, which states that anyone can use his past experiences to progress. Some young people remain marked for life by the obstacles that they have encountered, while others use these ordeals to set themselves apart and move forward. With social circus, we strive to develop this capacity.”³

In addition, the concrete and positive results observed in the field have given rise to a series of objectives that social circus is able to meet, in particular concerning the personal and social development of young participants, as follows:

³“Cirque du Monde e il circo sociale : intervista a Michel Lafortune,” *Juggling Magazine*, March 2008, p. 22.



1. Offering a means rather than an end

During social circus workshops, the aspect of fun is of prime importance, especially for at-risk youth, who are sometimes having to deal with very acute socio-economic difficulties. The appeal of practising unusual skills, the fun of experimenting, the joy of improving and progressing in a group, in an artistic and physical context, all combine to create a pleasurable environment.

Some participants take their learning very much to heart, to the point of imagining taking up a professional career. Even though this objective should not be discouraged by the training team, it should be made clear that social circus workshops are not professional training. It is therefore not an end in itself, but a means to an end. A means to growing on a personal and social level. A means to developing ways of being as much as ways of doing.

Social circus intervention targets several types of at-risk, on the fringes of society, insecure or excluded individuals. These persons must deal with various problems.

Due to its distinctive approach, characterized by the diversity of circus disciplines and the support of individual development, anyone can find a way that best helps him to meet his own objectives.

2. Encouraging the development of self-esteem

With at-risk youth, self-confidence is often weak. One of the main objectives of social circus training is to help young participants build and develop the self-esteem that they lack. This evolution is favoured by the very essence of circus disciplines, based on the idea of making possible what originally seemed impossible or difficult. Each small success, each little victory, each small step forward thus increases the participant's self-confidence, as he realizes his own strengths, qualities and capacity to meet challenges, progress and surpass himself.

To reach this goal, the intervention tandem (the circus instructor and the community worker) must set targets within the possibilities of each participant. The aim is not the absolute level of performance, but each participant's success in reaching his personal goals.

Some circus disciplines, such as handstand, unicycle and juggling, turn out to be particularly well-suited to the development of self-esteem, for they are intrinsic challenges to the laws of physics.

3. Encouraging the development of autonomy and self-regulation

The learning of circus disciplines such as juggling or unicycle is a progressive process, based on the repetition of movements and doing better the next time. Each fall or each error must be followed by another attempt, another try. The technical and human guidance of the instructor-community worker tandem is naturally of prime importance, but the participant is also encouraged to internalize much of the process through self-motivation and self-regulation. The participant thus learns to control his reactions, know himself better and act on himself.



In this process, self-examination and a critical faculty are important, since they allow young people to determine the reason for a failure, set realistic personal goals and define strategies to reach them. For some, the workshops serve as an initiation to fundamental human and moral qualities, such as patience, perseverance, concentration, discipline and control of emotions (fear, frustration, anger).

4. Encouraging the development of a sense of belonging and the spirit of solidarity

The circus has been rightly described as an art of solidarity, for it relies greatly on mutual aid and group work. This is why, unlike other types of social intervention based on a personal relationship between a young person and a worker, social circus intervention depends largely on collective participation, whether during warm-ups, games, learning or public performances.

Acting within a group to carry out shared activities is a powerful force for developing trust toward others and fundamental social values, such as solidarity, empathy, mutual help, the sense of belonging, listening, respect and friendship. The notions of leadership and respect of shared rules are also encouraged, which leads the participants to consider themselves no longer solely as individuals but also as members of a collective.

The pyramids, which demands the cooperation of several people to reach a common goal, is one of the most effective circus disciplines in this respect because the participants gain awareness not only of what others can do for them, but also of what they can do for others.

5. Encouraging the development of citizenship

For marginalized youth – sometimes marginalized to the extent of being rejected by society – the idea of “living together” can be abstract or even completely beyond their understanding. Citizenship, the consciousness of being part of a group, with one’s rights and one’s duties, can be illustrated and brought home to them during social circus workshops. Collective decisions are made for the common good, conflicts are resolved without violence, ideas are exchanged, divergent interests or desires are reconciled; for youths, it becomes a real initiation to democracy thanks to everyone’s participation. Social circus thus gives the young participants the opportunity to take their place in society and to connect with the social group.

6. Encouraging the development of good physical condition

Even without aiming for a very high standard of performance, social circus workshops require that participants be in good physical condition, notably in terms of strength, sense of balance, motor coordination and flexibility. This requirement can awaken in young people an awareness of the importance of acquiring healthy habits (healthy eating, avoiding the consumption of alcohol, tobacco and drugs, hygiene, etc.) in order to facilitate achieving their goals. It also induces them to make or renew contact with their bodies, to rediscover their inner selves and their sensations, which produce spectacular psychological results.

In addition, practising regularly circus disciplines constitutes a physical training in itself, and its beneficial effects can be observed during the workshops, alongside the progress participants make in developing their skills.



7. Encouraging the development of communication skills

For some youths, the mere thought of public speaking is an insurmountable challenge; for others, the problem is expressing feelings or organizing their ideas. Group work involves plenty of communication and discussion between participants and with the facilitators, and, as such, offers a powerful springboard for developing communication skills: expressing feelings, opinions and emotions; passing on knowledge and experiences; discussing the future (planning of a project) and the past (analysis of workshops).

Verbal communication is not the only kind to be encouraged: social circus workshops greatly favour body language, notably with mimes, grimaces and stage production. Youths also discover that humour, incongruity and self-mockery can constitute forms of communication capable of transmitting emotions or opinions.

Furthermore, taking up public space with a live performance, with staging and play, allows the youth to tell others that he exists in this space and he has something to show, something to express. It is an ideal place for self-affirmation.

8. Encouraging a flourishing fringe creativity

Circus arts have traditionally been linked with certain forms of marginality (nomadic existence, balancing acts, exuberance, artistic creativity, disguises, etc.) that are naturally attractive to young people. Those who live in situations excluded from society find in it a positive and constructive mirror of their own marginality, as well as a means of doing it justice.

What's more, the practice of circus disciplines often thrives on invention and creation, especially in the more modern forms of circus. For the participants, these disciplines offer a sometimes unique means of liberating, mastering and structuring their imagination, of giving their creativity full rein. Social circus does not seek to standardize or water down the marginal side of the participants or try to force them to conform at any price, but rather aims at providing young people with the tools to learn to communicate with the community from the fringes.

9. Taking pride in diversity

Just as no two humans are exactly alike, there is no typical circus artist. Whether it is juggling, acrobatics, the art of the clown, contortions or handstand acts, each specialty attracts a different type of personality, with different physiques, qualities and temperaments. This diversity, which is what makes the circus accessible to all, across social, linguistic, economic or physical divides, is an extraordinary example of inclusion for young people. No one will be shut out of the group because of different ideas, education, clothes or body type.

Taking pride in diversity, in the creative and constructive context of social circus workshops, allows cultures and communities who would normally avoid each other to meet in a neutral space and redefine their relationships.

10. Supporting risk management

Every day, circus artists carry out daring and sometimes dangerous acts. Just as in daily life, accidents can happen, but they are very rare. Truth be told, there are many fewer accidents under a big top than on the roads.



This reality is due to systematic preparation and strict risk management by the circus artists. For street kids who take part in the workshops, it is often an eye-opener. Rules, which they are used to seeing as unwelcome constraints, suddenly take on a positive meaning: they ensure their safety and therefore allow them to practise risky disciplines without danger.

This realization can be a big step forward in their personal development because it leads them to take care of themselves and others, and develops their capacity of judgment in dealing with life's events and dangers.

11. Encouraging socio-economic integration

The social circus movement is increasingly occupied with the question of the professional development of the youth who take part in social circus projects. All projects must deal with this question, for as often happens, the participants get intensely involved and discover a whole world of possibilities. Becoming a professional artist is one of these possibilities. The participants can also consider becoming social circus instructors or contemplate a career in show business and so on. In fact, the importance lies in the way the participant is guided after his time with the project if he wishes to go professional. There are a variety of visions for the development of social circus. Turning out professionals is one, but socio-economic integration is of strategic importance if we want to avoid participants going back to their old reality after having been through constructive experiences. Many other paths, such as returning to school, family reconciliation and community involvement, may also be very good solutions.

12. Social circus as a resilience support

Social circus intervention encourages both personal and social development with youths at risk due to its unique approach. It constitutes a real tool for acquiring resilience because it is based on surpassing one's goal, self-actualization resulting from one's own strengths and capacities, collective cooperation and the guidance of responsible adults.

• The concept of resilience

Originally inspired by a notion used in mechanics (a material's resistance to shock), the concept of psychological resilience was studied and popularized beginning in the 1980s. In this context, resilience can be defined as the dynamic process by which an individual adapts positively to a trauma or an adverse situation. Contrary to a widely held belief, it is not a matter of "bouncing back" or of denying a painful past, but of overcoming the traumatic event and absorbing it so as to grow toward something new.

Resilience is intimately linked to self-esteem and to the perception of one's capacity to control one's environment.

Scientific studies of populations who have lived through traumas (refugees, sexual abuse survivors, etc.) have highlighted the role played by two groups of factors to explain why some individuals tend to be resilient while others remain incapable of putting their ordeals behind them. These factors are known as "protective factors" and "resilience supports."



Protective factors refer to elements particular to each individual and his capacity to interact with his environment. They are linked to his personality and to the adaptive strategies that he is capable of implementing when faced with a stress or a traumatic event.

Resilience supports, on the other hand, are factors external to the individual that provide him with support so that he can develop his resilience. They can often be friends, parents or colleagues, or sometimes therapists and community workers. Complete strangers can also play this part, by listening, or with their encouragement or active support.

- **The role of social circus workshop as a tool for resilience**

Social circus workshops are specifically intended for people who are going through temporary or persistent difficulties that tend to marginalize them. These difficulties can be linked to situations of violence, instability or exclusion, as well as drug or alcohol abuse. Some participants suffer from emotional insecurity, family difficulties or social exclusion. During these workshops, favourable conditions are created to allow them to express their emotions and talk about the situations they must deal with. They can thus seek support and take a constructive look at what is happening to them without blaming themselves for those events. This attitude is fundamental for reinforcing and developing protective factors.

The community workers and instructors, for their part, often act as resilience supports for the participants. By being good listeners and showing themselves attentive and trustworthy, they become significant and influential persons who demonstrate to the participants that they are worthy of respect, which allows them to regain their own self-esteem.

This recovery of self-esteem happens through discussions, but also and above all through intervention. Participants are driven by a very strong energy, sometimes positive, sometimes challenging, which the intervention tandem must make the best use of.

Circus activities work as a springboard, a basis for building new strengths, new attitudes and new relationships with others. For example, when the youths exchange juggling clubs, these serve not just as juggling accessories but also as a way of improving communication; the two jugglers need to set up a routine before the activity and then respect it during their performance by coordinating their movements and adapting their gestures to each other. The clubs go from being playthings to being tokens of a relationship. As for the end-of-session performance, it is a process of collective creation that allows the participants to show off their talents in public and be applauded by members of their community.

C) THE PRINCIPLES THAT DEFINE SOCIAL CIRCUS

Apart from its fundamental characteristics (use of circus arts, working with social groups at risk), the social circus approach is based on seven fundamental principles to meet the objectives of its intervention. The instructors and community workers, as well as partner organizations, must adhere to them unreservedly. These guiding principles are: creation of a safe and fun space; links with the community; expression and creativity; collaboration between social and circus; duration over time; an approach centred on participants; and partnerships.



1. The safe and fun space

Social circus provides a fun space for creativity, freedom of speech and social apprenticeship. It creates a special venue where it is possible to experiment, take risks in a safe manner, have fun and develop a sense of belonging. This place is also a space of physical and emotional safety, a space where one can express one's culture, a social space of reconciliation and discoveries.

This notion of safe space is very important before, during and after social circus workshops, and the instructors and community workers are the guarantors. They must particularly ensure that the participants enjoy complete safety from all points of view (physical, psychological, social, emotional) and that the shared space is free from discrimination, threats, verbal, physical or psychological violence, harassment or intimidation.

The existence of this safe space allows the participants to escape from their sometimes very harsh social environment and experience dimensions such as unreality, playfulness, sensitivity and poetry through circus arts. The safe space thus acts not only as a refuge, but also as a context for trying out different possible ways of being.

2. Links with the community

Social circus creates or recreates links and dialogue between the participants, often young people, and their family or community. It serves as an interface between the community and the participants and invites the community to come and meet these youths so as to change how they are perceived.

3. Expression and creativity

Through its use of circus arts, social circus bases its approach around creativity. It provides youths with conditions that allow them to develop their creativity, express themselves, discuss, let loose their imaginations, transform themselves and the world, their world.

Creativity empowers participants to regain control over their environment.

4. Collaboration between social and circus

The collaboration between the social field of action and the circus field of action is at the heart of the social circus approach and constitutes its signature. Tandem facilitation, comprising a community worker and a social circus instructor, is one of its greatest riches because it allows two individuals to combine their efforts and their expertise toward a common goal. It stretches each person's limits by affording mutual support and providing the necessary space for reflection to overcome limitations and introduce new solutions.

5. Duration over time

While social circus workshops can have a significant impact in the very short term, it is the long-term projects that create an environment conducive to inciting profound change and encouraging participants to develop a sense of belonging.



Being part of the furniture!

Social circus workshops will last for varying amounts of time, depending on where they are being held. In some countries, participants can attend workshops for several years without interruption. Meanwhile, organizations in other countries may have to restrict participation because of lack of resources or project objectives. For example, one session of workshops may come to an end after a predetermined period of two years, while another training session may be cut short because the objectives don't match participants' needs. It is thus a good idea to inform participants of their other options (e.g. becoming an assistant instructor; learning a career related to social circus, such as makeup artist, carpenter or rigger; or even joining a circus troupe) and encourage them to undertake new challenges when the opportunities arise.

6. An approach centred on participants

An intervention approach centred on the participants implies that it is these people (youth or others) who are at the heart of the process. Social circus promotes a teaching process based on play, group dynamics, progressive learning and involvement of the body, heart and mind.

Social circus proposes a dynamic that seeks to motivate the participant to preserve or rediscover his capacity for play. If the participant loves what he does, sees and feels in the workshops, he will want to return. Voluntary participation is one of the principles of the circus: inciting but not forcing or obliging.

The group is self-regulated and establishes the best working rhythm for stability and balance. Over time, the individual is expected to develop a structure for himself to learn better, perform better, support the group, work in synchrony and learn with the others.

The development of skills at a suitable progressive rate is a fundamental condition for reconciling the participant with the desire to learn. The experience of a string of successes is at the centre of building self-esteem. Involving the whole individual (body, heart and mind) helps create meaning and go beyond mere sensation.

7. Partnerships

Establishing a partnership is essential to setting up a social circus project. The social partner is the one who understands the culture and who knows the individuals and the strategies for setting up and managing project operations. The circus partner's contribution is the teaching method and the specific knowledge that binds art and social intervention together. The projects with the biggest impact are those that are built with strong, motivated partners.



MODULE 1 | ACTIVITY 1

WHAT IS CIRCUS?

OBJECTIVE

To understand the concept of social circus.

Length of activity
45 minutes

Materials
*Paper, felt-tip pens,
coloured pencils*

Number of participants
20-25



EXPERIENCE

The trainer asks the group of instructors and community workers to name the keywords they spontaneously associate with “circus,” which the trainer notes on a large sheet of paper. The trainer then creates smaller teams of four or five people and asks them to repeat the activity, this time splitting the sheet of paper into two columns. On one side of the sheet, teams list words they associate with “recreational circus,” or circus practised as a leisure activity. Once this task is complete, teams list words that define “social circus” in the other column. It is important that these two tasks are done one after the other. Finally, the teams share their selected words with the whole group to identify collectively the specific characteristics of social circus.



OBSERVATION

- What are the keywords that define social circus? What are the keywords that define recreational circus?
- What are the differences between the concepts of circus, social circus and recreational circus? What are the points of convergence in the social context?



INTEGRATION

- Why is it important to understand the differences between these concepts?

The trainer draws the discussion together by introducing the seven principles of social circus,⁴ and then notes them clearly on the large sheet of paper, which can subsequently be posted on a wall for easy reference throughout the training.



APPLICATION

- How will your new understanding of social circus influence your practice as an instructor or community worker?

⁴See the reference text “The Circus and Social Intervention” in this module, p. 19-30.



MODULE 1 | KEY MESSAGES

Social circus is an innovative method of intervention based on the circus arts.

Social circus leverages the skills of circus artists and community workers.

Social circus has enormous potential to change youth and communities.

Personal and social development is the primary goal of social circus.



MODULE 2

THE ROLES OF INSTRUCTOR AND COMMUNITY WORKER



The circus instructors have the technical knowledge. In some cases, however, they'll ask us to take over because they don't feel properly equipped to deal with certain situations. For example, there was this young man from a youth centre participating in a workshop. He got angry with the community worker assisting him and started freaking out. He wouldn't listen to a word the instructor was saying and just lost it. Because he was having this breakdown, the instructor wasn't able to get through to him. In fact, it just made the situation worse, to the point where the instructor lost total control of the situation. The young man was in such a state, he could have torn the place apart. We had to ask the instructor to step aside and wait for the young man to ride out the anger. Once he was a bit calmer, I could step in – since I wasn't involved in the confrontation – and try to calm him down further.

Sylvain Demers, *Cirque du Monde* Coordinator
Centre résidentiel et communautaire Jacques-Cartier, Quebec



MODULE 2 - OBJECTIVES

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

1. Pinpoint the skills, attitudes and knowledge instructors and community workers must possess.
2. Understand the complementary roles of instructor and community worker.
3. Recognize the limitations of these roles and the scope of intervention possible, as well as the advantages of the tandem approach.

CONTENTS OF THIS MODULE

REFERENCE TEXTS

- The Community Worker-Instructor Tandem, the Mainstay of Social Circus
- The Instructor's Role in Social Circus

ACTIVITY

- Profiles



MODULE 2 | INTRODUCTION

Practically speaking, the roles of instructor and community worker are defined by a clear mandate that outlines individual spheres of action and responsibility. The mandate will vary according to the abilities of the instructor and community worker, as well as the organization's needs. In general, this mandate addresses the organization, planning, facilitation and evaluation of workshops, and includes managing materials and creating a safe environment.

Above and beyond their practical skills, the instructor and community worker must be flexible, able to adapt their intervention to fit the environment they're working in, the participants they're working with and the needs of the partner organization. The tandem team must teach participants the circus arts, while being attentive to their needs and encouraging their overall development. These considerations must be embedded in a tandem facilitation framework that continuously seeks to achieve complicity, cohesion and complementarity with members of the intervention team. Instructors and community workers are also responsible for fostering a partnership with the organization hosting the workshop and, by extension, its wider community. This helps to encourage a shift in the way the milieu is perceived and promote a unified approach to at-risk individuals.

The instructor and community worker's attitude toward at-risk individuals - especially youth - must be defined by openness, the willingness to listen, trust, respect and a strong sense of ethics. As adults, the tandem team can give youth the means necessary to further their personal development. However, to do so, the instructor and community worker must build a meaningful relationship with the participants. More attention must therefore be paid to participants' personal growth than to their ability to perfect the technique.



MODULE 2 | REFERENCE TEXT 1

THE COMMUNITY WORKER-INSTRUCTOR TANDEM, THE MAINSTAY OF SOCIAL CIRCUS¹

By Michel Lafortune and Annie Bouchard

The dispensation of courses by the community worker–circus instructor tandem is one of the fundamental principles of the social circus approach. Each of the two facilitators has a well-defined role to play with the youths. The instructor is a social artist, a person who comes to share his know-how and soft skills, a person with human qualities and solid experience in group work, suited to work with the participants learning circus disciplines. As for the community worker, he is someone who is close to the local community, familiar with its realities and difficulties and experienced in individual counselling. He is charged with establishing a relation of trust with the participants and turning the circus lessons into life lessons. Despite their differences, the instructor and the community worker must work together in close collaboration and synergy. This characteristic is a potential source of great richness, but can also present numerous challenges.

A) THE INSTRUCTOR: FIRST AND FOREMOST AN ARTIST

As a circus artist with human qualities, the instructor embodies the imaginary world of the circus representing an inspirational role model for the participants.

1. Profile of the instructor

The social circus instructor is first and foremost filled with a passion for his art and gifted with a real talent for performing it. The context of social circus intervention also requires that he have human qualities and that he should act with sensitivity, respect and integrity. In addition to his skills in the circus arts, the social circus instructor is necessarily a true artist who has chosen to put his talent at the service of individuals at risk.

• Skills of the instructor

Ideally, the social circus instructor possesses skills for performing and teaching all circus disciplines. In reality, he more often has mastery of only two or three disciplines but has the necessary rudimentary abilities in the others. The instructor must keep an open mind in how to use the teaching of circus arts and how to find creative methods suited to the needs of individuals.

• Human qualities of the instructor

Passion and talent are definitely indispensable for the work of the social circus instructor, but he must also demonstrate a real involvement with the participants and with the local organization, an involvement that goes beyond the mere passing on of circus techniques.

Instructors are not expected to be psychologists or social workers. Nevertheless, they should be aware that their attitudes and behaviour serve as models for the participants, and that this aspect of the relationship is just as significant as the content of the teaching.

¹ Excerpt by Michel Lafortune and Annie Bouchard, *Community Worker's Guide: When Circus Lessons Become Life Lessons*, Social Circus Training (Montreal: Cirque du Soleil, 2011), pp. 33-39.



The social circus instructor must therefore show empathy with the participants as well as commitment to them; he must be an open person, capable of listening and having respect for their reality and difficulties. This sensitivity will allow him to avoid misunderstandings, acts of negligence and incorrect or abusive behaviour.

2. The roles of the instructor²

The instructor's roles include teaching circus techniques, leading group workshops and supporting the community worker and the organization. He may be required on occasion to perform social intervention and should be fully conscious of the social impact of his actions.

It is not the object of this guide to provide a precise description of the instructor's roles, so we will not go into it further. We invite people interested in this aspect to avail themselves of the specific documentation.

3. The instructor's image with the participants

The instructor is often an ambassador of art and creativity. His mastery of circus techniques, his often extraneous origins and his artistic fibre make him a natural embodiment of the link between performance and representation.

B) THE COMMUNITY WORKER: BUILDER OF TRUST AND GOOD RELATIONS

1. Profile of the community worker

The ideal social circus community worker does not exist. Since the beginnings of the *Cirque du Monde* program, people with very different personalities, experiences and skills have successfully carried out this role. However, the community workers who have had the greatest success all shared a commitment to the social circus approach and possessed certain specific human and professional qualities.

• Commitment to the social circus approach

In community organizations, the most widespread method of social intervention consists in making individual contact between a community worker and an individual at risk. The social circus approach is different from this method. While listening and individual attention are also present, social circus relies mainly on action for its effectiveness (the learning of circus disciplines), as well as on courses given jointly by a tandem whose fields of expertise complement each other and who mesh well together. Moreover, the social intervention is addressed to a group of participants and not to a single person. This method allows each participant to draw on the collective energy and to link his personal happiness to positive social relations.

In this approach, the personal and social development of the participants does not only come from practising circus disciplines. It also comes from the contacts and the dynamic that are born within the group and from the individual and collective relationships established between the participants and the tandem.

These differences mean that community workers can feel disconcerted by a method of social intervention with which they are unfamiliar or that they do not master completely. Without wishing to, they might even refuse to adhere to it wholeheartedly and, in so doing, reduce its effectiveness.

² The instructor's roles are the subject of the second reference text in this module. See p. 45.



Therefore, the community worker's commitment to the social circus method is indispensable for the success of the social intervention. A profound belief in the constructive impact of the use of circus arts on the personal and social development of the participants is a key ingredient of success. It is also an opportunity for the community workers to discover and learn to master an approach that will serve them well in other social intervention situations, apart from social circus workshops.

TO KEEP IN MIND...

Passing the torch!

The presence of a stable intervention team is an important factor for ensuring the durability of a social circus project and inspiring profound change in the lives of youth and the community. However, experience has taught us that there is always a high turnover rate of circus instructors and community workers within the same social circus project. Given these circumstances, it's crucial that organizations implement measures to help staff share knowledge – especially since it cannot be taken for granted that everyone knows what social circus means. Taking the time to explain the existing objectives, educational approach, resources and roles clearly to new arrivals is an invaluable part of the process.

• Human and professional qualities of the community worker

Community workers who engage the social circus approach successfully all share a subtle combination of the following soft skills (human qualities) and professional skills (professional qualities):

- A capacity to energize and motivate the participants, and get them to overcome their barriers;
- A capacity to recognize the personal needs of each participant while at the same time stimulating the collective commitment, drawing a balance between individual support and group intervention;
- Open-mindedness and the ability to work with other professionals, respecting each one's responsibilities and roles;
- Firmness and tact in the prevention and mediation of conflicts, notably by collectively defining and ensuring a set of rules to respect and by listening when the situation requires it;
- A capacity to adapt and be creative in the search for solutions to individual or collective problems;
- A capacity to plan and organize, specifically in managing groups.

All these qualities are rarely combined in one individual, but a strong community worker-instructor tandem will include all of the above qualities combined.



2. The roles of the community worker

As a general rule, the community worker plays the part of liaison between the social circus project and the participants. Employed by the local organization, the community worker often has intimate knowledge of the living environment of participants and, in some cases, has followed the course of their lives and even shared some of their difficulties. The community worker's roots in the living environment of participants give him opportunities to capture and maintain their interest in a social circus project. He can also be a great help in building a powerful bond of trust.

The community worker's first role consists in preparing the circus session: recruiting participants, finding the location, planning the workshops. During the workshops, his main responsibility is to develop bonds of trust with the participants, an indispensable condition for the effectiveness of the social circus approach. In fact, the quality of these relationships is at the root of any progress. Only where there is a strong and lasting bond of trust between the community worker and the participants can the circus lessons become life lessons.

In order to establish, develop and consolidate a lasting relation of trust, the community worker must above all be attentive to the difficulties and needs of participants (need for respect, safety, listening, recognition, affirmation, freedom and creativity). It is thus essential to maintain constant communication with each participant, not only during but also before and after the workshops.

The community worker must also ensure that the content and pace of the workshops are adapted to the capacities and needs of the participants, and that they fit in with the particular character of the community. Lastly, one of his roles is to make sure everyone understands and respects the rules of the workshops. This aspect is essential to developing a bond of trust, as it forms the basis of mutual respect, fairness and the safety of all.

3. The community worker and life lessons

One of the community worker's most important roles is to draw the attention of participants to the parallels and similarities between the lessons of circus disciplines and the realities of life in society. This responsibility leads him to promote real life lessons, such as by instilling certain attitudes when faced with a failure (losing graciously) and success (winning graciously).

The general idea to pass on is that the lessons learned during the workshops can be transposed into everyday life and they can serve to develop social skills, to define one's life goals, to take care of oneself and others and to adopt positive attitudes to life's unpredictable ups and downs.

The role of the community worker in this respect is to help the social circus workshop participants develop ways of learning and elements that will allow them to deal with life's inevitable situations. Day after day, everyone has to handle a multitude of situations that never turn out the same way.

The act of learning in general offers difficulties that must be faced and overcome. This is particularly true in learning circus disciplines, because a social circus workshop participant may have to deal with fear (of falling, of hurting himself, of not succeeding), with the inability to perform an action (from lack of strength or of motor coordination, or because he doesn't understand) or with irritation, stress, frustration and so on.



When a participant is confronted with failure, the community worker must help him to deal with adversity by extolling perseverance and courage. He must also seize the opportunity to show the participant how to draw positive lessons from his negative experiences, so as to gain personal enrichment. Analyzing the reasons for his failure will allow the participant to recognize his weaknesses, work out solutions and, as a result, have a better understanding of how to conduct himself to reach his goals.

This positive attitude toward difficulties and failure constitutes a fantastic winning card, not only in circus workshops but also in life. It is therefore very important that the community worker establish a link between the situation experienced in the workshop and those that the participant faces in everyday life.

A more subtle and sometimes more difficult task for the community worker is that of teaching the participant how to conduct himself after a success, in other words, to teach him how to win graciously. A success should obviously be celebrated by the person responsible for it, by the other participants and by the facilitators, but the community worker needs to be watchful about how it is done.

First of all, the community worker has to make sure that the pride of the person who has succeeded is not expressed too demonstratively, as this attitude can have a negative impact on the other participants as it can be construed as arrogance or vanity. In such cases, the community worker must promote the idea that a success is above all a source of motivation and not a reason to stand out or feel superior to the others.

It is also important that the community worker make the participants understand that success is often only temporary and that no victory can be taken for granted. Overconfidence arising from success can lead someone to slacken his efforts and, as a result, fail on a subsequent attempt. It is therefore necessary to stress that the best way to experience a victory is to stay on course and prepare oneself for the next challenge. The same goes for the various other facets surrounding the workshops.

4. The community worker's image with the participants

As a general rule, the image participants may have of the community worker is one of reason, responsibility (organization, safety) and relative authority (transmission and respect of the rules), the latter being shared with the instructor.

This image can be difficult to assume for some people and can even become a source of tension within the intervention tandem, with the instructor being perceived as a model of creativity. Nevertheless, the community worker is also the member of the team who is closest to the youths and who can understand them best. He contributes to establishing and developing bonds of trust, which often run deeper than those with the instructor, and he embodies continuity.

It should be remembered that this is a question of perception, so that the subject can be addressed with participants if necessary.



C) ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES OF TANDEM FACILITATION

Tandem facilitation by an instructor and a local community worker is one of the fundamentals of the social circus approach. Although it constitutes one of its best assets, also presents one of its greatest challenges. Co-facilitation is in itself challenging. One needs to be aware of the perceptions and expectations so as to deal with them in specific contexts.

1. Complementarity within the intervention tandem

The relevance of the tandem facilitation hinges largely on the complementarity between the instructor and the community worker, which can become a true partnership when the two facilitators share the same objectives with regard to the participants and the same commitment to the social circus approach.

From their different backgrounds, each one can draw on experiences and qualities that the other may lack. Working as a team lets them combine these strong points and direct them toward reaching the common goals of intervention.

With his rich experience in a particular field, the instructor brings his artistic, technical and educational knowledge of circus arts to the participants and the local community. For them, it is a new wealth, a window to another world, a different way of looking at things. This position can be a strong point because it gives him the detachment necessary for working with a group without being involved in its tensions or internal difficulties. Also, the instructor has experience in working with groups, which is not always true of the community worker, whose experience may be limited to individual counselling.

On the other hand, the community worker is familiar with the living environment realities of participants, for that is often where he comes from himself. Unlike the instructor, who only appears during workshops, the community worker stays in direct contact with the participants before, during and after the workshops. This proximity gives him the opportunity to work on a more personal level when that becomes necessary, such as when a participant has personal difficulties. He is also in a better position to develop a bond of trust with the participants, an indispensable condition for the development of their self-esteem.

2. Cohesion and planning in the tandem intervention situation

Given that the two facilitators act with the same group in the same space and at the same time, their actions are bound to overlap, each helping in the other's field of activity. The limits of this overlap must nevertheless remain clear for the youths. Cohesion in the intervention of the two facilitators and rigorous workshop planning are therefore indispensable.

• Sharing objectives and abilities

It is indispensable that the two facilitators share their respective objectives, so that each has a good understanding of the other's role, responsibilities and field of activity.

The community worker must specifically brief the instructor on the objectives of the local organization and pass on to him any relevant information concerning the situation of each participant, within the limits of confidentiality (psycho-social information or physical condition). This information will help the instructor adapt the training program's pace and content to the needs and abilities of the participants.



The instructor and the community worker should also communicate their strengths and weaknesses to each other. This honesty will encourage the development of a good partnership between them and help them make the most of their abilities in the interest of the participants.

• Work planning

With the psycho-social and physical details provided by the community worker, the two members of the intervention tandem can jointly set specific objectives for each participant before the workshops begin. These objectives must be constantly re-evaluated depending on the progress made, the successes achieved and the difficulties encountered.

Moreover, the instructor and the community worker are expected to rigorously plan for the running of the workshops, to carry out ongoing assessments of their interaction and make whatever adjustments are necessary. This planning, which must be transparent for the participants, guarantees the work cohesion of the two facilitators.

3. Avoid rivalry between the community worker and the instructor

The different perceptions between the role and the image of each member of the tandem can sometimes be a challenge for the community worker. During the workshops, the instructor is seen by the participants as a positive reference and a model inciting them to escape from their reality, while the community worker can seem like the voice of reason. This situation is quite normal, but it can present problems if a rivalry develops between the two facilitators to win the attention and admiration of the participants. It is therefore indispensable that the community worker not consider the instructor as a rival but, thanks to the fascination he holds over the group, as an ally who can help him carry out his work.

4. The place of the community worker in circus lessons

The place of the community worker in circus lessons must also be particularly well-defined. In this regard, he must steer a course between two opposing risks of loss of control: the community worker-participant and the community worker-spectator. These two traps can undermine the balance necessary for establishing a bond of trust with the participants and thereby jeopardize the success of the intervention.

The community worker must both observe the participants and be involved in the workshop, in a balanced way, so as to be able to understand the participants and what they are going through over the course of the session. His participation in the activities is meant to show that circus arts can be practised by everyone. By achieving this balance, he develops an optimal relationship with the participants and becomes both responsible and understanding, observer and actor, playful and serious.

• The community worker-participant

Circus arts exert such a power of fascination that they can lead the community worker to participate too actively in the workshops, to the point of wanting to master a discipline himself. Even if his active commitment during the workshops must be real, in such a way as to create and consolidate a close bond with the participants, the community worker must be conscious of how much time he spends personally learning and practising circus disciplines. If he puts a lot of time and energy into it, he risks neglecting his role of observing and helping participants progress, thus compromising his work.



Moreover, his image as a person responsible for supervising the group could be weakened in the eyes of the participants, who might then consider him as a participant in the program, with the same status as them. The consequence of this shift would be to undermine his position of relative authority, a position that ensures the legitimacy of his interventions with the participants.

The community worker should therefore not lose sight of the fact that his active participation in the workshops is intended to improve his contact with the participants, but it should never make him forget the particular role that he plays within the group.

- **The community worker-spectator**

The flip side of the community worker-participant, the community worker-spectator draws back from the group's circus learning activities during the workshops, often from a desire to understand the progress of the participants and the group dynamic. Even though observation is one of the community worker's key roles, his work can be hampered by keeping too much in the background from the group and its activities, and making him lose contact with the participants. By adopting this behaviour, the community worker risks having the group start keeping him at a distance and developing a negative attitude toward him, even to the point of distrust.

This situation could be disastrous since the community worker's main role is to establish bonds of trust with the participants and to be able to help them in their personal and social development. By contenting himself with the position of spectator, the community worker deprives himself of the opportunity to draw participant attention to the life lessons that can be learned from circus lessons.

It is therefore necessary for the community worker to take part, on occasion, in the games and the physical training of the workshops and even to share his impressions with the participants afterwards; this can even be an excellent way to get them to do the same.



MODULE 2 | REFERENCE TEXT 2**THE INSTRUCTOR'S ROLE IN SOCIAL CIRCUS³***By Michel Lafortune*

Social circus instructors are asked to teach circus techniques as part of an educational program, but they are also called upon to help youth in their overall development by acting as important role models for that growth process. Teaching the circus arts is basically a pretext for building a trusting relationship with at-risk youth and giving them the resources they need to grow.

In order to understand at-risk youth and the complexities of their milieu, instructors must have strong social awareness, developed educational skills and a spirit of openness. Instructors must also have realistic expectations about what participants can learn and put the focus on effort instead of results.

The duties and responsibilities of the instructor are determined by the work mandate. This mandate is defined by how far advanced the intervention program is, as well as the circumstances and development of the youth participating in the circus workshops.

DEFINING THE INSTRUCTOR'S MANDATE

The mandate issued by the hiring organization outlines the responsibilities and determines the social circus instructor's field of activity. It must be clearly understood by the instructor and employer, as well as by the local community and other workers in the field (organization coordinator, assistant instructor, community worker, etc.). The clearer the mandate and the more realistic the expectations, the easier it will be to achieve the objectives.

The instructor's mandate will vary according to certain factors:

- Instructor status (coordinator, assistant, intern, etc.)
- Individual experience and qualifications
- How far advanced the program is at the time
- The length of the work mandate
- The needs and expectations expressed by the community and the program's partner organizations

THE INSTRUCTOR'S OBJECTIVES

As part of the work, the social circus instructor must be able to do the following:

- Adapt to the socio-economic and cultural realities, as well as the overall skills of participants.
- Take into consideration the cultural codes, lifestyles and unique customs of the community in which the intervention is taking place.
- Quickly find available resources to ease the process of producing these workshops.

³ Michel Lafortune, "Le rôle de l'instructeur de cirque social," in C. Dagenais, C. Mercier and J. Rivard, *Handbook for Coaches and Partners of the Cirque du Monde Program*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: Cirque du Soleil, Social Affairs and International Cooperation Department, 2001), fact sheet 8.

- Respect the rules and vision of the partner organization.
- Encourage other individuals in the community (family, friends, members of the partner organization) to participate and support the youth's involvement.

THE INSTRUCTOR'S RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of the social circus instructor will vary depending on the mandate given and must be carried out with the partner community. Responsibilities include the following:

- Organizing and planning circus workshops
- Facilitating circus workshops appropriate to the needs and proficiency of the participants: introducing the circus arts, refining techniques, introducing artistic elements (acting, characters, etc.), preparing a public performance
- Setting up and maintaining a physically and emotionally safe environment for the workshops
- Handling materials and logistics
- Evaluating all activities, from preparing to running the workshops and briefing the relief team

THE INSTRUCTOR'S ROLES

For workshop participants, the social circus instructor must do the following:

- Prepare and teach circus activities appropriate to the skills and experience of participants, as part of an educational initiative that takes their overall development into consideration.
- Listen to participants, paying special attention to their needs, stages of development and limits.
- Empower participants through learning, and provide them with a wide range of tools to keep them stimulated and actively involved in the learning process.

For community workers, the instructor must do the following:

- Develop a relation of trust and encourage teamwork in a complementary and harmonized way, in accordance with the tandem facilitation model.

For directors of the partner organization, the instructor must:

- Gear the program's general intervention toward the local community eventually taking charge.

Lastly, the instructor may also play a role in the community. As such, the instructor must do the following:

- Contribute to changing the community's perception of at-risk youth by encouraging involvement in circus activities or public performances.



THE INSTRUCTOR'S POSITION AND MOTIVES

Social circus instructors must oftentimes find a compromise between the mandate they've been given and their own personal ambitions. This allows the instructor to remain balanced and composed when managing tasks and dealing with the expectations of project collaborators.

The instructor's motivations can be defined using the four main values for volunteers, as generally outlined by NGOs (non-governmental organizations) for international cooperation:

- Professional challenges
- Social engagement
- Cultural challenges
- Personal experience

DEFINING THE INSTRUCTOR'S LIMITS

It is difficult to define the instructor's limits, but in a general sense, social circus instructors teach circus techniques, get involved with at-risk youth and support community workers and local partner organizations. The mandate will determine what's required and must clearly define the instructor's responsibilities and scope of action, as well as the position to be assumed by the instructor, employer and community partners.

THE ATTITUDES TO ADOPT

The arrival of a social circus instructor in a community can disrupt its usual activities and work methods. However, the introduction of new methods, interventions and tools for change can be well received if they are presented with respect and flexibility, gradually introduced so as to build consensus and framed in a spirit of mutual help and support.

It is therefore important to adopt and maintain an attitude that is open, attentive, flexible, respectful, humble and cooperative. Also, instructors must remember to be adaptable to the realities of the community and the context in which they are working. The attitude adopted will always transcend action. After the instructor has left, the circus skills taught will remain in the community, of course, but the attitude displayed by the instructor when sharing these skills will have a far more lasting effect.



MODULE 2 | ACTIVITY 1

PROFILES

OBJECTIVE

To understand the roles of instructor and community worker.

EXPERIENCE

The trainer divides the group into four teams, each one composed of both instructors and community workers. Two teams are put in charge of creating the profile for a social circus instructor, while the other two teams create the profile for a community worker. One person per team lies down on a large piece of paper placed on the floor as a second team member runs a pen around his or her body, outlining the shape. The teams then write keywords on the paper corresponding to the knowledge (know-how: in the head), skills (abilities: in the hands), attitudes (interpersonal: in the heart), experience (in the feet) and responsibilities (on the shoulders) associated with being an instructor or community worker (see figure 2.1). Teams use the space beyond the outline to define the limitations of what an instructor or community worker can do. Depending on the group's experience, the trainer may decide to assign only two or three areas of the profile to each team; for example, skills and responsibilities. Once they've completed the task, the teams attach their profiles to the wall with scotch tape.

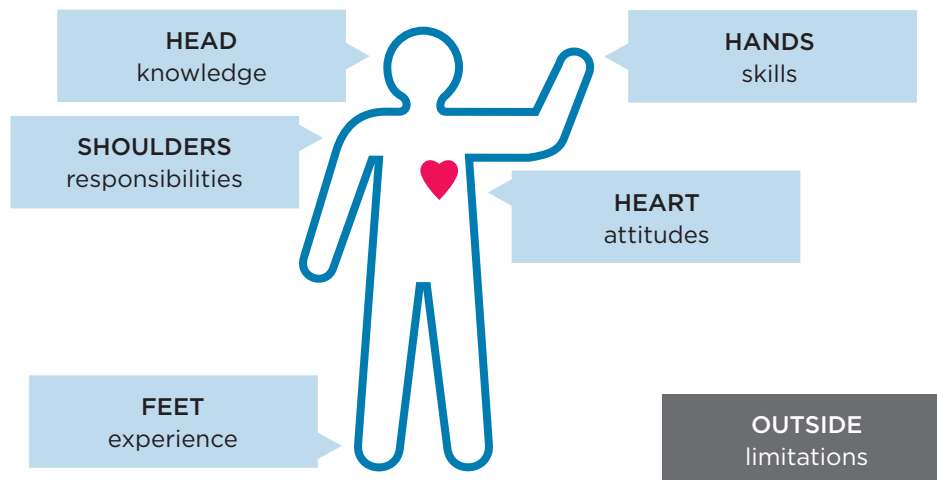
Length of activity
30-45 minutes

Materials
Large sheets of paper,
felt-tip pens

*For the alternative: large sheet
of paper, scotch tape,
magazines and scissors*

Number of participants
20-25

FIGURE 2.1 - PROFILES





OBSERVATION

The trainer asks the group to observe the profiles created by each team.

- What strikes you first? (For example: the originality of the drawing, bigger proportions for some parts of the body, the large or small number of keywords associated with one part of the profile, etc.)

The trainer then addresses the teams that worked on the profile for a social circus instructor:

- How did your team find the experience? What were the easiest tasks? What were the most difficult?
- On what points did the two teams agree? On what points did you disagree?

The trainer adapts these questions for the teams that worked on a profile for the community worker.



INTEGRATION

- Did all members of your team generally agree? Did you feel as if the instructors and community workers had different visions of what a social circus instructor should be?
- What are the roles of the social circus instructor and community worker?
- How do other related individuals and parties (participants, members of the intervention team, partner organizations, the community) distinguish these two roles from one another?
- Are instructors and community workers catalysts for change? How so?
- What are the limits to what an instructor and community worker can do?
- In general, what do the roles of instructor and community worker have in common? How are the roles different? How are the roles complementary?
- What are the instructor's expectations of the community worker? The community worker's expectations of the instructor?
- What influences the way in which each one perceives his or her role?



APPLICATION

- In your social circus project, do you clearly understand your role and the role of other members of your facilitation team? Do the others understand?

The trainer asks the instructors and community workers to spend a few minutes outlining their own profile and adding their strengths, as well as the areas for improvement, to the relevant category. Lastly, the trainer encourages all participants to use the drawing when they return to work in order to help clarify their role on their team.



ALTERNATIVES

1. The trainer divides the group into four teams and asks each team to create one drawing that outlines the qualities of an ideal social circus instructor and community worker. The profiles may include keywords or a slogan.
2. The trainer attaches two large sheets of paper to the wall, labelling one “instructor” and the other “community worker,” and asks the whole group to create a collective collage. The trainer then distributes magazines and asks community workers to select an image that best represents their understanding of what an instructor should be – and vice versa. Each participant then cuts out the chosen image and attaches it to the large sheet of paper. At this point, the trainer asks participants to explain the link between the selected image and their understanding of what their counterpart does, in a few words (e.g. “I chose the image of a highway, because I believe that a community worker accompanies youth on their journey.”)

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR TRAINERS

Cirque du Soleil favours the instructor-community worker tandem facilitation approach. However, the trainer must adapt to the reality of the group attending each training session. When working with a group solely composed of social circus instructors who do not work with community workers, this activity can be adapted by putting the focus solely on the role of the instructor. Nevertheless, the trainer must still maintain an open space where the role of the community worker can also be discussed.

NOTES



MODULE 2 | KEY MESSAGES

Both the social circus instructor and community worker must be highly adaptable to the needs of participants, other members of the facilitation team, partner organizations and the community, as well as to the context.

As adult figures, the instructor and community worker are role models for participants.

Instructors and community workers must be instigators, facilitators and catalysts for social change.

It is imperative that social circus instructors and community workers are consistent and reliable in all interactions with participants.





They should not be pitied, even if they are at risk. These young people must be treated as equals. There is so much help available to them. But at-risk youth must take responsibility for – and also take charge of – their situation. The day when a young person decides to make a change, to do what he or she really wants to do, there will be no limit to what can be achieved. There was one young girl who sat “paralyzed” on the bench for three years. We respected her decision. She still joked around and talked with the community workers. Then, two years ago, when we started aerials, she fell in love with the trapeze. From that point on, everything about her changed: her lifestyle, eating habits, training, wardrobe, etc. She’s now trying to get into the circus school in Quebec City.

Marc Lafrenière, Social Circus Instructor
Cirque du Monde, Sherbrooke



MODULE 3 - OBJECTIVES

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

1. Comprehend how the social circus approach addresses inclusion and marginality.
2. Gain a better understanding of the realities of young people locally and abroad.
3. Define the concept of resilience.

CONTENTS OF THIS MODULE

REFERENCE TEXTS

- Working with At-risk Youth
- At-risk Youth – Here and Abroad
- The Main Stages of Development in Young People

ACTIVITIES

- The Scale
- Group Travel



MODULE 3 | INTRODUCTION

Participants in social circus workshops are generally at-risk youth, that is, young people living in precarious social, psychological and economic conditions. This includes street youth, youth in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, youth under the care of protection agencies, young persons in trouble with the law and so on. Their situation is often the result of growing up in a poor family or underprivileged community, circumstances that put a great strain on family and social relationships (conflicts, abandonment, running away, sudden departures, early entry in the workforce) and lead to marginalization.

Each young person has a unique history, a fact facilitators must be aware of and attentive to in order to understand each individual journey. However, it is also true that these youth are undergoing the same physical, cognitive and emotional stages of development as others their age. Adolescence, in particular, is an extremely intense period, a time when young people begin planning their futures and laying the groundwork for their adult lives. Instructors and community workers must be familiar with the various developmental stages in order to adapt their teaching approach to each age group and assume the appropriate attitude when dealing with participants.

Traditional intervention methods are not always applicable when dealing with at-risk youth. Instructors and community workers must create a trusting environment that is safe, fun and creative, and use adapted intervention strategies. Social circus uses inclusion as the preferred intervention approach: the experiences of young people are not trivialized, mocked or denied, but rather, integrated into the intervention process. By acknowledging the creativity of marginalized, at-risk youth, we enable them to access their personal and social development skills, as well as to find tools to become more engaged in their own lives.

The social circus intervention approach is largely based on the concept of resilience. By discarding all prejudices against the traumas experienced by young people and by recognizing these events as being potentially enriching, the instructor and community worker encourage youth to gain perspective, and then use this knowledge to cast off their victim status and resume control of their lives. However, for this to happen, facilitators must adopt a certain number of psychological, educational and interpersonal strategies, including: assuming the role of initiator, creating a space for free expression, forming a membership group, establishing rituals, creatively managing behavioural problems, exploring other points of view about life, using humour and encouraging change.



MODULE 3 | REFERENCE TEXT 1

WORKING WITH AT-RISK YOUTH¹

By Dirce Morelli and Michel Lafortune

Resilience requires us to change the way we think about trauma and its consequences. It also forces us to discard any prejudice we may have against those who have survived trauma or are going through a difficult period in their lives. We now know that if we approach these people with non-judgment, their history does not have to dictate their destiny. It is therefore important to engage with these individuals and their resources, and to recognize the importance of their social context, rather than focus solely on their wounds and the potential consequences.

We know that youth who have survived extremely difficult circumstances possess vital energy that – with our help – can assist them in transforming and recreating their lives. Oftentimes, their creative ability is not limited to the self, but can also help them become more conscious, more engaged and more creative beings on a broader social level as well.

The view of human beings put forward by this approach is one that values the uniqueness of every individual, all of whom have their own biological, psychological and affective characteristics, life history, talents, resources and adaptive skills. This vision pushes us to search for treasures buried under socially unacceptable behaviours or problematic personal attitudes.

This vision shows us the important role that the immediate environment, family, peer group, neighbourhood and culture play in the wounded's ability to develop resilience, as well as their sense of responsibility should they face rejection, stigmatization or isolation.

We must also bear in mind that this technique cannot be applied in every case. To successfully intervene, we must develop the ability to discern the unique aspects of each participant and use an approach adapted to that uniqueness.

TO KEEP IN MIND...

To each his own!

Social circus workshops can greatly benefit a wide variety of at-risk populations, including street youth, drug addicts, detainees, women who have suffered physical or sexual abuse or even the physically disabled. All these groups have specific needs that require an in-depth understanding of the realities they face. Social circus instructors cannot pretend to be experts when intervening with certain groups, which is why it's so important to work with a qualified community worker.

¹ Adapted from Diane Morelli and Michel Lafortune, *The Phoenix: Building the Concept of Resilience into Cirque du Monde Practices* (Montreal: Cirque du Soleil, Social Affairs and International Cooperation Department, 2003).



Obviously, the application of this approach involves us calling ourselves, our beliefs and our behaviours into question. It also provokes us to reflect on the meaning we give to our intervention work with youth, as well as to our personal and professional goals. When we ask youth to be open to the possibility of change, we must ask the same of ourselves.

Each young person we work with is unique, just as each facilitator is unique. Therefore, each and every one of us should follow the basic principles outlined here with a deep commitment to ourselves, our qualities and our talents, which are different from those of other instructors and community workers. Each one of us adds a unique and personal flavour to what we do.

We must also bear in mind that the basic framework for any intervention is the community, which must also become involved in the process of change. Community involvement enables youth to find mentors who can continue to provide messages of recognition and support long after the workshops are over.

We will begin by defining the underlying notions that support the concept of resilience and the dynamics of its manifestation in individuals and groups.

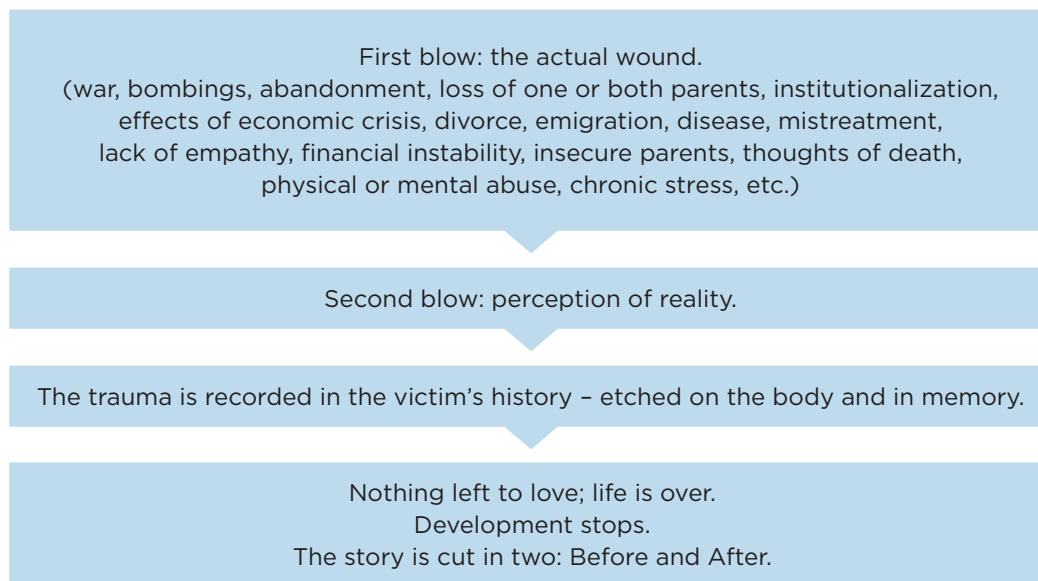
1. TRAUMA

Trauma is a two-stage process:

- The first blow, or the event itself, which results in a wound or loss.
- The second blow, which comes from the victim's perception of the experience. The real trauma stems from the victim's internal narrative, which is to say the image of the self, as well as the role the victim played in the event, fed by what the victim knows to be the opinion of the social group.

Therefore, the severity of an injury depends on the familial, social and cultural context in which it occurred.

FIGURE 3.1 | HOW TRAUMA OCCURS

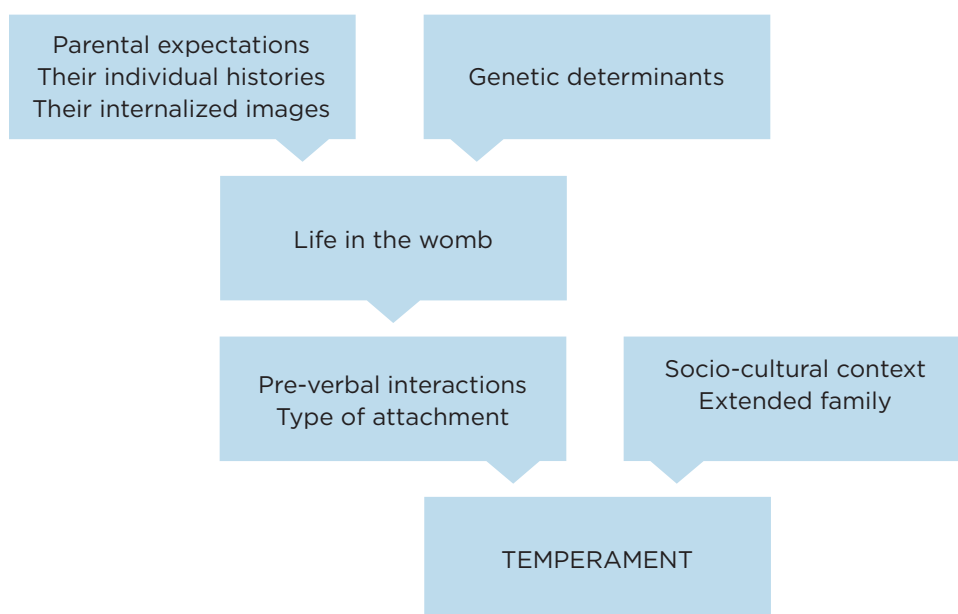


2. TEMPERAMENT

Temperament is the foundation upon which the capacity for resilience is built, as well as the basis for all behaviour and personality. Psychologists have come to the conclusion that temperament is neither innate, nor immutable, but that, in addition to genetic determinants and above all, it is based on the environment and socio-cultural context into which the child is born and lives. Genetic determinants, incidentally, must not be seen as irreversible; on the contrary, it is often easier to correct a metabolic problem than it is to combat prejudice.

The environment - in particular the family, which is heavily imbued with the individual history of each parent, as well as their internalized images and expectations - has an impact even before the child is born. After birth, the type of bonding that develops in pre-verbal interaction and the socio-cultural milieu will also play a major role in determining temperament. Moreover, our temperament influences how we relate to our environment and, consequently, how others respond to us.

FIGURE 3.2 - HOW TEMPERAMENT DEVELOPS



3. ATTACHMENT

The theory of attachment² relates to the bond that develops between a baby and its primary caregiver, usually its mother. This attachment is dependent on the relationship between the two, particularly in the way that the adult responds to the child's care and security needs. It is also what guarantees the healthy social and emotional development of the child.

² Mary Dinsmore Salter Ainsworth, Mary Curtis Blehar, Everett Waters and Sally Wall, *Patterns of Attachment* (Hillsdale: Erlbaum, 1978); John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss, Vol. 1: Attachment* (New York: Basic Books, 1969); Mary Main and Judith Solomon, "Discovery of an Insecure-Disorganized/Disoriented Attachment Pattern: Procedures, Findings and Implications for the Classification of Behavior," in *Affective Development in Infancy*, ed. T. B. Brazelton and M. W. Yogman (Norwood: Ablex, 1986), pp. 95-124.

We can identify four types of attachment:

- **Secure attachment**, which occurs in about 60% of children, develops when the attachment figure is available and sensitive to the child's needs. As a result, children feel confident that they will not be abandoned and that the attachment figure will protect them in case of danger. Simply put, these children feel secure in this relationship. If trauma occurs or if the attachment figure disappears, these children will be equipped to search for effective substitutes. Children in this case have the best prognosis for development and a good capacity for resilience.
- **Avoidant attachment** occurs with approximately 15% of children. Over time, these children have learned not to rely on the attachment figure, who rejects them and is not very attentive to their needs. As a result, these children have not acquired the internal resources that would enable them to find a stable substitute or to seek out and develop a new emotional bond with an unknown person. These children remain aloof from those who would like to take care of them.
- **Ambivalent attachment**, which affects about 10% of children, occurs when the attachment figure is frequently insensitive to the child's needs, causing the child to doubt the availability of this figure. Not inclined to exploration, these children have also not learned to establish a helping relationship through means other than expressing distress. Showing distress results from a hope that help will be provided, but in most cases, this behaviour actually causes the adult to detach from and reject them.
- **Disorganized attachment** occurs with approximately 15% of children. In this case, the attachment figure displays contradictory behaviours that are sometimes frightening to the child. Totally disoriented, the children are unable to develop any strategies to seek affective bonds or fight despair. These children do not know how to turn to a parent, a stranger, an object or even to their own body. Their behaviour disorients adults, who consequently reject the child in question.

It is important to note that resilience can be achieved in all cases. Evidently, it is easier in the case of secure attachment and a little more difficult with avoidant attachment. But even in these last two cases, if someone with great patience succeeds in establishing a secure attachment, there is hope that development can continue and that resilience can occur.

At this point, it is quite evident (sadly) that the children and adolescents who need the most help and support in life are also those who have not acquired the skills necessary to find that help.

This point underscores the importance of breaking the cycle of rejection through the intervention process. This vision encourages instructors and community workers to develop the ability to spot these behaviours and demonstrate different reactions so as to introduce a new dynamic into their relationships with these children.



4. PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND RESILIENCE SUPPORTS

Protective factors are often confused with mental disorders and behavioural problems that need treatment. In fact, at-risk youth adopt these strategies in crisis situations to protect themselves – oftentimes temporarily, with inconsistent results and with some degree of social acceptability – and maintain some sense of integrity while they wait for a helping hand to lead them back toward the light.

Here are some of the most common protective factors displayed by life's walking wounded.

- **Cleavage:** The individual's personality is split into a socially acceptable self and a second, more secret self that displays unexpected and surprising behaviours. *Marco shows compliant behaviour during workshops, but when a conflict situation arises, he demonstrates a completely different way of functioning.*
- **Denial:** The individual is unable to see a dangerous situation or tends to trivialize a painful wound. *Every time someone talks about incest, Johnny acts as though he has never heard of it before.*
- **Daydreaming:** This strategy enables the individual to build an imaginary world that is more beautiful than the painful truth. *Fanny describes her house as if it were a luxurious mansion, even though she lives in a very poor dwelling.*
- **Intellectualization:** This strategy permits the individual to avoid a confrontation that would get personal. To overcome or avoid the adversary, this person resorts to abstractions and generalizations. *When faced with an emotionally charged situation, Luis chooses to explain why the situation is complex and then analyzes all the contributing factors.*
- **Sublimation:** Aggressive or sexual impulses are channelled into socially acceptable activities such as art or helping others. *Alice has difficulty forming intimate relationships with boys, so she passionately helps the less fortunate instead.*
- **Isolation:** The traumatic incident is stripped of its emotional intensity and recalled with no emotion. *Piera downplays the impact of what she suffered: "A gang rape is no big deal..."*
- **Hyperactivity:** When in an environment that does not provide sufficient structure, this strategy allows children to respond, briefly but intensely, to all stimuli, and thus force others to pay attention to them. *People coming into the room and walking around the workshop are a constant distraction for Yan. He goes over to them, talks to them and must constantly be disciplined.*
- **Fantasizing:** This strategy enables children with no stability to imagine an all-powerful parent somewhere in the world who can anchor and support them during difficult times. *Anne-Lise can't stop inventing adventures for her imaginary mother.*
- **Disengagement** (non-autistic): A sort of protective cocoon in which stimuli are filtered before being received and integrated. This strategy replaces the ineffective or absent parent-mediator. *Denis is indifferent to any stimuli that would usually move him. This is how he defends himself against possible attacks. He will only process and assess the received information later.*



- **Delinquency:** In poorer neighbourhoods, becoming a drug dealer is often an act of resilience following humiliations suffered at school, in the family, on the street or in society in general. Blocked in their pursuit of social and cultural development, these young people become resilient by behaving in a delinquent manner. *Street kids survive by participating in illegal activities. It allows them to become part of a group, boost their self-esteem through their abilities and feel satisfaction knowing that the money they earn will help their families.*
- **Psychosomatic problems:** This strategy has the advantage of drawing the parents' attention away from their own concerns and toward the child. *When Claudia gets anxious, she experiences intense stomach cramps. These symptoms attract the attention of her usually distant mother, who then takes the time to rock Claudia and soothe the child's pain.*

Resilience supports are external factors in young people's environment that can help them achieve resilience. Here are some examples:

- A significant encounter can transform a life.
- The meaning we succeed in giving to events and to life itself will enable us to create a life plan and even light the way.
- Developing creativity will lay the foundations for a change in the way we see ourselves and others see us.
- We can rebuild our self-esteem.
- Humour can help us to defuse tense situations and create an aura of compassion around us.
- Belonging to a community will root us in the reality of our own experience, while the solidarity and mutual help we forge in that community will enable us to feel more important.
- Social, cultural or religious involvement will help give meaning to our existence and provide a secure place where love, action and talk can flourish, and where all these supports will be in place to help us reconstruct our life and invent a new reality.
- A change in our cultural references will transform our past, making it more acceptable.

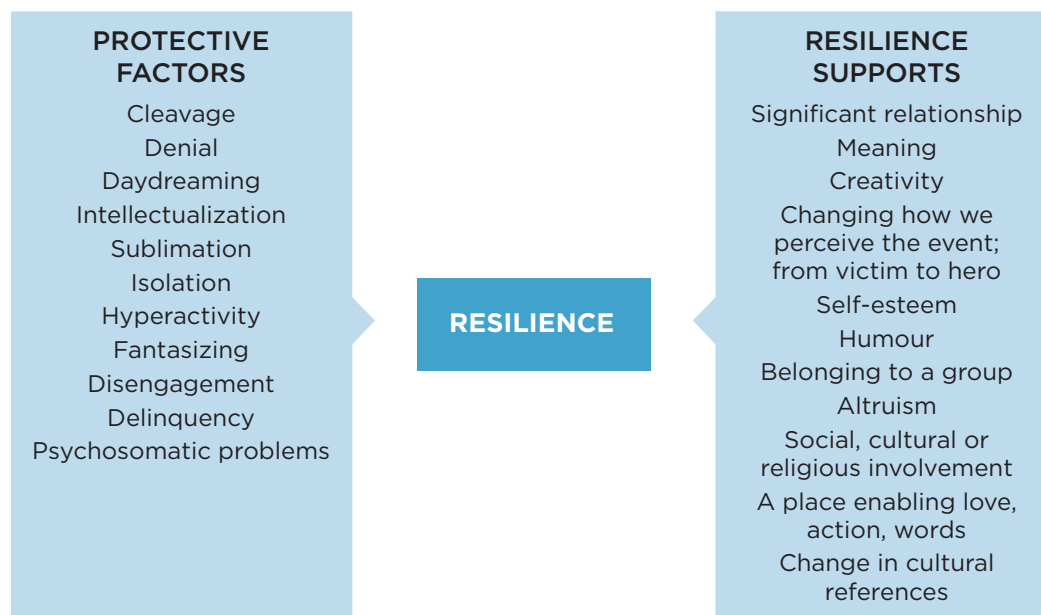
THE MAGIC OF CHANGE

The following are the main goals of intervention:

- To create resilience supports for youth
- To foster hope for a fulfilling life regardless of what has happened in the past
- To promote a new way of looking at experiences that allows youth to cast off their victim role
- To encourage the exploration of other ways of being, living and thinking
- To help individuals regain control of their lives through creative practices that nurture a new vision of the world



FIGURE 3.3 – PROTECTIVE FACTORS AND RESILIENCE SUPPORTS



Creating a project that leaves the past behind, transforming a painful moment into a triumphant or amusing memory – these examples aptly describe what resilience does. This emotional distancing is made possible through the use of protective factors, such as creativity.

Creative culture is the social glue that leads to hope in the face of tribulation, whereas passive culture is a distraction that kills time but resolves nothing.

TAKING A DEVELOPMENTAL VIEW OF YOUTH

Because they disrupt the balance of forces at play and lead to a new situation, all interventions can have a negative or positive impact. As facilitators, it is our responsibility to ensure that the impact of our work is positive.

This is why we must view the youth we work with as persons in development, whose current situation is the result of internal biological and psychological forces, combined with external family, cultural and social influences.

Therefore, we must develop the ability to recognize the strengths and skills of these young people and to emphasize these positive aspects when problematic behaviour needs to be addressed. In fact, problems tend to arise precisely when the soil is most fertile, that is, where feelings already exist and talent is obviously waiting to be discovered.

We therefore need to know how to decode the behaviour without letting ourselves be distracted by our relationship with the young person who has developed the behavioural problems. We must get to the essence of the person.

Instructors and community workers face the following challenges:

- To avoid further harm by always being conscious of how our words and actions could be negatively interpreted.
- To avoid categorizing, labelling or making any value judgments (e.g. insisting that all is irreversible after a certain age, claiming the inevitability of patterns repeating across generations, etc.) concerning the children, families and social groups with whom we interact as professionals and who are members of our community. The temptation is great – even if you're a doctor or social service provider – to reduce the person in front of you to a set of symptoms or problems, but this kind of behaviour is limiting.
- To avoid laying blame on those who have been wounded by life and who display behaviour that is considered deviant, dangerous or socially unacceptable: “We can only build on what is positive... But positive does not necessarily mean perfect.”³

IMPLEMENTING RESILIENCE SUPPORTS IN SOCIAL CIRCUS WORKSHOPS

The following is an overview of possible ways to integrate resilience supports into the framework of social circus workshops.

Firstly, we will explain how to create the preliminary conditions for implementing resilience supports into an intervention, mainly by adopting guidelines that have been deemed important and, in some cases, necessary. By preliminary conditions, we mean all the mental, psychological, philosophical, educational, interpersonal and organizational attitudes that should guide social circus instructors as they help youth to develop resilience.

Later, we will look at how to integrate these principles into the context of a social circus workshop.

Aiming for change

Since the goal is encouraging young people to change, it is best to target that change directly rather than express vague expectation. Consequently, it's important to set solid objectives that are respectful of everyone involved, rather than merely talking about good intentions.

- In a group situation, when individual therapy is not appropriate, we must foster a thirst for change and a conviction that change is possible. We will then work on setting personal goals for change.

Disconnected youth perceive the world as a hostile place that rejects them. In this perception of reality, the best that the world has to offer is a menial, alienating and poorly paid job, social isolation and the entertainment of passive culture to help them forget it all.

³ Stefan Vanistendael, *La résilience: Un regard qui fait vivre* (Paris: Bureau international catholique de l'enfance-BICE, 2002), p. 6.



Assuming the role of initiator

In a workshop, it is important to create a significant interpersonal relationship with youth and clarify the instructor's role.

No man can reveal to you aught but that which already lies half asleep in the dawning of our knowledge. The teacher who walks in the shadow of the temple, among his followers, gives not of his wisdom but rather of his faith and his lovingness. If he is indeed wise he does not bid you enter the house of wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind. For the vision of one man lends not its wings to another man.⁴

Once we have shown youth that we are attentive listeners and have a benevolent attitude, laughed with them and impressed them with our technical skills; once they have chosen us as role models; once contact has been established, we must help youth to express themselves to the best of their ability, acquire the skills they need and rebuild their self-esteem. It is also our responsibility to encourage them, recognize their every success, give them new and attainable challenges and help them achieve their goals, as well as assist them in accepting defeat.

By acting as initiators, we can offer youth the kind of quality relationship rarely found in their social circle. Although it has practically disappeared from our culture, the role of initiator is to invite – with a benevolent spirit – young persons to explore their selfhood through a technical learning process that goes beyond the simple transfer of knowledge. It is also the initiator who uses his or her teachings to introduce youth to life and relationships with others, and to help them progress through the stages of development.

Acknowledging that everyone has an active and important role to play

Another mainstay of social circus is teamwork. It is important to share workshop leadership in a realistic and efficient manner, all the while understanding that those who are not facilitating the workshop are just as important as those who are. All the time spent helping youth to learn a movement with precision, or correcting and encouraging them, is precious and essential at every step of the process, from learning techniques to developing resilience. Our efforts to help youth, as well as the attention we pay them, the courage we give them and the body awareness we help them gain, are all resilience supports.

Being direct

In making direct suggestions, we are not bending the will of these young people to our own will or power. Rather, it's an opportunity to help them go beyond their own beliefs and vision of the world (which has led them to where they are in the first place). It can also help them discover other ways of being and doing, and open them up to possible changes in their internal and external worlds.

This occurs when, for example, we stimulate their imagination by introducing them to never-before encountered images and situations, or when we suggest ties between their experience and ours, their culture and other cultures, or their music and other musical styles. In discarding cultural stereotypes, we open a new world of previously unexplored possibilities, because it was unknown.

⁴ Khalil Gibran, *The Prophet* (Middlesex: Echo Library, 2006), p. 25.



Asking a lot and giving a lot

We tend to think that intervention is successful when it offers youth many services. But this is not the case, since passively receiving help has no impact on self-esteem or on taking responsibility for one's own life. Young people must become their own catalysts for change:

Giving more is not the key to helping these children. On the contrary, we make them stronger by demanding more of them.⁵

Consequently, we must demand a lot from them and provide them with challenges, all the while properly assessing their abilities. We have to be realistic about what we ask for, and not yield to claims of "I can't" or "I don't feel like it" when we know that they are up to the task.

Having been prevented from acting in the past, when they wanted to, can sometimes lead young people to become lazy or to give up altogether. Helping them to overcome this obstacle triggers a surprising change. Oftentimes, the fear of making a mistake inhibits action, so it's important to give and inspire trust, as well as to maintain a confident attitude over time, despite the possibility of failure.

Creating a magical space

Whether workshops happen in a well-equipped room or a gymnasium with minimal facilities, let's make it a magical, sacred space. With just a few spotlights or the careful, artistic arrangement of equipment, we can create a protective bubble around our youth and activities.

Reproducing the same environment and dynamics that they are already familiar with does not serve our purpose. On the contrary, this space must offer these children a different way of relating to themselves, others and the world.

We also have to establish ground rules for using this space. Whenever we enter, we do so to work – it's not time for discussion. There is another space for that. Workshop preparation should also happen in this other, very distinct space.

Let's open the doors to the magic of change!

... and a space for free expression

For participants, the workshops will last between five and twenty hours per week. The rest of their lives happen elsewhere. To create a necessary buffer between these two realities, there should be a physical space set aside for talking. Since all internal changes call for and trigger external changes, youth will need to talk about and name what is happening in their lives.

In some workshop models, a community worker is present during the workshop. One of the roles that this worker could undertake is to create a link between these two worlds, which mutually reflect and define one another. This space will also be used for meetings and individual interventions requiring some privacy.

Forming a membership group

It's important to ensure, from the very first moment, that a membership group is harmoniously formed. This is why everything must be done to facilitate exchange and recognition between participants. Group games will facilitate the development of bonds,

⁵ Boris Cyrulnik, *Un merveilleux malheur* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1999), p. 48.



affinities and complementarities, but competitive games should be avoided. All participants must contribute what they can, setting their own benchmarks for improvement and not comparing themselves to others.

... and a peer-helper network

An informal peer-helper network can be established outside the workshops. This network, where mutual help, exchange and discussion can flourish, is nurtured by the values taught in the workshops and will help young participants rediscover meaning in their lives.

Establishing rituals

Rituals within a group serve to channel aggression into more acceptable forms that will positively affect the group and subsequently prevent action from drifting toward violence.⁶

Rituals integrated into a social circus workshop can take many forms. A greeting ritual helps to immerse participants in the present moment of the workshop and to disconnect from their outside problems; ultimately helping them to benefit fully from what they're learning. It is also a good idea to create codes, give nicknames or mark various stages or high points of a workshop with a ritual or gesture. These actions will save time and make young participants feel more secure.

For example, we could use a "virtual path," "sacred circle" or "tribe" to validate the group at the beginning or end of a workshop. A sign transmitted from person to person, a word spoken aloud, a message whispered from ear to ear or even hand clapping could be the signal that triggers a series of actions ending with the formation of the aforementioned circle or a specific configuration of bodies in space, or even indicate a new set of instructions, a change of rhythm and so on.

Recognizing the importance of rhythm

Rhythm plays an important role in workshop dynamics. The presence of several instructors gives the workshop a sustained rhythm. In fact, the workshop should be designed like a performance, with variations, intense high points and more quiet moments in which participants can better understand how individual and group work is interdependent and necessary. There must be no room for boredom.

This attention to rhythm helps us to avoid "dead" time, which inevitably leads to flare-ups of behavioural problems and discipline issues. It also enables us to sustain the group's motivation and reinforce the group dynamic.

Using laughter and humour

We use laughter and humour to create a relaxed atmosphere, defuse tense situations and laugh at ourselves... but never in a mocking way. These tools also help us to stand back from a situation, rather than taking things personally and getting mired in frustration. We must find as many opportunities as possible to laugh. Working on clown characters, for example, will help explore that part of our personality that delights in humour and the paradoxes of life:

When we laugh, we multiply our respiratory capacity by three or four times. This increases the secretion of saliva and digestive juices, aiding digestion.

⁶ Boris Cyrulnik, *Les nourritures affectives* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1993).



Laughter also releases sphincter muscles and relaxes all muscles. The diaphragm gets a lot of use too. Simply put, it's a sport (one minute of laughing is equal to ten minutes of jogging), a way to relax, and an effective remedy against your anxieties and the surrounding gloom.⁷

Letting words create

As we all know from experience, proper use of language is extremely important. Through words, we can give new life to a spirit that's waning, imbue an experience with meaning or show the way to self-discovery, but words can also put a damper on earnest effort, clip wings and discourage people.

From the moment we are born, and even before, our being (and the way we see the world) is shaped by the words spoken by our parents and those around us, as well as by the words used to describe us and our surrounding reality. The cultural beliefs of the community in which we live also contribute to forming our perception of reality and our own personal beliefs. If exposed to other words, even within the same culture, we would have developed a very different perception of ourselves and reality. But, ultimately, our beliefs, whatever they are, are imprinted on our behaviour and on our bodies.

Our language bears the marks of the social and familial context in which we were raised, and it is often difficult to translate and express all the subtle ideas that motivate our commitment when we intervene with words. It is thus important to take time to define and practise a new way of reading behaviour and speaking.

Exploring other perspectives on life

Changing our perception of reality and adopting another point of view are creative acts that can occur through the use of words. However, it is unnecessary to introduce youth to alternative visions or beliefs. Rather, the goal is to provide them with the tools required to create their own fresh perspective by listening to and respecting their inner voices.

We influence the body through circus arts, while the mind is influenced by character play, but we can also use words, images and symbols to foster the kind of creativity needed to reinvent a life.

Adopting a new perspective on life brings about a change in our perception of the past. If, for example, we are no longer able to see life from the victim standpoint, we can view our past – and the role we played in it – in a much different light. The impact that this past will now have on our present and future will be different. This change is necessary to promote resilience.

To transfer the workshop experience to – or anchor it in – the daily lives of these youth and enable them to explore their new aptitude for change in the outside world, post-workshop prescriptions may be used.⁸ These tools let us explore, in words and actions, a different way of living. Prescriptions range from instructions on how to continue to develop physical gains made during the workshop (e.g. maintaining a particular attitude or physical posture) to organizing theatre games around the concept of “playing pretend.” It could also involve working in a small group that builds on a broader idea with social, artistic or poetic implications.⁹

⁷ “Osez plus souvent le rire et l'humour,” *Top Famille*, March 2002.

⁸ By “prescription” we mean suggestions given at the end of a workshop that can be acted upon by the individual or group once outside the workshop context.

⁹ We are referring to what Jodorowsky calls the poetic act, the theatrical act and the psychomagic act. Alexandro Jodorowsky, *Le théâtre de la guérison: une thérapie panique, la psychomagie* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1994).



Managing behavioural problems creatively

How can we find new ways to resolve behavioural problems?

When children act out their feelings through inappropriate behaviour at home and school, the traditional carrot-and-stick approach is often favoured. This method is also used in the army and by totalitarian governments. Although it may sometimes work with children who are already motivated, we know that it does not work with at-risk youth – except at the cost of breaking their spirits even further. This method does not create authentic motivation or real initiative, because acting under the threat of sanction is neither rewarding, nor motivating.

There are other methods that do not treat the underlying causes of behaviour, but rather focus, simply and directly, on changing attitudes. These methods can work marvellously well in circus workshops featuring character work.

Learning to read and interpret non-verbal signs

In order to apply this vision to our work with youth, we have to break with our own behavioural and interpersonal patterns, as well as confront our own prejudices and beliefs. We must also perfect our ability to read and interpret the verbal, physical, cultural and behavioural signs employed by the youth with whom we are working.

We must remember that communication is a system comprising speech, gestures, sight, sound, touch, smell and taste. We need to learn their language so that young people can feel understood. Only then can we introduce other languages to expand their views of the world.



MODULE 3 | REFERENCE TEXT 2

AT-RISK YOUTH - HERE AND ABROAD¹⁰

By *Andréa Seminario*

This paper was written as a general reflection on the problem of at-risk youth, a dilemma that touches communities around the world. It covers the subject of spaces occupied by this youth and the process of social exclusion, as well as the different types of intervention targeting the at-risk. Statistics, expert commentary and testimonials are used throughout the text to illustrate the circumstances of at-risk youth in various countries. These young people experience such vastly different realities that it is sometimes difficult to identify the reasons for such a range of life experiences and contexts.

In the beginning, the *Cirque du Monde* program was devoted to helping street kids. Today, it also speaks to troubled youth or at-risk youth, with a particular interest in youth living on the street... This shift in mandate came about for several reasons. First, we gradually learned that the youth participating in the workshops were not necessarily living on the street, even if they accessed resources designed for that youth category (such as the case in Rio de Janeiro, Quebec City, downtown Montreal, Santiago and Recife). Then, following a 1996 conference in Amsterdam, we discovered that those who work with youth – as well as the young people themselves – do not like the term “street kids.” Finally, when the *Cirque du Monde* program started expanding, certain sites (e.g. the Saint-Michel borough in Montreal) began to include youth that had never lived on the streets, as well as young people that did.¹¹

THE CONCEPT OF “AT-RISK YOUTH”

First and foremost, let us define the concept of at-risk youth, which is large and inclusive. According to Rivard, the expression “at-risk youth” first arose when youth and intervention workers were reluctant to use the term “street kids,” which represents a subgroup of young people who live in particularly difficult circumstances.¹² In response, *Cirque du Soleil* chose to use “at-risk youth” instead. However, regardless of the designation used for these young persons, what they have in common is the great social, psychological and economic hardships they face or the dangerous conditions in which they live, whether it be in Northern or Southern countries. This group comprises marginalized youth and youth living on the streets, as well as excluded youth, youth from disadvantaged neighbourhoods, youth under protection, youth in trouble with the law, working youth and so on.¹³

The following are among the most common difficulties faced by at-risk youth: poverty, the breakdown of familial and social relationships, and the process of marginalization. It is important to note that these factors will only lead to exclusion if young persons and those around them assign meaning and importance to these factors. In order to grasp how at-risk youth ended up where they are today, we must attempt to understand the

¹⁰ Andréa Seminario, *Jeunes en situation précaire ici et ailleurs* (internal document, Montreal, Cirque du Soleil, 2000 and 2010).

¹¹ Jacinthe Rivard, “Un modèle d’action sociale auprès des jeunes en difficulté: le cas de *Cirque du Monde*” (comprehensive examination, Montreal, Université de Montréal, Programme des Sciences humaines appliquées, Faculté des études supérieures, 2000), pp. 9-10.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Cristian Dagenais, Céline Mercier and Jacinthe Rivard, *Handbook for Coaches and Partners of the Cirque du Monde Program* (Montreal: Cirque du Soleil, Social Affairs and International Cooperation Department, 2001), fact sheet 7.1.



links between these difficulties, the degree of exclusion and the meaning attributed to the events that precipitated the exclusion (family conflicts, abandonment, running away, disappearance of a parent, migration, precarious employment, etc.).¹⁴

POVERTY

Poverty is a reality for many at-risk youth. In fact, whether they live in Northern or Southern countries, these young people are greatly affected by poverty in their families and in their communities, obliging them to develop survival strategies and resources that may lead right into situations of marginalization or social exclusion.

In many countries, drastic changes in the business world and social policies lead to an increase in precarious employment and the lack of jobs, as well as a breakdown of and shortages in the social safety net. This trend means that youth are increasingly less able to access key areas of society, including workplaces, public services, quality housing, education and so on. Compounding this already generally adverse situation are other factors, such as the breakdown or fracturing of social links, isolation within the family, single parenthood, dropping out of school, early motherhood, etc. All of these factors push youth into further decline and condemn them to a precarious social, economic and cultural existence.¹⁵

In societies undergoing rapid change (urbanization, population growth), there are a greater number of difficulties relating to poverty, school integration and employment. In such cases, young people are powerful catalysts for change, but they also present a considerable challenge for everyone in that society.

- According to statistics published by the US Census Bureau in 2009, sub-Saharan Africa is home to the world's highest percentage of population under the age of 25 (63.1% of total population). By comparison, youth under the age of 25 only represent 44.3% of the world's total population.¹⁶

The economic and social poverty of families will often lead to reliance on other survival strategies, namely migration, exodus to a big city perceived as having a better social and economic quality of life, and sending children and youth out into the working world to supplement the family's revenues and ensure survival. These strategies lead to more fall-out in the community and for the youth involved, including the erosion or rupture of family relationships, difficulties of every kind, delinquency:

Children and youth seeking their survival on the streets of big cities represent the creative ways in which the population reacts, but it also constitutes an alarming symptom of the sharp increase in injustice, misery and urban violence.¹⁷

¹⁴ Riccardo Lucchini, "Street Children: Deconstruction of a Category," in *Life on the Street: Children and Adolescents on the Street - Inevitable Trajectories?* (Sion: International Institute for the Rights of the Child, 2007), pp. 49-75.

¹⁵ Madeleine Gauthier and Lucie Mercier, *La pauvreté chez les jeunes : précarité économique et fragilité sociale* (Québec: Institut québécois de recherche sur la culture, 1994).

¹⁶ *International Data Base: 2009 Midyear Population, by Youth Age Groups*, US Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idb/informationGateway.php> (accessed April 14, 2010).

¹⁷ ENDA Third World, "Enfants en situation difficile: quelques axes de réflexions," *Jeunesse action Enda Tiers-monde* 77 (1990), p. 5.

BREAKDOWN OF FAMILIAL AND SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Family context has a very important influence on youth. In fact, the family constitutes the first community in which the child learns citizenship. Through inclusion in the family unit, the esteem of other family members and the acquisition of a sense of the power of change,¹⁸ young persons acquire the tools necessary to create their own identity, learn how to be autonomous and engage in social and civil activities in their society.¹⁹

According to Bouchard, the potential for building citizenship is based on the support that society offers parents. A lack of love and affection set against a dysfunctional family environment, in addition to the parents' social and economic exclusion, and their concomitant distance from the seats of power where they might model engaged citizenship – all of this constitutes a real threat to a young person's ability to learn how to be a citizen.²⁰ These forms of exclusion are strong triggers for the erosion of, or breakdowns in, the family or social unit.

According to Lucchini,²¹ the events that lead to a breakdown in the family and movement toward life on the streets are a combination of restrictions relating to the youth's spatial and social environment, personal experience and their own affective, self-identifying, social and physical resources.

THE MARGINALIZATION OF YOUTH

The perception that society has of at-risk youth varies according to the different realities of Northern and Southern countries, and this gap is reflected in the variety of intervention types developed for this target group.²² Social perceptions transmitted by society, institutions or the media exert an immense influence, helping to forge a common vision of the phenomenon and what intervention types are deemed to be most appropriate. The process by which youth are marginalized is understood as an exclusionary process that can extend to include discrimination, with troubled youth relegated to a category within the at-risk population or associated with the causes of urban disorder.²³ Youth excluded from the important spheres of urban society must therefore reconquer public spaces.²⁴ This notion enables us to understand the importance placed on experience gained on the street and the appropriation of certain public spaces by youth, whether for reasons of survival or to protect their identity or themselves socially.

Numerous studies demonstrate increases in and a revival of the marginalization phenomenon in North American cities. It is among the main findings written up in an article by Michel Parazelli of the *Collectif de recherche sur l'itinérance, la pauvreté et l'exclusion sociale*, a collective at the Université du Québec à Montréal.²⁵ Over the course of his research, Parazelli explains how, for youth escaping conflict or violent situations within the family or an institution, a place on the street can become a kind of haven for "social protection" and "self-protection," regardless of the inevitable risks and vulnerability

¹⁸ Camil Bouchard, "Permettre la citoyenneté pour prévenir l'exclusion," *Actes du colloque Jeunes en difficulté: de l'exclusion vers l'itinérance, Cahiers de recherche sociologique 27* (1996), p. 9.

¹⁹ Michel Parazelli, "Les jeunes de la rue: Quand la marge devient un milieu de vie," *Le Devoir*, December 6, 1999, p. A7.

²⁰ Bouchard, "Permettre la citoyenneté," p. 14.

²¹ Lucchini, "Street Children."

²² Rivard, "Un modèle d'action sociale," p. 10.

²³ Céline Bellot, "Les enjeux de l'intervention à l'endroit des jeunes de la rue," *Droits et libertés: Que signifient les droits et libertés pour les jeunes de la rue?* (Montreal: Commission des droits de la Personne et des Droits de la Jeunesse, 1999), pp. 17-28.

²⁴ Yves Marguerat, "Enfants, jeunes et marginalités: Le cas de l'Afrique," in *L'enfant de la rue et son univers: Ville, socialisation et marginalité*, ed. S. Tessier (Paris: Syros, 1995), p. 67.

²⁵ Michel Parazelli, "L'appropriation de l'espace et les jeunes de la rue: Un enjeu identitaire," in *L'errance urbaine*, ed. D. Laberge (Sainte-Foy: Les éditions Multi-Mondes, 2000), pp. 193-220.



that come with it. For some young people, the experience of living on the streets has an initiation value, whereas for others, it means feeling anchored, while, for others still, it leads to death. Parazelli concludes by saying that within the intervention context, it is important to take into consideration the meaning that young people attach to their experiences of living on the street and the way in which they build their identity through the marginalization they have experienced.²⁶

INTERVENTION RATIONALE FOR AT-RISK YOUTH

During a conference on the rights and freedoms of at-risk youth held in Montreal in 1999, Céline Bellot, a criminology researcher at the Université de Montréal, presented three systems of intervention rationales addressing marginalization and youth.²⁷ The presentation of these three systems provides a better understanding of the ideologies upon which intervention practices are based.

The first intervention rationale - normalization - represents the traditional approach used by institutions to address the problems experienced by youth. Because young people are minors, they become objects of social intervention delivered by specially placed institutions that seek to protect them from inadequate living conditions. If the youth live on the street or are trapped in a dangerous situation, the objective is first to remove them from the situation, and then to transfer them to a more acceptable environment (school, family, work, supervisory institution).

A broad range of intervention practices based on this rationale has been developed, from assigning at-risk children to public protection to running intervention activities in their everyday environment (on the streets, in the community, in a youth centre, etc.). These practices target the reintegration of the children in society or, at the very least, the creation of a social relationship that will reconnect the children to society.

The second intervention rationale - repression - associates street youth with delinquency and a disruptive public nuisance, and considers these children as sources of urban disorder. The related intervention practices are based on coercion (that is, repression) and seek to exclude youth from public spaces. Bellot also demonstrated how these types of intervention legitimize the penal system's handling of the social problems of youth and how these interventions work against youth.

Repressive practices against youth on the streets can also take more extreme forms. For example, in some countries, militia police directly attack youth on the streets.

The third intervention rationale presented by Bellot is integration. This rationale takes into account the fact that young people are catalysts for change in their own lives, and that they have gained skills and strategies through their experiences. In this system, youth are encouraged to develop their own solutions with the help of community workers, in accordance with their needs and degree of motivation. It is therefore important to work together to develop a social project that uses solidarity to confront social integration problems.

²⁶ Parazelli, "L'appropriation de l'espace"; Elvia Taracena, "Enfants de la rue et enfants dans la rue à Mexico," *Lien social et politique* 34 (Fall 1995), pp. 101-7; Elvia Taracena, "Le théâtre et les jeunes de la rue à Mexico," *Sud/Nord - Folies et cultures Revue internationale*, April 1995, pp. 109-18.

²⁷ Bellot, "Les enjeux de l'intervention."



Numerous writers and community workers emphasize the immense creative and artistic potential of at-risk youth. Projects that combine intervention with art lead to opportunities to develop the creative potential of youth and to open new channels of communication with them. They also enable young people to become catalysts for change in their own lives. These projects can be integrated into the framework of traditional intervention practices or offered as an alternative intervention model based on imagination and communication: “The natural affinities that exist between project workers and children or youth are what bring these two groups together and lead to discoveries.”²⁸

²⁸ Rivard, “Un modèle d’action sociale,” p. 41.



MODULE 3 | REFERENCE TEXT 3

THE MAIN STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT IN YOUNG PEOPLE²⁹

By Michel Lafortune

We undergo development and changes throughout our lives. There is, however, a difference between development and growth: while growth increases our height, weight and mass, development brings about physical and psychological changes.

A caterpillar is born and then grows to its full size. Once this first stage of development is complete, the caterpillar builds a cocoon to keep itself away from the world. To the naked eye, there seems to be no movement inside, but development is taking place, and, after a certain period of time, the caterpillar will emerge from the cocoon as a butterfly, free and independent. The caterpillar grew, but it was also transformed. At each stage of development, the caterpillar and the butterfly were two completely different entities – the products of the experiences that changed them.

It is much the same for a child. If a baby did nothing but grow, it would become a giant baby. Gladly, developments bring about changes that transform that baby into an independent, adapted and eventually fulfilled adult.

The period between 8-18 years of age is definitely the age span that sees the greatest number of changes. It is an intense development period in which young people learn how to move into the future and build their ideal lives. Children move from dependence to independence, and take on greater responsibility for their own lives. This transition inevitably takes time, as the road to maturity is full of trial and error.

In many traditional societies, the concept of adolescence does not exist. Young people move from childhood to adulthood through specific rites of passage that clearly mark their transition and earn them recognition as adults. Our modern societies have done away with these rituals, without really proposing other ways to mark a child's entry into adulthood:

Without these markers, youth are left to recreate their own rituals that can be used to evaluate their lives, to secure power and to explore other places. But as these new rituals are not integrated into society, they can take on unexpected – and often savage – forms that are worrying (think gangs, suicide, certain sexual attitudes or drug use).³⁰

“A NORMAL YOUNG PERSON”

For the road to adulthood to be considered “normal,” there must be a progression through specific stages of physical, cognitive and emotional development. The reference point for determining these stages is the age group. For our purposes, this text will refer to three age groups: 8-11 year olds, 12-14 year olds and 15-18 year olds.

²⁹ Michel Lafortune, *Les principales étapes de développement des jeunes* (internal document, Montreal, Cirque du Soleil, Social Circus Department, 2000 and 2010).

³⁰ Radio-Québec, *Devis pédagogique sur la réussite éducative* (unpublished report, 1992).



Knowing these stages of development will help the social circus instructor to do the following:

- Recognize participants' stages of development.
- Respect their learning pace.
- Identify the skills participants could use in order to understand and address their needs better.
- Adapt workshop content.
- Adopt appropriate attitudes in relationships with participants.

This reference text will outline the principal physical, cognitive and emotional changes for each age group.

8-11 YEARS

Physical development in 8-11 year olds

This stage, which corresponds to puberty, is marked by an onslaught of events that, over three to four years, will result in a fully mature sexual body with new height and mass.

As with all biological phenomena, puberty follows certain quantitative standards, most notably regarding age. On average, onset of puberty begins at 10 years of age for girls and 13 years of age for boys. The average of the two groups combined is 11 years, 10 months (+/-2 years). If changes begin before 8-9 years for girls or before 10-11 for boys, this is considered to be precocious puberty. Delayed puberty is considered to start after the age of 13 for girls and after the age of 15 for boys.

Naturally, there are variations from one individual to another, depending on the presence of certain internal factors, such as genetic history or chronic illness, as well as external factors, such as socio-economic background, sports, nutrition or even geographic location (e.g. altitude).

• Physical changes

Puberty leads to three major and very important physical changes: start of the growth spurt, changes in bodily proportions and the development of primary sexual characteristics/the appearance of secondary sexual characteristics.

• Start of the growth spurt

Girls experience their growth spurt earlier than boys. In general, growth begins in the legs, followed by the shoulders and development of the chest. Bones become more dense and harder, while the amount of muscle and fatty tissue increases. There is also weight gain. Children will achieve 80% (for boys) to 90% (for girls) of their adult size at this stage.

• Changes in bodily proportions

While girls begin developing chests and hips, boys begin developing shoulders. In both groups, however, legs and arms get longer and muscle mass increases, as does resistance to stress.

• Primary sexual characteristics

Primary sexual characteristics, or the sex glands (ovaries and testicles), begin to enlarge. These physical changes are not readily noticeable, as development takes place inside the body and happens while children are feeling prudish.



- **Secondary sexual characteristics**

These sexual characteristics, which appear during puberty, help to differentiate the two genders. Girls develop pubic hair and their nipples become more pronounced. Boys, on the other hand, show little sexual maturation at this point, other than increased bone mass.

Cognitive development in 8-11 year olds

Jean Piaget³¹ meticulously studied the development of children and adolescents at length. His work led to the understanding that the evolution of the brain and an individual's intellectual development are inextricably linked. This is how all individuals evolve and reach different development stages. Each of these stages adds new intellectual skills children will need to interact with the world.

- **Concrete operational stage**

At the age of eight, a child reaches the concrete operational stage, which is characterized by the acquisition of mental representation, conservation of properties, the ability to understand relationships among objects, inclusion and seriation.

- **Mental representation**

At this stage, the child learns how to develop the mental representation of a series of actions that happen in a certain sequence. For example, although a child at the previous stage would be able to get to a friend's house by following a path or directions to turn right and left, that child would not yet possess the ability to trace the path out on a map. This skill is only acquired in the concrete operational stage.

- **Conservation of properties**

This skill allows a child to know that the properties of something remain the same, even if the form changes. For example, the child now understands that a quantity of liquid can remain the same, regardless of whether it's poured into a large or a small glass. Also, the child now knows that two balls of clay – identical to begin with – keep the same weight and quantity, even if one is shaped into a sausage and the other stays a ball.

- **Relationships between objects**

At the concrete operational stage, the child learns to recognize logical relationships among elements in a serial order. Before, the child could only indicate whether an object was small, dark or hard, for example. At this stage, the child can now compare an object to those around it and indicate whether it's smaller than, darker than or harder than another item.

- **Inclusion**

Children in the concrete operational stage can now conceive of the whole, as well as parts of the whole. In other terms, the child can now see the bigger picture. Therefore, when looking at ten vehicles – seven of which are cars and three of which are buses – this child now understands that there are many types of vehicles and not just many cars.

- **Seriation**

Having reached the concrete operational stage, children can now organize a series of items according to their size, weight or other physical characteristic. And they can do so in descending or ascending order.

³¹ Jean Piaget and Bärbel Inhelder, *The Psychology of the Child* (New York: Basic Books, 1969).



One of the most important acquisitions during the concrete operational stage is the child's new ability to compare him or herself to other young persons. This helps the child better define his or her height, intelligence, courage, charisma and so on. This ability is central to defining identity and building self-esteem. It provides youth with valuable information needed to define who they are now and who they would like to become in the future.

Emotional development in 8-11 year olds

• Self-image

One of the most remarkable aspects of emotional development during this period is the emergence of identity and self-awareness. Younger children tend to describe themselves according to concrete characteristics, such as hair colour, height and their favourite activities. During this stage, youth can begin to describe themselves with more abstract or intrinsic qualities, using feelings, thoughts or beliefs.

The process of defining identity is undertaken through a mechanism that consists of appropriating the characteristics of significant people in their milieu. The most important people in a young person's life are parents, but may also include teachers, friends or other people with whom the youth feels an attachment and a kinship.

Between the ages of 8-11 years, young people go through certain stages, during which time they conform to the general rules in order to avoid feeling guilty or ashamed, and to gain acceptance. This conformity becomes more conscious as the respect for rules is increasingly associated with personal well-being and less associated with fear of reprisal.

Youth can now finally adopt the personal standards for behaviour that will eventually differ from those imposed by adults, enabling them to learn self-criticism and responsibility. The notion of self-respect and respect for others also evolves, and there is a more critical attitude toward authority.

More profound and fundamental questions will also begin to emerge during this time – the answers to which will come in the following years: “Who am I?” and “Who do I want to be?” The young person is thus torn between the desire to be a unique and different self and the need to fit in with peers. Youth want to be different... but not too different.

• Socialization

This period also sees the onset of socialization, when young people like being together and doing things as a group. Socialization is a learning process that consists of conforming to group models, morals and habits. It is also the ability to behave in accordance with social expectations.

Young persons at this age are more conscious of what others think of them and thus demonstrate more sensitivity – and vulnerability – in the face of peer judgment. This stage is also the “primitive man” stage, when young persons become interested in activities associated with primitive man: swimming, camping, climbing, going on excursions and so on. Youth are fervently pitting themselves against the forces of nature and trying to adjust by using nature for their own ends. Relationships with same-sex peers are dominant at this time.



- **The gang**

There are several types of groups – called gangs – that are clearly differentiated by the number of members, relationship dynamics and reasons why they come together.

- **The small, informal gang**

This small, informal group is usually composed of three or four individuals drawn together by a sense of belonging and a common way of thinking and acting. They come together without obligation and mutually exert a very strong influence on the thoughts, attitudes and behaviours of one another. They are generally very available for, sensitive to and supportive of one another in difficult situations.

- **The big gang**

This larger group comprises several small, informal groups brought together for a specific purpose, such as a festival, party or dance. The advantages of being in a big gang are a greater sense of belonging, a wider friend network and opportunities for exploring (and subsequently assessing) new behaviours.

- **The organized gang**

This large group often pursues delinquent activities. It is structured and there is a hierarchy, as well as membership rituals (or initiation rites) based on established rules. Individuals in this group are generally unable to join other, more standard groups because of skills they lack or a refusal to adhere to certain rules. This group practises anti-social behaviour and seeks out a place or sense of belonging that will make them feel more secure.

Opportunities to create

The following are suggested actions to respond to the developmental needs of youth 8-11 years old:

1. Provide youth with opportunities to define their identity:
 - Opportunities to know and understand, as well as define and accept themselves better
 - Opportunities to explore and discover the society in which they live, to help them orient themselves in this context
 - For youth from another culture, opportunities to orient themselves between their native culture and their new culture by reappropriating their language, rituals and beliefs
2. Provide youth with opportunities to develop skills and realize their potential:
 - Opportunities allowing youth to discover what they're capable of and what is valued by those they respect
 - Opportunities to develop new skills, speak in public and reflect both on their own and in a group
3. Provide youth with opportunities to explore positive relationships with adults and peers:
 - Opportunities to develop interpersonal skills, as well as the ability to cooperate and work with peers
 - Opportunities to develop new ways of relating with parents, particularly ways that reflect their new autonomy



4. Provide youth with opportunities to participate actively in family, school and community life:
 - Opportunities to decide which activities will influence their lives and contribute to the success of their activities as leader or participant
 - Opportunities to get involved in real problem solving that will impact real life
5. Provide youth with opportunities to be physically active:
 - Opportunities to burn off energy and discover their growing bodies' new abilities to move and express themselves
6. Provide youth with opportunities to be creative:
 - Various opportunities to express what's going on internally
7. Provide youth with rules and clear limits:
 - Creating an environment where young persons will feel safe and comfortable enough to make decisions about their behaviour

12-14 YEARS

Physical development in 12-14 year olds

Generally, it is during this period that young persons begin to undergo major physical transformations observable to the naked eye. As the way in which they perceive their bodies is quickly changing, this period understandably tends to generate malaise among 12-14 year olds if they are unable to integrate these changes. It is usually during this period that the question "Am I normal?" becomes a great preoccupation. Also, as changes undergone during this period tend to leave youth feeling unbalanced and unsteady, it can also lead to problems with coordination and motor skills.

In addition to a significant increase in height and weight, this period also sees the manifestation of almost all secondary sexual characteristics. With girls, there is an increase in breast size, the appearance of hair under the arms, the activation of sweat glands and changes in the skin, which becomes oilier. With boys, the scrotum, testicles and penis get larger, the voice drops due to changes in the larynx and shoulders get wider. During this period, girls will also experience their first menstrual periods and boys will begin to ejaculate.

Cognitive development in 12-14 year olds

This period usually marks the transition to the most advanced stage of development in youth – the onset of formal thought. The acquisition of formal thought can be recognized by certain characteristics of reasoning: the ability to explore many hypotheses, consider other (perhaps wild) hypotheses and organize several simple functions logically into one larger and more complex function.

• The ability to explore many hypotheses

The first characteristic recognizable in young persons at this stage of formal thought is their ability to weigh many hypotheses and determine which solution is the most appropriate.



- **The ability to consider other (perhaps wild) hypotheses**

A second characteristic is youth's ability to accept other, more wild hypotheses, even if the facts do not support said hypotheses. For example, if we tell an eight-year-old that "researchers have found the 100-year-old skeleton of an animal with two heads and five legs," the child will respond that such a thing is not possible. However, after developing formal thought, the same young person is ready to accept the possibility and look for explanations.

- **The ability to organize functions logically**

The third characteristic of this stage of formal thought is the ability to organize several simple functions logically into one larger and more complex function. For example, when faced with the question "How many pairs of different colours can you make with six disks of different colours?," a child not yet in possession of formal thought will attempt to resolve the problem through trial and error. Youth capable of formal thought, however, can elaborate a mathematical formula that will produce the correct number of possibilities.

Emotional development in 12-14 year olds

This period is defined by a sense of identity. These young people are slowly distancing themselves from childhood, family and parental figures, and in the process, identify more strongly with the values, beliefs and lifestyles of their peers, heroes and significant adults other than their parents. The relationship with peers is coloured by the values of loyalty, steadfastness and trust. Regardless of how much they want to belong to a group, young people also want to be different. Consequently, a wide variety of moods can be observed: young people will sometimes be exuberant, sometimes depressed. Youth may even temporarily regress and exhibit more childish behaviour when they play or when they have certain emotional reactions.

Young persons between the ages of 12-14 are looking for independence and autonomy. Their self-esteem is strongly related to the acceptance and approval of others, and consequently, their notion of good and bad is also affected. The search for intimacy with self and with others is heightened. In addition, their concerns are very much in the present moment. Young persons in this age group will also begin testing limits and experimenting with cigarettes, marijuana or alcohol.

Opportunities to create

The following are suggested actions to respond to the developmental needs of youth 12-14 years old:

1. Provide youth with opportunities to be physically active:
 - Opportunities to move
 - Opportunities to burn off tension and channel energy toward more stimulating activities
2. Provide youth with opportunities to use their new intellectual abilities:
 - Opportunities to resolve complex situations individually and within a group



3. Provide youth with opportunities to build symbolic worlds:
 - Opportunities to imagine tales, stories and scripts
4. Provide youth with opportunities to develop their critical skills:
 - Opportunities to propose projects and defend their ideas by formulating arguments
 - Opportunities to learn how to be open to the ideas of others
5. Provide youth with opportunities to discover the world:
 - Opportunities to explore other cultural realities through music, food and customs
6. Provide youth with opportunities to strengthen their sense of belonging:
 - Opportunities to recognize active participation, support and group pride
7. Provide youth with opportunities to take responsibility.
8. Provide youth with opportunities to see how the instructor respects the changes they are going through.

15-18 YEARS

Physical development in 15-18 year olds

Toward the middle of this period, the majority of young persons will see the major physical changes that began in previous stages finally come to an end. It is during this period that girls develop more curvy figures, while boys grow in strength, get oilier skin, start growing hair on their faces and chests and develop an Adam's apple.

The energy of young persons in this age group is mostly directed toward the interpersonal and emotional facets of their development.

Cognitive development in 15-18 year olds

The transition to the formal operations stage means finally being able to think and reflect in an abstract way. During this period, the young person is capable of developing self-critical awareness. This ability to be aware of one's own consciousness is part of a deeper process of reflection that allows the young person to build a system of moral values and beliefs.

Emotional and psychological development in 15-18 year olds

At the beginning of this period, youth invest their energies in the consolidation of identity, which begins to form when they can project themselves in the past, present and future. These youth will nonetheless have periods when they question everything and experiment to affirm their self image.

Always seeking their independence, they consider their parents to be an obstacle to their growth. However, these young persons will also experience periods of sadness as they grieve for the growing distance from their parents.

During this period, young persons develop deep friendships – with members of both sexes – that are sincere and based on trust. They become more selective in their choice of friends and tend to become more distanced from these friends once they become involved in an exclusive, romantic relationship.



Toward the end of this period, young persons possess a strong identity, the ability to accept the delay between action and gratification, more emotional stability, the capacity to make decisions on their own and more sensitivity toward others.

In addition, youth aged 15-18 possess a clear sexual identity that will be consolidated throughout their adult life. They are also looking for a romantic relationship and are capable of tenderness and sensuality.

Lastly, these youth will be very much concerned with the future and their role in life.

Opportunities to create

The following are suggested actions to respond to the developmental needs of youth 15-18 years old:

1. Provide youth with opportunities to explore and experiment:
 - Opportunities to explore a wide variety of behaviours, roles, attitudes, relationships, ideas and activities that can help them develop their identities
2. Provide youth with opportunities to integrate their sexuality:
 - Opportunities to understand their awakening sexuality and integrate it into their personality through discussions and projects with members of the opposite sex
3. Provide youth with opportunities to play an active role in the community:
 - Opportunities to participate actively in community activities
 - Opportunities to become socially responsible
4. Provide youth with opportunities to prepare for their future:
 - Opportunities to acquire the skills necessary to be an adult, such as setting goals, resolving problems, managing time and making decisions
5. Provide youth with opportunities to develop a value system and decision-making abilities:
 - Opportunities to compare their values with the values of others
 - Opportunities to gain experience in decision making

CONCLUSION

It is important for social circus instructors to adapt and adjust to the group with whom they are working. To do so, instructors must develop the ability to read the group, that is, to size up physical abilities quickly, as well as the maturity and development potential of participants. The activities proposed by instructors must be appropriate to the skills of the group, all the while encouraging feelings of success and strong motivation. All human beings go through the stages of development described in this text. Nevertheless, the various aspects of each stage will manifest themselves differently according to the social, economic and cultural context of each young person. The challenge for instructors is to use their knowledge to plan and facilitate workshops that will create harmonious moments of progress for all.



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<http://www.earlyadolescence.org>

Child Development Institute
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MODULE 3 | ACTIVITY 1

THE SCALE

OBJECTIVE

To increase awareness of the realities of at-risk individuals.



EXPERIENCE

First establish an imaginary scale of percentages in the room: one end of the room represents 0%, the mid-point represents 50% and the far end represents 100%. The trainer asks the instructors and community workers some 15 questions relating to the realities of individuals at risk. These questions are solely statistical and pertain to the community or country targeted by the training. For example:

- What percentage of the population is under the age of 25?
- What percentage of the population lives under the poverty line?
- What percentage of the population has HIV-AIDS?
- What is the literacy rate for men? For women?
- What is the proportion of the population over the age of 15 who have completed elementary school?

To answer each question, the instructors and community workers must place themselves somewhere on the imaginary scale. Even if they do not know the answer, they must at least take a guess and share their thoughts. Once everyone has chosen a spot, the trainer reveals the official statistic and moves on to the next question.



OBSERVATION

- What struck you most?
- What did you observe?
- Was your position on the scale roughly the same as your colleagues?



INTEGRATION

- Did some statistics surprise you?
- Were your impressions and judgments close to the real answers?

Length of activity
20-30 minutes

Materials
Statistics demonstrating the reality of at-risk individuals in the city or country targeted by the training

Number of participants
20-25



- How do impressions and judgments influence the way you interact with people? How do the labels we attribute to individuals (e.g. woman, poor, addicted, HIV positive, etc.) define how we interact with them?
- Are there other pertinent risk indicators that were not mentioned? What are they?
- What can we learn by comparing our impressions and judgments to reality? To those of our colleagues?



APPLICATION

- How do the profiles of your workshop participants relate to the statistics presented?
- How will this new knowledge about the real lives of at-risk youth affect the following:
 - Your interactions with participants?
 - Your workshop planning?
 - Your workshop facilitation?

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR TRAINERS

Preparing for this activity requires statistical research into the community or country in question. Government websites and websites of international organizations are good reference points. Here are some suggested sites:

- Social indicators from the United Nations (UN):
<http://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic/products/socind/statistics.htm>
- Country profiles compiled by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO):
http://stats.uis.unesco.org/unesco/TableViewer/document.aspx?ReportId=198&IF_Language=eng
- World Bank data, by country, topic or indicator:
<http://www.data.worldbank.org>
- L'Encyclopédie de l'État du monde (in French; subscribers only):
<http://www.etatdumonde.com>
- Worldometers (Real Time World Statistics):
<http://www.worldometers.info>

In communicating with instructors and community workers, the trainer must show great delicacy and sensitivity, as many of them may be living in - or have already lived in - at-risk circumstances.

To lighten the mood, the trainer may also ask some questions touching on other topics. For example:

- What percentage of the earth's surface is covered by water?



MODULE 3 | ACTIVITY 2

GROUP TRAVEL

OBJECTIVE

To recognize the behaviours and emotions related to exclusion.

Length of activity
60-90 minutes

Materials
One sheet of paper for every participant (featuring a characteristic), scotch tape

Number of participants
20-25

EXPERIENCE

The trainer takes a piece of paper with a characteristic written on it and tapes it to the back of each individual participant. Each person can read the characteristics of other participants, but cannot read his or her own.

The trainer explains, “You’re leaving on a group trip for two weeks, but first you must choose your travel companions according to their characteristic. You will be forming smaller groups of participants willing to travel together.” Participants are then given a few minutes to get into groups.

The following is an example of grouping. The characteristics are for reference purposes only. The trainer must adapt the content to the cultural context in which he or she is working.

- Subgroup 1: Courageous, calm, dreamer, problem-solver, empathetic
- Subgroup 2: Pretentious, hypocritical, manipulator, complainer
- Subgroup 3: Depressed, neglected personal appearance, aggressive, egocentric, charismatic

OBSERVATION

At the end of the activity, participants can remove the paper on their backs and find out what the characteristic was.

- What were the verbal and non-verbal behaviours others displayed toward you? Were you accepted with open arms? Did you feel some people holding back? Did it take some time before others agreed to travel with you?
- What were your verbal and non-verbal behaviours toward others? Did you spontaneously accept everyone? Did you have preferences? Did you second-guess your decisions?

INTEGRATION

- How did the reactions of others affect you?
- What do the members of your subgroup have in common?

- What were you looking for when choosing travel companions? (acceptance, people with similar values, comfort, harmony, etc.)
- What image were you projecting?
- What did others do or hide in order to be accepted?
- What causes social exclusion?
- What are the consequences of social exclusion?



APPLICATION

- What problems do participants of your social circus workshops have to deal with and who is causing social exclusion?
- What can you do to make it easier to include participants who are generally excluded by the group?

ALTERNATIVE

Ask participants to create their own short artistic performance in order to express something about themselves that is not revealed by their outer personality. Observe how the reaction of others in the group changes as a result.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR TRAINERS

The trainer helps instructors and community workers understand that reactions will change depending on the characteristics attributed to them: participants with positive characteristics are more relaxed because they are more readily accepted – in fact, it's frequently the case that almost all of them end up in the same group.

It can be observed how, when groups were being formed, the participants saddled with a negative characteristic accepted their own marginalization and the excluded were grouped with other marginalized people. Becoming part of a group or group-ing is in fact a survival mechanism used by individuals to feel less alone.

The trainer can also ask instructors to make a link between certain behaviours that are acceptable in certain contexts and milieus, but that are not acceptable in other social situations and can lead to exclusion. Knowing that we're taking a two-week trip makes us more selective when choosing travel partners – more so than if we're choosing company for an afternoon. Time and space thus play a very important part in deciding what we are willing to accept in another person.

This activity illustrates the role that social perception – as well as the relationship between words, images and values – plays in the process of exclusion within a community. In this context, directing more positive energy toward the excluded can make a big difference.



MODULE 3 | KEY MESSAGES

The objective of social circus is not reintegration at any cost. On the contrary, it's about allowing the marginality of youth to enrich the social fabric.

The life experiences of at-risk youth can be used as the foundations for change and serve as catalysts, enabling youth to rebound and become creators of their own lives.

Each young person has his or her own history: instructors and community workers can embrace this truth by being attentive to each young person in the group.

The social circus workshop offers a fun and accepting environment that encourages young people to express and create and allows them to feel safe.





In Montreal, we worked with one community worker who happened to be punk. She had a fantastic relationship with the kids, mostly because they all listened to the same kind of music. One day, she approached me with a problem. The punk scene is very small in Montreal, to the point that on a Friday or Saturday night, she often found herself in the same bars or concert venues as some of our young participants. She wanted to party – to dance, drink and indulge – but the youth that she worked with during the workshops were also there. She came to me with an ethical question about this very situation: “When I’m at Foufounes Électriques and I get a little too drunk, I have to leave because I don’t want to behave badly in front of the participants.” What she finally did – and I thought it was a great idea – was to use this situation to open a dialogue with youth about drinking and taking drugs.

Emmanuel Bochud, Social Circus Liaison Officer
Cirque du Monde, Montreal



MODULE 4 - OBJECTIVES

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

1. Recognize the importance of having a common code of ethics.
2. Use a frame of reference for all interventions.
3. Understand the scope and limits of their role.
4. Adapt the application of and respect for the code of ethics to their particular set of circumstances.

CONTENTS OF THIS MODULE

REFERENCE TEXT

- Code of Ethics for Social Circus Instructors

ACTIVITIES

- Snap Judgment
- Sabotage



MODULE 4 | INTRODUCTION

Instructors and community workers work with at-risk individuals, particularly youth, who often still carry the scars of their past experiences and expect a lot of the process they are undertaking. Consequently, the relationship between instructors and participants must go beyond the simple sharing of technical knowledge: this relationship, based on mutual trust, must be interwoven with compassionate sensitivity and respect for the ethical principles established in order to avoid abuse, negligence and other care-less behaviour.

Social circus instructors – without trying to be community workers or psychologists – must be conscious that their attitude and behaviour will serve as models for young participants and that this aspect of their intervention is just as important as teaching the circus arts.

The demeanour of instructors and community workers must be based on numerous ethical principles, namely: skill, integrity, personal responsibility, dignity, respect for the culture, social responsibility, physical and emotional safety concerns and discretion, as well as keeping promises and working as part of a team.

In more concrete terms, the instructor and community worker must pass on the knowledge they possess and the skills they've mastered, all the while being conscious of their limits and adapting their teaching to the nature of the group. They must also behave honestly and with respect toward others, without projecting a false image of who they are or trying to take advantage of the position they have. In particular, they must abstain from having sexual relations with their young participants and avoid all criminal behaviour.

The instructor and community worker must assume the responsibilities related to their role and respect the commitments they've made. They must also respect the fundamental rights, dignity, culture, privacy, confidentiality and autonomy of each participant, and always show discretion, openness and good judgment. Lastly, they are required to be open and responsible to the community in which they are intervening, while promoting social justice, self-determination and respect for individuals. Furthermore, they must not abuse their position to spread propaganda.

Safety is also a constant concern for instructors and community workers. They are responsible for the physical and emotional safety of participants during the workshops, and they must help participants understand this fact. Instructors and community workers must also actively and voluntarily work as a team to prepare, run and evaluate workshops, as well as to foster a prevailing climate of cooperation. In case of conflict, it is their responsibility to find the fairest solutions, all the while ensuring that the workshop is running smoothly and encouraging the personal growth of each participant.

By following these ethical principles, the instructor and community worker can embrace their responsibility and perhaps serve as role models for participants. This exemplary behaviour must also extend outside the workshops. The instructor and community worker must respect their hiring conditions, keep employers updated about their activities and abstain from making any public comments that could negatively affect the organization.



MODULE 4 | REFERENCE TEXT 1

CODE OF ETHICS FOR SOCIAL CIRCUS INSTRUCTORS¹

PRINCIPLES AND STANDARDS OF CONDUCT

The objective of any code of ethics is to provide a common frame of reference. This code sets guidelines for those assuming the role of social circus instructor. It guides their conduct during training practice and also indicates proper behaviour for the cultural context in which they'll be working.

Social circus instructors work with at-risk youth who have often been betrayed and hurt in the past. As a result, these young people place an enormous amount of faith in the efforts they make and seek to develop trust-based relationships with their instructors.

Consequently, the instructor-youth relationship goes beyond the mere teaching of circus skills. These interactions must be infused with compassionate sensitivity and obey certain guidelines in order to prevent any instance of abuse or neglect, or any awkward situation that could negatively impact young participants or the social circus program.

Instructors are not required to be psychologists, social workers or street workers. Their involvement, however, does entail certain responsibilities and tasks that will keep their interventions grounded in the utmost respect for the young people, colleagues and partners participating in the program.

Instructors must be aware that their attitude and behaviour will serve as models for young participants, and that this aspect of the relationship is just as meaningful as the skills that will be taught.

In this spirit, this text outlines the principles and actions that should guide the attitudes and behaviours of social circus instructors during the circus workshops and, in certain circumstances, outside the workshops as well.

These principles and standards of conduct are what instructors must strive to achieve as they carry out their duties according to the highest performance criteria.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

This code of ethics for social circus instructors grew out of existing codes developed by various sports and professional associations with a social and educational bent. It is in keeping with the definition of social circus instructor; in other words, it integrates the artistic, social and sports aspects into one single training approach.

The code is founded on the following key principles:

1. Competence
2. Integrity
3. Personal responsibility
4. Dignity and respect for the culture
5. Social responsibility

¹ This is a reprint of the code of ethics for social circus instructors adopted by Cirque du Soleil and developed by Michel Lafortune. In addition to serving as a content model for more than 100 social circus training sessions around the world, it is also used by the Cirque du Monde and the Brazilian Circo do Mundo networks. Excerpt by Michel Lafortune, "Code of Ethics for Social Circus Instructors," in *Handbook for Coaches and Partners of the Cirque du Monde Program*, ed. C. Dagenais, C. Mercier and J. Rivard (Montreal: Cirque du Soleil, Social Affairs and International Cooperation Department, 2001), fact sheet 8.



6. Physical and emotional safety
7. Teamwork
8. Relationship with employer

The statement of each of these principles is followed by a definition and list of standards of conduct describing how the principle applies to the instructor's actions. These standards of conduct are an important aspect of each principle.

1. Competence

Instructors will teach techniques that they have mastered or are capable of teaching, according to recognized standards, in a safe manner. Furthermore, instructors shall acknowledge and respect their limits and agree to act according to these limits, all the while seeking to improve and increase their overall abilities.

- 1.1 Instructors must have completed the basic training necessary to assume the role of social circus instructor.
- 1.2 Instructors must be aware that what they do impacts the lives of the individuals and groups with whom they work.
- 1.3 Instructors must respect the limits of their knowledge and abilities while performing their duties.
- 1.4 Instructors must refrain from working in an inadequate environment that presents excessive risks and dangers to the health of participants.
- 1.5 Instructors must provide activities that are suitable to the age, experience and abilities, as well as the physical and psychological state, of participants.
- 1.6 Instructors must train participants gradually and systematically.
- 1.7 Instructors must transform circus workshops into positive life experiences.

2. Integrity

Instructors shall be committed to maintaining integrity throughout their teaching and assisting activities, and they must do so in a sincere manner that shows respect for others. They shall not falsely represent their qualifications, experience or power, or otherwise inaccurately portray themselves so as to derive personal benefits.

- 2.1 Instructors must be aware of how their beliefs, values, needs and limits, as well as other aspects, could impact their role.
- 2.2 Instructors must clearly define their role and fulfill the requirements of that role with regards to those with whom they are working.
- 2.3 Instructors must understand that they can disagree with some of a participant's behaviours, without acting in ways that will be alienating to that individual.
- 2.4 Instructors must personally abstain from accepting any emotional, economic or sexual advantages offered to them during the course of their work, other than the remuneration they receive for fulfilling their role.
- 2.5 Instructors must not engage in any form of sexual intimacy with participants.
- 2.6 Instructors must refrain from all forms of sexual or psychological harassment.
- 2.7 Instructors must not commit any wrongful acts.
- 2.8 Instructors must acknowledge the use of any items of intellectual, artistic or other property that does not belong to them.



3. Personal responsibility

Instructors will accept responsibility for their actions and strive, to the best of their ability, to adapt their methods to the needs and potential of the individuals with whom they work.

- 3.1 Instructors must consult with their colleagues to avoid posing a danger to participants and to prevent behaviours that run counter to the instructor's code of conduct.
- 3.2 Instructors must respect the commitments they have made by ensuring that they perform their duties according to the determined schedules and objectives, and to the resources made available to them.
- 3.3 Instructors must keep their private lives strictly private, unless it is likely to compromise the instructor's practice or the workshop being run.

4. Dignity and respect for the culture

Instructors will be respectful of the fundamental rights, dignity and culture of all individuals. This means respecting the privacy, confidentiality, self-determination and autonomy of each individual.

- 4.1 Instructors must not use confidential information that could harm the workshop participants for the sake of personal gain or for the gain of others.
- 4.2 Instructors must be discreet, showing tact and good judgment when it concerns the private lives of trainees.
- 4.3 When participating in a research project, instructors must ensure that those participating in the project have wilfully and knowingly consented to do so, and that they have not been led to believe that a refusal to participate would lead to reprisal or sanctions.

5. Social responsibility

While leading circus workshops, instructors will be open and responsible to the communities in which they are working.

- 5.1 Instructors must take steps to ensure that actions planned for individuals and groups help them gain the greatest possible autonomy and independence. This excludes actions that aim to exert control or domination.
- 5.2 Instructors must promote social justice, acceptance, autonomy, self-determination and respect for all persons. They must also encourage trainees to take an active role in developing a mutual support and assistance network in their community.
- 5.3 Instructors must intervene if another instructor behaves in a way that does not conform to the code of ethics.
- 5.4 Instructors must never, under any circumstances, use their position for propaganda purposes, nor to procure – or attempt to procure – unjust or illicit benefits for themselves or for anyone else.



Helping each other to be better!

A colleague exploits the talents of his young participants by adding them to his performance troupe. He also uses his status to sell them circus products. After one workshop, he even takes them out to the park to smoke a joint. Do you ignore the situation? Express your disapproval to your colleague? Or inform your employer of this colleague's behaviour? When you witness your colleague behaving in a non-ethical manner, an intervention is necessary. It's best to adopt an approach that is gradual and fitting to the circumstances and gravity of the situation. It is possible to confront your colleague in a private setting and in a non-aggressive manner. Perhaps even use humour. It is usually appropriate to ask him or her to explain the situation, which not does seem to conform to the rules. If you are unsure about the validity of your judgment concerning the ethics of said behaviour, it is advisable to consult with a member of your team before confronting the colleague in question. If necessary, instructors must also consider the possibility of turning to mediation as a solution. At all times, it is important to remember that when working with at-risk groups, upholding professional ethics is fundamentally important.

6. Physical and emotional safety

Instructors are responsible for physical safety on their training sites. They will ensure that training equipment is safe and properly used. They must also be ever vigilant when assisting with a risky move or ensure that said moves are attempted in the presence of a competent person who can oversee the safety of trainees.

Instructors are also expected to create an emotionally safe space where mutual respect is a given. They must establish a state of trust among the participants and ensure that all of them can find their place in the group.

- 6.1 Instructors must ensure that participants take part in activities in a secure setting.
- 6.2 Instructors must teach participants to be responsible for their own safety by making them aware of the measures they must take to protect themselves and others.
- 6.3 Instructors must encourage participants to have fun and learn in a positive environment that encourages fairness and collaboration.
- 6.4 Instructors must enforce the right degree of rigour and discipline, all the while being flexible and adaptable to different situations.

7. Teamwork

Instructors are committed to collaborate actively and voluntarily with other team members, including other instructors, community workers, partner representatives and employers.

- 7.1 Instructors must commit to work actively as a team when preparing, running and evaluating circus workshops, and to do so in an atmosphere conducive



to reaching a certain degree of trust likely to generate honest, genuine exchanges.

- 7.2 If pending decisions lead to conflicts over technical, administrative or political choices, instructors must always focus on their top priorities: running a smooth workshop and helping participants in their development.
- 7.3 Instructors must promote an atmosphere of cooperation and support among workshop participants.
- 7.4 Instructors must cooperate with other partners who wish to lend additional support to the program.
- 7.5 Instructors must use discretion when resolving any disputes with colleagues. Differences of opinion must be settled in a constructive manner, with more serious conflicts dealt with through the appropriate channels.

8. Employment relationship

Instructors promise to respect their hiring conditions and account for their activities to their employer.

- 8.1 Instructors must provide their employer with any and all information likely to contribute to the smooth running of the program.

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MODULE 4 | ACTIVITY 1

SNAP JUDGMENT

OBJECTIVE

To recognize the importance of having a shared code of ethics.

Length of activity
90 minutes

Materials
*Blindfolds for each participant,
list of ethical statements*

Number of participants
10-25



EXPERIENCE

The trainer asks the instructors and community workers to form a line, one behind the other, about an arm's length apart. The trainer then distributes the scarves to all participants and asks them to blindfold themselves. Once that is done, the trainer delivers the following instructions:

“I am going to read a series of statements out loud. You must make a decision about where you stand on each one. If you agree with the statement, take one step to the right. If you disagree, take one step to the left. You must make a snap judgment. No explanation will be given once the statement has been read.”

After the statement is read and participants have taken their positions, ask them to take off their blindfolds and observe, in silence, the position of others around them. Participants then return to their starting positions, refasten their blindfolds and wait for the trainer to read the next statement aloud.

Examples of statements:

- You see a homeless man stealing an apple from a display. You tell the vendor.
- You stop at yellow lights.
- A youth breaks a house rule where the activity is being held (you did not make the rule). You call him on it.
- You are in favour of euthanasia.
- It is ethical for a trainer to demand that you reveal your position on these statements.

To ease tension in the room, the trainer may also add other funny or non-related statements. For example:

- The sun is prettier than the moon.
- Clowns eat more oranges than jugglers do.





OBSERVATION

- Which statements challenged ethical beliefs and which did not?
- Was it easy to make a snap judgment?
- Were there similarities or differences in the decisions people made?
- What surprised or shocked you?



INTEGRATION

- What were you feeling? (e.g. confident, worried about the judgment of others, etc.)
- What guides your ethical decisions?
- Do social circus instructors share a common code of ethics?
- Why is it important to take time out and discuss the code of ethics for social circus instructors?²

The trainer presents the code of ethics for instructors, either formally or by asking one or more of the participants to read it out loud.



APPLICATION

The trainer presents the following situation, either describing it verbally or using two instructors to act it out in front of the group:

An instructor who owns a circus entertainment company is telling his colleague that he hired some of the youth from his social circus program to perform in a show the previous week. He goes on to say that the performance went well, that the young performers were very good and that one of them executed some amazing flips and so on. His colleague, however, is not really listening because he's too preoccupied by the following ethical questions:

- What are the conditions permitting young persons to participate in this project?
- Where do the profits go?
- Were the young performers from the social circus program reasonably paid?
- What impact could this have on other participants who did not take part in this performance?

This situation raises many ethical questions that the group can discuss by referring to the principles that came up during the activity. The trainer concludes the activity by inviting the instructors to adhere to the code of ethics, to reread it often and to think about how it can be applied to their programs or shared with partner organizations. Lastly, the trainer asks them how this activity will influence their behaviour, as well as how it will affect their practice.

² See the reference text "Code of Ethics for Social Circus Instructors" in this module, p. 93.



MODULE 4 | ACTIVITY 2

SABOTAGE

OBJECTIVE

To learn how to use an ethical frame of reference for all interventions.

Length of activity
45-60 minutes

Materials
*Large sheets of paper,
felt-tip pens*

Number of participants
10-25



EXPERIENCE

The trainer divides the group into teams of 8-10 people. Each team is invited to brainstorm for 10-15 minutes on a plan for sabotaging a social circus project. The goal is to come up with as many ideas as possible – without censoring or criticizing – of ways to ruin a social circus project. Ideas can be realistic or far-fetched. Each team notes its members' ideas on a large sheet of paper.



OBSERVATION

Once each team has presented their sabotage plan to the whole group, the trainer steps in to lead the discussion:

- What did you notice?
- Which sabotage plans received the most consensus?
- Was it difficult to generate certain ideas? Why?



INTEGRATION

- Do you disagree with some ideas? More simply put, were there any grey areas or certain elements that, in your opinion, cannot necessarily be considered as sabotage?
- Do social circus instructors and community workers share a common code of ethics?
- What are the main themes defining the ethical principles that guide the actions of social circus instructors and community workers?

The trainer presents the code of ethics for social circus instructors³ and underscores the importance of establishing and respecting a common code.

³ See the reference text "Code of Ethics for Social Circus Instructors" in this module, p. 93.



MODULE 4 | KEY MESSAGES

A code of ethics is a framework that can be used to make working together easier, regardless of the participants or country. It is a common reference point, guideline and shared code of conduct.

A code of ethics enables greater consistency in every action and more stability in every intervention.

Differences in values between instructors, community workers, participants and members of the partner organization can lead to conflict. The development of a code of ethics eliminates some of the potential conflicts before they have even begun.





One part of the program has us take our equipment out to the streets. One day, we arrived in the park and one young man absolutely wanted to use the stilts. As he had knocked back about ten beers and was completely drunk, we were insistent: “No, you can’t do that. You can juggle, but no stilts.” The next time, he was waiting for us; however, he had stayed sober, so that he could use the stilts. From that day on, each time we went out, he would make sure not to have any alcohol. It became a way for him to manage his alcohol consumption.

Karine Lavoie, Social Circus Instructor
Cirque du Monde, Montreal



MODULE 5 - OBJECTIVES

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

1. Recognize the importance of establishing physical and emotional safety to ensure the success of workshops.
2. Develop an abiding concern for safety.
3. Learn ways to implement a safe environment conducive to circus workshops.

CONTENTS OF THIS MODULE

REFERENCE TEXTS

- Safety Concerns for the Social Circus Instructor
- Safety Measures for Social Circus Workshops

ACTIVITIES

- Pyramids
- Sketches



MODULE 5 | INTRODUCTION

The instructor and community worker are responsible for the safety of participants during a social circus workshop. This responsibility includes preventing accidents as well as teaching participants about safety.

The degree of focus that the instructor and community worker must put on safety depends on the type of activity and characteristics of the participant group, including their age, physical condition, experience, degree of autonomy and ability to work as a team. The instructor and community worker must also consider other important safety aspects, such as the condition of the equipment, the facilities and the premises where the workshop will be held. The goal is to create a magical space that offers physical, psychological and emotional safety and that promotes exploration, discovery, fun and a sense of belonging.

Group safety also includes taking into consideration the health of each individual. Special attention must be paid to preventing the transmission of infectious diseases, such as hepatitis and skin conditions, as well as monitoring consumption of alcohol or drugs before the workshop. However, these interventions should not distract the instructor and community worker from showing the proper respect, empathy and attention due each participant.

The concern shown by the instructor and community worker for safety, health and hygiene can play an important role in educating participants. That is, it can help teach them the safety measures they can take to protect themselves and others during the social circus workshops and in the outside world. It also educates them about the risks of transmission, and helps them to understand their own limits, respect their own bodies and take care of others. For at-risk individuals – particularly young people – these lessons often represent a very important step in their personal growth.



MODULE 5 | REFERENCE TEXT 1

SAFETY IN SOCIAL CIRCUS WORKSHOPS¹

By Michel Lafortune

With regards to safety, the responsibilities of the facilitation team address the following four points:

1. **PREMISES**
2. **EQUIPMENT**
3. **PARTICIPANTS**
4. **INSTRUCTORS AND COMMUNITY WORKERS**

1. PREMISES

The instructor and community worker must take care to create a working environment that is **pleasant, neat and safe**. Although they must be vigilant at all times to secure the environment, both the instructor and community worker must also **set aside specific periods of time for inspecting the premises**. When visiting a workshop site for the first time, they should walk around to familiarize themselves with the premises and verify certain key elements. The team must check, among other things, the safety exits, first-aid kit, fire extinguisher and location of a telephone in case of emergency, and make sure that they have the contact information of the person in charge of the premises. Furthermore, they must **check for the presence of objects that could cause injury** and remove them from the area. Lastly, the facilitation team must pay particular attention to the quality of the lighting and ventilation.

Should the workshop take place in an open area, the instructor and community worker should locate a sheltered area to use in case of rain or a shady area if it gets too hot. They should also inspect the terrain for the presence of dangerous objects (gravel, sharp objects, sand, etc.). However, whether the workshops happen inside or outside, instructors and community workers must always adapt workshop activities to the actual site where the workshop will take place.

A **quick evaluation of the premises** should also be conducted **before each workshop**. To help with this, we strongly recommend that organizations and members of the tandem facilitation team use *Checklist for ensuring safety during social circus workshops*, a grid that lists all the elements that must be verified before each workshop. This checklist, which has been provided in the following pages, catalogues the most common inspection points and includes a follow-up tool explaining recommended actions for situations when safety measures are not being respected.

¹Michel Lafortune, *La sécurité dans les ateliers de cirque social* (internal document, Montreal, Cirque du Soleil, Social Circus Department, 2003 and 2012).



2. EQUIPMENT

Instructors are responsible for the physical safety of participants and must ensure the safe use and maintenance of equipment. They must therefore **check all circus equipment or materials before allowing** use. The frequency and degree of use evidently determines how often the equipment must be checked. For example, stilts used but once a month can be quickly checked before each use, whereas stilts used every day by more than one participant should be rigorously examined before each workshop.

Instructors must also regularly make the rounds to verify, maintain and clean all equipment. During the rounds, instructors must confirm that equipment has been installed or mounted according to standard. If the instructor does not feel competent enough to evaluate the quality of the equipment installed, he or she must then ask a specialist. If this is not possible, the equipment should not be used. Also, instructors should be able to **recognize signs of wear** on equipment and safeguard that equipment has not come into contact with sand, liquids or blood. If this is the case, it becomes necessary to clean the equipment before use, or even during use, to make sure that no one slips, gets hurt or is contaminated. Finally, instructors must make sure that there is **enough clearance for safe use of the equipment**.

Another responsibility of the instructor is **educating participants about how to use the equipment** and encouraging them to **adopt preventive measures**. In doing so, instructors must transmit clear messages about how to move, install, use and store the equipment.

3. PARTICIPANTS

Instructors and community workers will be asked to work with a wide variety of participants. The age of participants, as well as their physical condition and abilities, degree of autonomy, experience and ability to work as a group will impact how activities are planned and **determine the level of safety to implement**. The facilitation team must be vigilant the day of the workshop to **make certain that participants are in an appropriate state** to take part in scheduled activities. If some participants are showing signs of physical or psychological fatigue, or are demonstrating signs of diminished capacities, the instructor and community worker must re-evaluate what they've planned and adjust safety levels accordingly. Before jumping into the activities, the facilitation team must also ensure that **participants have been adequately warmed up** and that they are wearing clothing that is appropriate for the planned activities.

Furthermore, from the very start, instructors and community workers should **make participants aware of the importance of safety** during social circus workshops. The facilitation team must help participants to understand the risks of practising the circus arts and teach them the safe behaviours to adopt. Teaching safety also involves helping participants to respect their limits and **to be mindful of others**. Over time, through ongoing sensitization, the instructor and community worker can **foster a spirit of mutual aid among participants**, all the while making them increasingly responsible for their own safety.



4. INSTRUCTOR AND COMMUNITY WORKER

While the instructor ensures the physical safety of participants, the community worker plays a major role when it comes to ensuring emotional safety. When faced with complex situations, the facilitation team will be called upon to mediate. Handling difficult situations is necessary and delicate work. It is important to be **strictly intolerant of psychological abuse** such as harassment, intimidation and bullying, and to intervene immediately. However, intervention goes beyond reacting to difficult situations as they arise. Throughout the session, instructors and community must focus their energies on **creating a safe and reassuring environment** – a safe space or bubble – where participants can feel that their physical and emotional integrity is always being respected.

It is also recommended that instructors and community workers be **well prepared to deal with all safety issues**. They should have a list containing all contact information for the parents or guardians of each participant and, if possible, health information about each participant. Naturally, the facilitation team understands that this information must be kept confidential. It is also highly recommended that the facilitation team be notified about the transmission of blood-borne diseases and understand what procedures have been established by the partner organization to deal with emergency situations. Remember that being well informed does not necessarily teach instructors how to intervene efficiently should the situation arise. For instructors to learn how to **react appropriately in emergency situations**, adequate training with simulation and practice is also required. Ideally, all members of a facilitation team should have completed full first-aid training.

Finally, instructors and community workers must **ensure their own safety**. During workshops, there are numerous risk factors: physical confrontations between participants, the presence of contaminated objects or syringes, emergency situations requiring intervention, etc. But there is emotional risk as well. Working with at-risk youth presents challenges for even the most seasoned professional. Instructors and community workers must therefore **be aware of the psychological fatigue** that comes with their job. Furthermore, it's important to **avoid developing close relationships with participants** in order to maintain their emotional safety and circumvent delicate situations that could potentially pose ethical dilemmas of both a personal and professional nature.



When one participant endangers the safety of the whole group

The safety of a group can be threatened by the inappropriate behaviour of just one participant. It is the responsibility of the instructor and community worker to decide whether this participant should be ejected from the workshop to minimize risks for the whole group. The decision to exclude one young person is difficult to make, as it deprives us of the opportunity to intervene positively in that life. If a participant must be thrown out, it is imperative to explain the reasons why to the group and the individual participant, regardless of how receptive he or she might be. Ideally, we should adopt preventative measures to avoid such a hard decision. For example, it is important to establish ground rules with the group from the beginning (notably rules concerning violence and alcohol or drug use) and to avoid situations in which a previously permissive attitude toward the group suddenly becomes hard and uncompromising. Instructors and community workers must meet frequently to establish objectives, agree on which appropriate and consistent actions to take and follow up on these measures and interventions once they are taken.



CHECKLIST FOR ENSURING SAFETY DURING SOCIAL CIRCUS WORKSHOPS

SAFETY ELEMENTS TO VERIFY:	COMPLIANCE? YES/NO	IF NO, WHAT ACTION(S) MUST BE TAKEN:	ACTION(S) TAKEN ACTION	DATE
PREMISES				
Training area is well delineated and free of debris				
Adequate lighting and ventilation is provided				
Drinkable water is available				
Emergency exits are clearly marked				
A first-aid kit and fire extinguisher are on hand				
A telephone and an emergency phone number, as well as contact information for the person in charge of the premises, are available				
EQUIPMENT				
Equipment is appropriate and in good condition, and does not present a risk of injury for participants				
Equipment not being used is properly stored, so as not to inconvenience participants				
Equipment is set-up in full compliance with norms and standards				
Equipment is clean and disinfected				
There is sufficient clearance for safe use of the equipment				
Participants have received clear instructions on how to use equipment				
Instructions are given for the set up and uninstall of moveable equipment, which will be stored after each workshop				
PARTICIPANTS				
Activities have been planned according to the mental and physical state of participants				
Participants are willing and do not have diminished capacities				
Participants are able to adequately warm-up their bodies for the activity				
Clothing worn by participants is appropriate				
Participants are made aware of the potential dangers of practising the circus arts, as well as the safe behaviours they must adopt				
INSTRUCTORS AND COMMUNITY WORKERS				
Instructors/community workers ensure the emotional safety of participants and that they are not subjected to intimidation or harassment				
Instructors/community workers have a list with the names and contact information for each participant's parent or guardian				
Instructors/community workers know basic information about participants and their general health, all the while respecting their privacy				
Instructors/community workers are informed of the procedure to follow in order to prevent the transmission of HIV during social circus workshops				
Instructors/community workers receive clear instructions on procedures to follow in case of an emergency and their respective responsibilities at that time				
At least one member of the facilitation team has first-aid training				

MODULE 5 | REFERENCE TEXT 2

SAFETY MEASURES FOR SOCIAL CIRCUS WORKSHOPS

By Stéphane Batigne

Working with at-risk individuals could bring social circus instructors and community workers into contact with certain infectious diseases, in particular sexually transmitted infections (STIs). They will also encounter addicts in their participant group. The information that follows will help instructors and community workers handle these situations, as well as adopt safety measures to protect participants and themselves.

SOME FACTS ABOUT INFECTIOUS DISEASES

An infectious disease is caused by micro-organisms such as bacteria, viruses, parasites and microscopic fungi. In order to contract an infectious disease, someone must first come into contact with the micro-organism causing it. Transmission resulting in contamination varies according to the disease (e.g. through blood transfer, sexual relations, skin contact, etc.). The “incubation period” refers to the delay between contamination and the onset of symptoms, and it lasts for varying lengths of time. Certain symptoms are typical of a specific disease, while other symptoms are not typical at all. Some individuals may present no visible symptoms, even while they are contagious. “Contagion” refers to the transmission of an infectious disease by the micro-organism that causes it. The transmission period also varies according to the disease.

TREATMENTS FOR INFECTIOUS DISEASES

Antibiotics can only combat bacterial infections – not viruses. The only protection against viral infection is vaccination (when available) and prevention. In certain cases, there is also the possibility of treatment with antiviral medication. A vaccination³ is an immunization method that involves introducing a little bit of the disease germ or bacteria into a healthy person, which helps the body build antibodies to fight this kind of germ or bacterium. A vaccinated individual thus becomes immunized against this micro-organism for a (more or less) long period of time. There are no vaccinations against certain types of disease, including HIV-AIDS. In most developed countries, vaccination is free. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada, vaccinations present a very low risk to general health. Also, vaccines cause little or no reaction.

HEPATITIS A AND B⁴

Hepatitis is an infectious liver disease caused by a virus. There are numerous types, but the most common are hepatitis A and hepatitis B. These two diseases have different methods of transmission; they also vary in how commonly they occur and in their severity. Many symptoms of hepatitis A and B are similar: fever, fatigue, loss of appetite,

³ *Immunization: The Most Successful Public Health Measure*, Public Health Agency of Canada, <http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/im/measure-intervention-eng.php> (accessed October 13, 2009).

⁴ *Hepatitis A and Hepatitis B*, 2009, Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/diseases/hepatitis_a.html and http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/diseases/hepatitis_b.html (accessed October 13, 2009).



nausea and abdominal pain. In the case of hepatitis A, there is also a darker colouration of the urine and yellowing of the skin and eyeballs (jaundice). In some cases, infected persons present no symptoms at all.

Hepatitis A

Hepatitis A is the most common form of viral hepatitis, accounting for 90% of all cases. It is also the least virulent and is rarely fatal for individuals in good overall health. Hepatitis A is transmitted by ingesting food or water that's been contaminated with infected fecal matter. Transmission can also occur through oral and anal sexual activity. Poor personal hygiene and sanitary conditions increase the risk of contamination. The incubation period for hepatitis A is from two to six weeks, with contagion beginning two weeks before the onset of symptoms and ending two weeks after symptoms have disappeared. A vaccination exists for hepatitis A, but there is still no treatment for the disease. Prevention consists of proper hygiene, including hand washing and water sanitation.

Hepatitis B

Hepatitis B is a more severe type of hepatitis. In 90% of cases, individuals will spontaneously heal. However, in 9% of cases, the individual becomes a chronic carrier of the disease; that is, they will never heal and remain contagious for months, years or even their entire lives. Carriers of hepatitis B often develop cirrhosis and then liver cancer, with 15-25% of carriers dying from their disease. In the last 1% of cases, the disease evolves into a more deadly form called fulminant hepatitis. Hepatitis B is spread from person to person through contact with contaminated blood, tissue or other bodily fluids (saliva, sperm, vaginal secretions). Urine, feces, sweat, tears and vomit do not contain the virus. Transmission can occur in the following situations: punctures of the skin with a contaminated object (needle, knife, etc.), a blood splash on skin already bearing small wounds (including a scratch or burn), contact between mucus membranes (in the mouth, nose, eyes) and contaminated blood, bites and unprotected sexual activity, including oral sex. The risk of transmission through sexual activity is high. Prevention consists of vaccination and avoiding contact with contaminated blood or bodily fluids.

HIV-AIDS⁵

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) is a virus that attacks the immune system. Acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) is the most advanced stage of the infection, at which point the immune system is too weak to fight off any infection. HIV-AIDS first appeared in 1981 and has already killed more than 25 million people around the world. In certain regions, such as sub-Saharan Africa, this disease is the number one cause of death and has greatly reduced the population's life expectancy. Transmission of HIV occurs mainly through contact with infected blood and unprotected sexual activity (heterosexual or homosexual). Contagion through blood transfer mostly occurs through the sharing of contaminated needles and the transfusion of contaminated blood. The virus does not survive long in the open air. HIV can be transmitted from a mother to her unborn child before or during birth, or through breastfeeding. Several

⁵ *HIV/AIDS in the Workplace*, Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety, <http://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/diseases/aids/aids.html>; CATIE.CA, <http://www.catie.ca/eng/Home.shtml> (accessed October 13, 2009).



years may pass between HIV contamination and the onset of symptoms indicating a compromised immune system (AIDS). Individuals with HIV who do not present any symptoms are referred to as being “HIV-positive”; despite this lack of symptoms, these individuals are still contagious. Also, multiple exposures to the HIV virus will accelerate the progression toward AIDS. Although there are blood tests to determine if someone is HIV-positive, these tests cannot detect the virus if contamination occurred in the last three months. If the disease is detected early, patients can benefit from medical treatments that can delay – or even prevent – the onset of AIDS. These treatments are heavy and taxing on the body, and in poorer countries, they are often not available. There is no vaccine for AIDS.

OTHER SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS⁶

Infectious diseases transmitted through unprotected sexual activity are called sexually transmitted infections (STIs) or sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). In the past, they were also known as “venereal diseases.” The most common STIs are gonorrhea, chlamydia, genital herpes and syphilis. Other STIs include candidiasis, chancroid, trichomoniasis, genital warts, cervical cancer and lymphogranuloma venereum. Exposure to an STI can occur during vaginal, anal or even oral sexual intercourse. Using condoms is the best form of prevention for these diseases.

PRACTICAL TIPS FOR RUNNING SAFE WORKSHOPS⁷

Prevention and hygiene

- Make sure you have received all the basic vaccinations.
- Keep a first-aid kit on hand.
- Let participants know that they should be using condoms.
- Wash your hands meticulously – and don’t forget your nails! Always use soap, but make sure to use a product that’s gentle on skin.
- Require that all individuals wanting to use the trapeze or the aerial hoop disinfect their hands first.
- Regularly disinfect the trapeze or aerial hoop bar with a solution of alcohol, water and soap to reduce the risk of transmitting infectious diseases. Alcohol destroys many types of micro-organisms. We can never disinfect enough!
- Before all physical contact, make sure to cover any lesions (cuts, scratches, etc.). A freshly burst blister, no matter how small, could expose you to numerous infectious diseases.
- If you suspect a dangerous product has come into contact with your eyes, rinse them thoroughly for 20 minutes.
- Fungal diseases, or infections caused by microscopic fungi, are transmitted through touch, but not via objects. As many fungal infections are commonly carried on the feet, it’s recommended to ask that feet also be washed before beginning any exercises where contact with the feet might be involved.

⁶ *The Fight against STI*, Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux du Québec, http://www.msss.gouv.qc.ca/sujets/prob_sante/itss/index.php?home (accessed October 13, 2009).

⁷ Suzanne Cummings, *Sexually Transmitted Infections: How Can Coaches Protect Themselves?* (social circus training document, Montreal, Cirque du Soleil, Social Affairs and International Cooperation Department, May 19, 2005).



TABLE 5.1 - OTHER SYMPTOMS AND TREATMENTS OF SEXUALLY TRANSMITTED INFECTIONS (STIs)

STIs	GERM CAUSING INFECTION	SYMPTOMS	TREATMENTS
Gonorrhea	Gonococcus or Neisseria gonorrhoeae	Vaginal discharge or discharge from the penis, pain and trouble with urination (miction).	Antibiotics
Chlamydia	Chlamydia	Often asymptomatic for women, but can still cause infertility. For men, causes discharge of the penis and trouble with urination (miction).	Antibiotics
Genital herpes	Herpes virus	Inflamed vesicles (contagious) on the infected region (genitals, anus). Symptoms will disappear after ten days or so, but the virus stays in the body and the infected person may experience irregular flare-ups throughout his or her lifetime.	Antivirals reduce symptoms. There is no vaccine for herpes.
Syphilis	Treponema pallidum	In the primary stage, an open, but painless sore appears on the genital organs or in the mouth. At the secondary stage, the skin and mucus membranes develop small pink or red patches, and very contagious rashes begin to appear on the face, soles of the feet and palms of the hands. In the tertiary stage, which occurs many years later, the organs begin to be affected and other numerous and varied symptoms begin to appear, perhaps even resulting in death. Today, in countries where treatments are available, the tertiary stage is rarely reached.	Antibiotics (penicillin)
Candidiasis	Microscopic fungus of the Candida species	Inflammation, discharge, rashes and aches affect different parts of the body, in particular the genital organs. The micro-organism is transmitted through touch.	Antifungals
Scabies	Microscopic parasite, Sarcoptes scabiei	Severe itching develops beneath the skin's epidermis. Disease can be transmitted through simple contact, even contact with contaminated clothing.	An antiparasite treatment must be applied all over the body, and everything that came into contact with the body must be washed. A second treatment is sometimes required 10 days after the first.



Communication

- When talking to participants, use neutral language that does not contain value judgments. Good communication is essential.
 - Remember that some participants are experiencing great inner turmoil and that they are trying to cope with it. Offer them options when you share your point of view.
 - It is sometimes valuable to share your personal experience with participants. It's up to you to decide.
- **Infectious diseases:**
 - If you suspect that certain young people are engaging in sexual activities that put them at risk or are taking drugs, let them know that you care about their well-being and that you are available if they want to talk about it.
 - Let participants know how important it is to have tests done to screen for infectious diseases.
 - As an instructor, respect the limits of your expertise. Point participants toward the right resources. Community workers have been trained to answer questions about infectious diseases.
 - When educating participants about condom use, don't forget to mention that the symptoms for some STIs are not always visible.
 - Let the women know that they are more at risk than men. Also, warn them that they can transmit HIV to their unborn child during pregnancy.
 - Inform participants that piercings, if done improperly, can transmit STIs.
 - There are many approaches for discussing protection against STIs. You might even draw a parallel between having protected sex and having a spotting partner when working balance exercises. Safety is always the number one priority.
 - **Drugs:**
 - If, during a workshop, you notice that participants are under the influence of drugs, ask them to complete a simple task that will not endanger them or the others. If the behaviour threatens their personal safety or that of the group, you can also suggest that they leave, with the reassurance that you are acting in their best interest. In any case, your decision must be based on the condition of the participants in question and their ability to participate safely in the workshop.
 - When talking about steroid use with participants, mention the side effects, especially those that impact the genital organs.
 - Positively reinforce the decision of a young person who chose not to use before a workshop with a reward.
 - Do not demonize drugs - remain objective. Instead, let participants know the facts and consequences of drug use.



MODULE 5 | ACTIVITY 1

PYRAMIDS

OBJECTIVE

To explore ways to encourage or create a safe environment in social circus workshops.

Length of activity
45-60 minutes

Materials
Mats, images of different types of human pyramids

Number of participants
20-25



EXPERIENCE

The trainer divides the group into two or three teams and gives each an image of a human pyramid. Taking turns, members of one team will give members of another team verbal instructions on how to build the pyramid they've been given without showing them the image. Throughout the activity, the team members building the pyramid must do so in silence.



OBSERVATION

- How did the pyramid-building activity go?
- Were the instructions clear?
- Who took the lead in giving instructions? Who collaborated with the leader(s)? Who followed the leader(s)?
- Was the human pyramid built respecting safety rules?
- What helped or detracted from the building of the pyramid?



INTEGRATION

- What are the safety measures to be taken when building a human pyramid? For physical safety? For emotional safety?
- Why is this aspect important?
- Which of these concerns can be applied to all circus activities?



APPLICATION

The trainer asks the group to name three safety rules to achieve the following goals:

- To ensure physical safety on the premises before the activity begins
- To ensure physical safety during the activity
- To create an emotionally safe space
- To practise the circus arts safely in a team of two
- To practise the circus arts safely in a larger team



MODULE 5 | ACTIVITY 2

SKETCHES

OBJECTIVE

To explore ways to encourage or create a safe environment in social circus workshops.



EXPERIENCE

The trainer creates teams of five. Each team randomly picks a card with a theme. The teams then use this theme to create a sketch about safety. Teams will be given about 10 minutes to prepare before they are asked to present their sketches one at a time.

Examples of themes:

- Acrobatics
- Clear instructions
- Safety measures when performing a circus technique
- Alcohol and drug use
- Condition of equipment or premises
- Instructor or community worker with poor technical skills (working beyond what you know)
- Psychological or sexual harassment
- Spotting (manual aid)
- Exclusion



OBSERVATION

After each presentation, the trainer should ask the whole group the following questions:

- What safe or unsafe behaviours did you notice?
- What did you understand from the sketch? What was the message?

The trainer should then ask the team presenting the following question:

- Did the whole group understand your message? If not, explain why.

Length of activity
60 minutes

Materials
Cards with themes written on them

Number of participants
20-25





INTEGRATION

Once all the teams have presented their sketches, the trainer begins the discussion anew by reviewing situations that came up in the sketches.

- What were the physical and emotional consequences of unsafe behaviour?
- Have you ever witnessed a similar situation?
- How does this problem relate to safety?
- Did the sketches present a solution? What are other possible solutions?
- How can this kind of situation be avoided?

The trainer then invites the group to reflect on this activity as a whole:

- If we were to categorize different kinds of safety measures to be taken during a social circus workshop, what are the different labels we would use?

The trainer completes this portion by introducing the following five categories of safety measures applicable to a social circus workshop:⁸

1. Characteristics of the participants
2. Equipment to be used
3. Condition of the premises
4. Supervision
5. Emotional safety



APPLICATION

The trainer asks the instructors to form smaller subgroups to discuss the following:

- Based on the five categories, what strategies would you use or implement to ensure safety?
- What category of safety would you like to reinforce in your practice?

ALTERNATIVE

Rather than decide on the themes for the sketches beforehand, the trainer could ask for the group's help. On a card, all the participants could write down one concern they have about physical and emotional safety during social circus workshops. This concern could stem from a previous experience they've had or be entirely made up. Each team would then randomly choose one of these cards.

⁸ See the reference text "Safety Concerns for the Social Circus Instructor" in this module, p. 107.



MODULE 5 | KEY MESSAGES

The physical and emotional safety of participants is the top priority.

Safety must become a permanent concern shared by all.

Prevention and education are key to ensuring safe practices.

The extent of the safety measures required will vary according to the context, so it's important to re-evaluate your practices frequently.

When it's a question of safety, it's important to be aware of one's professional limits.





The theme for this year's performance was "The Giants." There was a parade in Baie-Saint-Paul, in which all the Cirque du Monde groups participated. Here in Manawan, we made traditional Aboriginal costumes for our giants. It was our way of combining the theme with our native traditions. Parents worked alongside their children. It was really beautiful to watch. The integration of traditional elements was a source of inspiration for the youth, because it's how they identify themselves. They can just as easily listen to Samian and traditional music as they can to hip hop.

Alice Echaquan, Special Education Technician
Cirque du Monde, Manawan



MODULE 6 - OBJECTIVES

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

1. Learn the role and importance of creativity in social circus both for participants as well as instructors and community workers.
2. Apply the different steps of the creative process to the social circus context.
3. Understand the benefits of and issues surrounding the performance in the social circus model.

CONTENTS OF THIS MODULE

REFERENCE TEXTS

- Creativity in the Social Circus Context
- The Role of Performance in Social Circus

ACTIVITIES

- Depicting a Moving Object
- Be Creative!



MODULE 6 | INTRODUCTION

Social circus is all about creativity. First and foremost, it's about artistic creativity, in the sense that a group prepares and presents a performance, but it's also about educational creativity, which is used by instructors and community workers to keep participants stimulated and included in the group. Simply put, creativity is a powerful catalyst for change and for participants' development.

The performance comes after many weeks and months of training and preparation, but this event, or participants' technical performance, should not be seen as the ultimate goal. Rather, the performance serves to validate the process of social change, as well as the satisfaction that follows successfully completing a group effort and performing in front of the community.

For the instructor and community worker, the preparation of the performance poses a creative challenge, as they are required to remind themselves constantly of the true goal of social circus: that is, to help all participants find a role within the group, regardless of their talents and ability to cope with the stress of performing in public. The instructor also faces the challenge of maintaining his or her role as an educator over that of artistic director.

As educators, the instructor and community worker must also show creativity when finding the means to encourage participants' self-expression and integrate them all into the group by using their marginalization as a tool for personal growth. For many participants, using their creativity helps them overcome their suffering and leave behind the world that causes that suffering for a world of their own making. Through the creative process, participants can replace the role of "victim" with that of "hero." They become artists and actors in their own life.



MODULE 6 | REFERENCE TEXT 1

CREATIVITY IN THE SOCIAL CIRCUS CONTEXT¹

By Michel Lafortune

Creativity is not a leisure activity. It must invent a new world to replace the world of suffering. Creative culture is a social anchor that inspires hope in the face of life's adversities, while passive culture is merely a distraction that kills time but resolves nothing.²

This reference text will present the basic cornerstones of the creative process, as described most notably by André Paré, Bernard Démory and François Tougas.³ For our purposes, creativity will be understood as the conception and manifestation of ideas or projects, and as a tool for managing groups. This text will also address the creative process as it applies to running social circus workshops with participants.

THE ABILITY TO CREATE IS WITHIN EVERY HUMAN BEING

Writing the history of creativity would, in essence, be like painting a large fresco depicting the history of all mankind... It would also be writing the history of art... Or even writing the history of thought... It would be like following the winding roads leading away from the alchemy of all things, the alchemy of all verbs... Ultimately, it would be the senseless task of indexing every moment - from the beginning of time - when humans transformed their ideas into new creations.⁴

Creativity is a way of learning, of generating knowledge. All theories of creativity are necessarily theories of knowledge.⁵

All human beings, regardless of what they do in life, have the potential for creativity within them, but this inner potential must be explored and exercised. Also, the life experience of each individual will determine whether this innate creativity is validated or stifled: "Being creative is above all a way of being in the world."⁶ Creative work benefits the creators as well as those around them, because the creators are in essence sharing a part of themselves. This act constitutes a perpetual source of learning.

CREATIVITY: A PROCESS

The creative process generally follows four stages:

1. Preparation

This first stage consists of gathering feelings, ideas, emotions and thoughts, without trying to put them into any order. It's a period of exploration in which one feels the desire for change.

¹ Michel Lafortune, *La créativité appliquée au cirque social* (internal document, Montreal, Cirque du Soleil, Social Circus Department, 2008 and 2010).

² Boris Cyrulnik, *Les vilains petits canards* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2001), p. 242.

³ André Paré, *Créativité et pédagogie ouverte, Volume 2: Créativité et apprentissage* (Laval: Les Éditions NHP, 1977), pp. 89-91.

⁴ Bernard Démory, with Lucie Julien and Michelle Saunier, *La créativité en pratique et en action* (Paris: Les Éditions Agences D'Arc, 1984), p. 113. Cited in J-L Sudres and R. Fourasté, *L'adolescent créatif: formes, expressions, thérapies* (Toulouse: Presses universitaires du Mirail, 1994), p. 21.

⁵ Paré, *Créativité et pédagogie ouverte*, p. 83.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 81; Démory, *La créativité en pratique*, p. 51; and François Tougas, *CRE 2810 - Créativité appliquée à la formation* (course pack, Montreal, Université de Montréal, Faculté de l'Éducation permanente, 1997), p. 4.

2. Incubation

At this stage, the cognitive data collected begins to become more organized at the subconscious level. New ideas begin to emerge and are explored, but do not yet coalesce into a satisfying form.

3. Inspiration

Finally, an idea or solution is discovered! Thoughts flow and come together, becoming more organized and forming the foundations of the larger work.

4. Confirmation

The idea or solution is at long last brought to life. The relevance and quality of the work is confirmed by the feedback provided by others and the public.

TO KEEP IN MIND..

Show just how open you are!

Some participants are very creative: they have fertile imaginations and a great wealth of ideas, almost all of which are worth pursuing. Meanwhile, other participants may find it difficult to think outside the box or are kept back by fear of ridicule, self-doubt or simply because they've never been asked to nurture their inner creativity. It is not always easy for instructors and community workers to draw consistently good ideas from participants, be open to all suggestions and achieve consensus with the group about which ideas to develop. They can, however, recognize the efforts being made. To encourage creative development, the facilitation team must reinforce the successes of each participant (according to ability) and help them overcome the obstacles holding them back.

CREATIVITY AS EDUCATION

Creativity is also defined as an educational tool. It helps humans develop the ability to gather ideas from different sources and then use their innate sensory, affective and cognitive skills to transform them into a new idea or solution:⁷

In this sense, creativity is above all a lesson in invention that seeks to help individuals, through the use of appropriate techniques, to explore their innate creative potential, and, in doing so, to conquer new challenges.⁸

CREATIVITY AS A TRAINING TOOL

The group dynamic offers fertile ground for the creative process. The group consciousness, as well as its ability to define goals and the means of obtaining these goals, are the cornerstones required to help the group's creativity flourish. According to Tougas,⁹

⁷ Paré, *Créativité et pédagogie ouverte*, p. 51.

⁸ Démory, *La créativité en pratique*, p. 44.

⁹ Tougas, *CRE 2810*, pp. 7-8.



creativity enables the birth of new activities and new ideas or solutions, but it also inspires changes within the group or to the intervention approach. Creativity can occur in the group at every level (content, procedure, group dynamic)¹⁰ and encourages the optimal use of resources at every level.

The authors mentioned have determined a series of questions applicable to group interventions, in particular to the trainer's actions, to participants and to how knowledge is shared. The questions were created to develop strategies and stimulate the creative process in a training context, but they are also applicable to social circus workshops.

Questions relating to actions taken by the instructor and community worker:

- How do I stay upbeat when undertaking a difficult task?
- How can I communicate this experience in another way?
- How can I improve my performance?
- How can I react creatively to conflicts?
- How do I approach different encounters?

Questions relating to participants and the socio-affective climate in the group:

- How can I stimulate participants in another way?
- What else can I do to help them feel safer?
- How can I better inspire participants?
- How can the ideas of participants be transformed?

Questions relating to the sharing of knowledge:

- How else can I present these activities so that they'll be better received?
- How do I introduce new content?
- How do I come up with new activities, tools and themes?
- How can I transform technical skills into an artistic experience?
- How can I encourage participants to express themselves artistically?

CREATIVITY AS A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

Creativity finds all of its meaning in the context of change. Producing one-of-a-kind objects, finding original solutions to old problems (or even new ones), fostering a constantly evolving aesthetic or artistic vision, practising the daily art of doing things differently, doing it uniquely: all of these practices lead to a transformation of the inner and outer worlds belonging to each one of us.¹¹

Creativity has the power to bring about great change. It can knock down barriers, explore new horizons, find affinities between seemingly random ideas, establish new relationships, deconstruct and rebuild what is considered standard or normal, contemplate new perspectives and so on. All in all, creativity enables us to produce new ideas, transform that which already exists, discover new paths of inquiry and contribute to personal development and growth.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 5.



SOME OBSTACLES TO THE CREATIVE PROCESS¹²

Various obstacles can block the creative process, some internal and others external.

The biggest internal obstacle is a total lack of motivation to engage in the creative process, a process which can only take place if an individual is interested and willing. Other blockages that could curb creativity include: a demanding inner critic that sets unrealistic performance goals, the refusal to dream or difficulty abstracting.

Other internal obstacles that can prevent people from leaving their comfort zone include fears of making a mistake, failing or being ridiculed. Similarly, fear of the unknown and resistance to change indicate an inability to challenge the basis of one's actions, ideas, beliefs or values, and thus an inability to explore new horizons.

Obstacles can also come from outside sources, whether from another person, a group or the context. Some examples include terror regimes, authoritarian pressures, negative criticism, value judgments, bureaucracy and over planning.

Education, which is seen as the classic model for sharing knowledge, does not necessarily encourage the development of a critical eye and can impede creativity by limiting a person's ability to explore and make links between seemingly disparate ideas. Learners can easily fall into the trap of becoming too comfortable with what they know and their previous experiences, and subsequently avoid situations calling for change or innovation.

CREATIVITY AS IT APPLIES TO SOCIAL CIRCUS WORKSHOPS

Instructors and community workers giving social circus workshops are required to stimulate the creative process in different ways, whether by fostering a creative environment within the group or finding new activities that encourage participants to express themselves artistically. Above all, the facilitation team must adapt the creative process to suit the context of the intervention and promote a creative approach to learning circus techniques (adding variations, humour, body language, etc.).

Whether preparing a creative workshop, a performance, materials or a repertoire of games, instructors must frequently adopt a minimalist approach that takes into account the modest resources at their disposal. They must, as much as possible, find an approach free of material and human constraints, in order to ensure the success of the project. For example, if there is a chronic lack of financial resources, instructors must consider transforming or recycling existing materials.

¹² As discussed by Démory, *La créativité en pratique*, pp. 138-59.



RECOMMENDATIONS - EDUCATIONAL METHODS

1. To get ideas moving

- Brainstorming.

2. To boost artistic creativity

- Doing improv exercises.
- Engaging in exercises in dramatic expression.
- Exploring the poetic, symbolic and aesthetic aspects of artistic development and mounting a performance.

3. To encourage creativity in the workshop

- Building circus materials.
- Creating new workshop activities and exercise circuits.
- Listening to presentations by circus instructors who have already worked with participants in a context of limited means.
- Compiling lists of all the games and exercises that stimulate the creativity of participants and a bank of information for putting together materials. Instructors could then use these documents for their own workshops.



MODULE 6 | REFERENCE TEXT 2

THE ROLE OF PERFORMANCE IN SOCIAL CIRCUS¹³

By Normande Hébert and Michel Lafortune

When the International Network for Social Circus Training (INSCT) met in 2002, they reached a general consensus on what role performance should play in the educational aspect of social circus.

In fact, all participants recognized the importance of performance, identifying it as an essential part of the learning process:

- It is an opportunity to celebrate the end of the session and mark the achievement of a common goal.
- It also presents an opportunity to interact with the community.
- It validates the participants and what they have learned.

Depending on how far the group has evolved, the performance can take the form of a presentation, a demonstration, a contribution or be part of another public event like a parade, popular festival or open house.

Participants at the INSCT meeting also agreed that technical performance should not replace the main goal of social circus, which is to help participants feel a sense of belonging in a group and share a positive experience. It is thus the responsibility of the instructor and community worker to use their creativity and know-how to ensure that less skilled participants or participants unable to deal with the stress of the performance do not feel excluded.

For us, the performance is pure fun. When young people put on their costumes and get made up, they are learning. The performance is part of their learning process; it brings them together. It is the apex or the end point of a long process. It allows them to show others what they've learned. If you ask young people what is the most fun, they'll answer that it's the performance.

- Representative, Federation of Agencies for Social and Educational Assistance (FASE), Brazil, INSCT Meeting, 2002

For participants who know what it's like to be marginalized or who have never been recognized by society, being centre stage in the spotlight is an opportunity for pure joy, as well as a source of pride and validation.

The preparations and performance itself are an opportunity for participants to learn the importance of discipline and working together. Even if they are performing a solo, participants appreciate how dependent they are on the work of many others. In short, the end-of-session performance contextualizes what they've learned. It is the moment when all the exercises taught piecemeal throughout the workshops become more meaningful as they are integrated into one large-scale project.

It is very important to hold a public event, which becomes an occasion to celebrate the end of the session and an official way to mark the accomplishment of a common goal. It's also a good opportunity to establish links with the community, family members and peers, so that they too become more aware of each participant's potential and perhaps

¹³ Adapted from the *Proceedings of the First International Meeting on Social Circus Instructor Training* (internal document, Montreal, International Network for Social Circus Training, June 25-27, 2002), pp. 83-85.



change how they perceive these youth. There are numerous ways to demonstrate what participants have learned. The most important thing is to evaluate the group's skills thoroughly and select the type of public event accordingly.

Performance is central to any social circus project. However, the goal is not to push for a high-level technical performance at any cost; rather, it's to mark the end result of a long process and to do so with a prevailing spirit of fun. Above all, a performance must be an occasion to interact with the community.

We work with at-risk youth, that is, kids who have been rejected, written off, dismissed as good for nothing. They're performing in front of an audience that perhaps includes their parents. I've seen mothers who hide themselves at the back when the performance starts because they're worried that their child will behave badly in front of all these people. When they see their kid succeed on stage, they move toward the front rows and say, "That's my son!"

- Representative, Jeunesse du Monde, Canada, INSCT Meeting, 2002

In Douala, I once saw a youth performance of *Cirque du Monde*. It took place in the city's most elite school, as it was the only institution able to offer a little money for the performance. So children at this prestigious school, which offers a high-level French education, invited at-risk youth to give a performance, and they even applauded. This is what *Cirque du Monde* does: it builds relationships.

- Representative, Jeunesse du Monde, Canada, INSCT Meeting, 2002

One of the objectives of the social circus instructor is to show participants how to demonstrate what they've learned during a performance. Community workers, on the other hand, must have the necessary tools to evaluate how the performance will be put together, looking at the artistic performance, as well as how it fulfills certain social, collective and community goals. For example, the community worker will note whether participants were punctual, diligent and respectful toward others and the materials used. Also, did participants develop greater self-confidence and self-esteem? Did the relationship with their family improve as a result?

Another innovative aspect of the social circus approach is the fact that all participants, no matter what their skills and talents, have a part to play in the performance. Although it might be difficult for certain instructors to find roles for less skilled participants, this validation is crucial to the process, regardless of what happens with the performance. In truth, the show is not about performance; the show must actually encourage inclusion within the community and acceptance of the individual despite differences. From this perspective, the performance is like a rite of passage that concludes the development process; participants must work toward this goal together, sharing the same experience at the same time. This life experience connects members of the group and enables them all to feel as if they have made an important contribution to the group's success. Thus, the performance becomes a milestone, after which participants can begin the process of rebuilding their lives.

For us, the performance is a source of constant stimulation, because it offers youth an opportunity to be applauded by others and by previously abusive parents who are now applauding them rather than beating them.

- Representative, El Circo del Mundo, Chili, INSCT Meeting, 2002



One of the goals of tandem facilitation is to create an environment in which participants allow themselves to take risks because they feel safe. In this space, participants should not worry about being judged; instead, they should feel inspired to do something new simply because they will gain self-confidence. It is this same spirit that participants must bring to the stage.

The idea of the performance must be simplified, made accessible, easy and fun. And it should be done every day. You have to address acting, their fears of the public and of making mistakes. When doing exercises, take advantage of the opportunity to have them just stop and watch the others as they run through their exercise. This is one of the first steps toward the end-of-session performance. If we wait until the last week to say, "Right! Let's take all this and put on a show," we'll fall flat on our faces.

- Representative, *Cirque du Soleil*, Canada, INSCT Meeting, 2002

When planning the performance, it is important to remember that instructors may sometimes lose sight of the crucial step of including all participants. At this point, they are actually behaving more as an artistic director, whose goal it is to ensure the quality of the performance and whose artistic vision will necessarily affect the overall feel of the performance. To avoid this slip, instructors must constantly be reminded that this performance is for the benefit of participants and not for the advancement of their own careers.

Despite all this, for certain instructors, each session must produce a work of art, and this goal cannot be entirely supplanted by social goals. The instructor must be able to evaluate and know how to develop the artistic and creative skills of each participant. On their end, participants benefit from being recognized and applauded for their artistic accomplishments, regardless of their degree of accomplishment.

Lastly, even if some participants wish to pursue a career in the circus arts, their development is far more important than anything else that happens during the performance. For participants wishing to become professionals, they can be referred to training or national schools, where they can further develop the technical and artistic techniques required.



MODULE 6 | ACTIVITY 1

DEPICTING A MOVING OBJECT

OBJECTIVE

To recognize the dynamics that come into play when a group engages in the creative process.

Length of activity
30-45 minutes

Materials
*For the second alternative,
various objects*

Number of participants
20-25



EXPERIENCE

The trainer divides the group into teams of four. Each team must depict a moving object (e.g. bicycle, sailboat, bird, Metro train car, television, etc.) using the bodies of the four members. The object must be presented, in motion, to the whole group.



OBSERVATION

After each presentation, the trainer asks the spectators the following question:

- What object was being depicted?

The trainer confirms the identity of the moving object with the team that just presented, and then asks members of that team the following questions about their creative process:

- What creative process did you follow?
- During the creative process, how did your team make decisions? (e.g. consensus, democratic vote, autocracy, etc.)
- What dynamics began to manifest in your group? (e.g. was behaviour inclusive or exclusive? Active or passive? Open to consultation or micro-managing? etc.)



INTEGRATION

- What contributed to or detracted from the depiction of this object?
- What contributed to or detracted from the audience's ability to understand the identity of your object?
- What influenced your ideas? Your decisions?
- Were all the ideas presented good ones?
- How is this similar to the work undertaken by instructors and community workers in social circus workshops?





APPLICATION

- What are the different methods of collective creation you can use with participants in social circus workshops? For the preparation of a performance?
- How can you make sure that each participant will have a role in the creative process?

ALTERNATIVES

1. Instead of depicting a realistic object, ask teams to create a monster to add a more imaginative dimension to the process. This variation lends itself especially well when working with children.
2. The trainer gives each team an object (could be the same object or different objects for each team). The team then brainstorms to find different uses for this object, chooses the most interesting idea and prepares a presentation to sell this item to the whole group.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR TRAINERS

It is crucial that this activity stimulates the creativity of each person. To do so, the trainer must choose teams carefully and ensure that more introverted participants don't just go along with the suggestions of more assertive participants. The trainer must also remind everyone of the importance of not judging the ideas of others. Exploring the creative process is not a competition to find out who can come up with the best idea or who has the best leadership skills on the team. Rather, it's about collective effort. Creative equality must therefore be fostered in each team.

It may happen that some teams finish preparing before the others do. To keep these teams stimulated, the trainer could suggest further development of the idea. Open questions are best, for example:

- What else could happen?
- What else could be added?

NOTES



MODULE 6 | ACTIVITY 2

BE CREATIVE!

OBJECTIVE

To understand the different stages of the creative process.



EXPERIENCE

On the first day, the trainer divides the group into three or four teams and explains the activity. Each team uses the next four sessions to create a performance that will then be presented to the other groups. Performances can take any form and will not be evaluated.

Each day, the trainer asks several questions and the team must make a decision about each question. These communal decisions will influence their approach to the creative process.

DAY 1:

The trainer poses the following three questions in a row:

- Where do you come from? (a common place)
- How will you communicate? (visual cues, language, other)
- How will you move around?

When the teams have decided on their answers, the trainer adds the following question:

- What is the element that best represents you?

DAY 2:

- What do you want?

The question is vague, so trainers must specify that this question does not refer to what they want to create or perform.

DAY 3:

- What circus technique(s) will you use?

This question requires the team to determine which common techniques everyone knows well, and then decide on the technique(s) to be used for the performance. Once the decision has been made, teams get some rehearsal time. The trainer explains that each team must implement and respect the decisions made earlier in the process. For example, if the team has decided to move around by walking backwards and juggling, then each member must juggle while walking backwards.

Length of activity

30 minutes per day for the first four days, then 60 minutes on the fifth day

Materials

Participants must display their creativity by making optimal use of their resources

Number of participants

20-25



DAY 4:

- How will you enter and exit the stage?

The trainer then allots some time for a run-through.

DAY 5:

Presentation of each performance and discussion.



OBSERVATION

After each presentation, the trainer asks the spectators the following questions:

- Where did they come from?
- How did they communicate?
- How did they move around?
- What element best represents this team?
- What did they want?
- What circus technique(s) did they use?

Once the trainer has confirmed the answers with the performing team, he or she will then ask members of that team about their creative process.

- What observations did you make about:
 - Teamwork?
 - The creative process?
 - The contributions of each member?
 - Creative use of resources?
 - Communication?
- How did you feel during the creative process? During the performance? After the performance? Are you satisfied with the result?
- How did you choose which circus technique(s) you would use?



INTEGRATION

- Does creativity come naturally to everyone?
- How could the process and result have been better? Different?

The trainer explains the four stages of the creative process (preparation, incubation, inspiration, confirmation).¹⁴ The trainer then asks the instructors and community workers to associate parts of the activity they just completed with each stage of the creative process.

- Did each team move through the four stages of creativity? Explain how.
- What links can we make between this experience and the experience of participants in social circus workshops?

¹⁴ See the reference text "Creativity in the Social Circus Context" in this module, p. 127.



MODULE 6 | KEY MESSAGES

Creativity allows individuals to create a new world and explore new horizons.

Encouraging self-expression in all its forms stimulates a creative environment.

The instructor and community worker use creativity in their facilitation approach to ensure interaction between all participants.

The performance is not a goal in itself, but a rite of passage that permits individuals to meet a challenge and to perform to and even exceed expectations.





I was working with a translator in Mongolia. At the beginning, I spoke the same way I would speak in North America, but I realized that the translator was having great difficulty translating my words. At one point, we sat down together and he said to me, “You must speak in very short sentences; you must get directly to the point.” He explained that syntax in the Mongolian language is very different to that of English. If I remember correctly, sentences begin with the verb, followed by the subject and the complement. So I had to adapt, finding a way to state the point as briefly as possible and just speak less. I learned a huge lesson because of this experience. When I returned to Canada, I continued to use this method of communication with youth, even in French.

Emmanuel Bochud, Social Circus Trainer
Cirque du Soleil, Montreal



MODULE 7 - OBJECTIVES

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

1. Understand the three components of communication: verbal, paraverbal and non-verbal.
2. Know communication techniques to ensure the proper transmission of information.
3. Understand notions allowing to give constructive feedback.
4. Apply communication skills in terms of expression and mostly the ability to listen.

CONTENTS OF THIS MODULE

REFERENCE TEXTS

- The Communication Skills of a Good Educator
- The Elements of Non-verbal Communication

ACTIVITIES

- Drawing Back-to-back
- Bottle and String



MODULE 7 | INTRODUCTION

Instructors and community workers must be master communicators. Their ability to convey clear instructions enables them to capture and maintain the attention of participants, avoid discipline problems, ensure that workshops run smoothly and reduce the risk of accidents. Also, instructors and community workers must know how to adjust their communication style according to their audience: that is, language level, as well as the complexity of the message, will change depending on whether they are speaking to the head of a partner organization or a group of participants.

When communicating, instructors and community workers have a variety of ways in which to convey a message: verbal communication (words), paraverbal communication (voice) and non-verbal communication (body). Often used simultaneously, these three components of communication, when combined, provide a limitless number of variations, enabling facilitators to adapt to all kinds of audiences. Instructors and community workers must pay particular attention to establishing eye contact with their audience, supporting their words with gestures, pausing, using their full vocal potential and having a physical presence in the common space, all the while respecting the personal space of others.

In order to create an environment conducive to good communication, instructors and community workers must define formal and informal spaces, and choose the most appropriate moments in which to communicate. They must also demonstrate that they can listen, which is as important as the ability to speak. Gaze, attention, posture and respect all have a role to play in the attitude required for good listening.

Feedback is a useful tool for letting speakers know how well an audience is receiving their message. However, it must be employed with tact, and in an environment that promotes trust and mutual appreciation. Instructors and community workers must learn how to give and receive feedback, as it is a strategic communication tool for the learning process and a very effective way to help others learn how to improve and build their self-confidence.



MODULE 7 | REFERENCE TEXT 1

THE COMMUNICATION SKILLS OF A GOOD EDUCATOR

By Normande Hébert

Communication is one of the most essential skills required of the instructor and community worker. In giving clear and brief instructions, the instructor or community worker can do the following:

- Maintain the group's attention.
- Avoid discipline problems.
- Ensure that workshops run smoothly.
- Reduce the risk of accidents and injuries.

METHODS OF COMMUNICATION

When instructors or community workers communicate with an individual or group, they are acting as transmitters, receptors or both at the same time. As a transmitter in a face-to-face situation, there are essentially three ways to “code” the message being sent. These three methods of communication are not always consciously used.

1. Verbal expression: words

The words we use, apart from the manner in which they are expressed, constitute what is known as “verbal expression.” This includes vocabulary, grammatical structure and the particular expressions used by a specific group.

• The impact of words

The meaning of a word can differ from one person to another. If someone says, “Please pass the salt,” there is little risk of confusion. However, if someone says, “I need you to respect me,” the speaker will likely get a raised eyebrow in response. In the first case, “salt” has an objective meaning; because salt can be seen, touched, handled, we all have a common understanding of the word. On the other hand, “respect” is a more subjective concept; the meaning we assign this word depends on the knowledge and emotions we have accumulated through previous experience. A good communicator is conscious of the fact that words convey certain values and that the level of language used must be adapted to be accessible to a particular audience.

2. Paraverbal expression: voice

Paraverbal expression refers to how words are pronounced: tone and intensity of voice, pauses, intonation, modulation, accent and so on.

3. Non-verbal expression: body

This form of communication mainly consists of facial expressions, bodily gestures, posture, eye contact, the notion of space (that is, the distance between the speaker and the audience), and even mode of dress.



All of these elements contribute to communicating messages to others. The concept of non-verbal expression is explained with more detail in “The Elements of Non-verbal Communication,” a reference text in this guide.¹

The most impactful messages are those that achieve the greatest balance between these three modes of expression.

TECHNIQUES FOR EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

1. Prepare what to say

• Instructing

The instructor and community worker must take the time to clarify what they want to communicate and how it will be communicated. Some instructions for an activity can be written down and even accompanied by a drawing – after all, a picture is worth a thousand words.

• Sharing

Instructors and community workers succeed when they are able to express themselves clearly in a precise and concise fashion. They should use “I” and present the facts – without manipulating or changing the meaning. They must express disagreement in an acceptable way and know how to choose the right moment and the right mode of communication.

TO KEEP IN MIND...

Less is more

Oftentimes, instructors and community workers give so much information that it's difficult for participants to grasp the core message. The intention is generally good. That is, they want to give plenty of instructions or advice, so as not to leave room for confusion, or to describe the technique as completely as possible. To make it easier for participants to understand, it's best to plan messages beforehand: prioritize the information to be shared, mete out interventions and choose the appropriate moment.

2. Know how to listen

One of the most important elements of communication that instructors and community workers must not lose sight of is listening. We sometimes mistake the act of hearing for that of listening; because hearing is a natural function, we think that listening requires no effort. In truth, listening is an active process that requires effort and training. Here is a list of receptive behaviours and attitudes that can be learned and used to improve listening:

- Posture, including movements and other gestures that indicate we're listening
- Respecting the rights of others to speak and be heard
- The gaze, used to express interest (this may vary according to culture)

¹ See the reference text “The Elements of Non-verbal Communication” in this module, p. 151.



- Inviting the speaker to continue with verbal or non-verbal expressions: e.g. nodding the head, smiling or making statements like “Yes, I see” or “That’s very interesting”
- Accepting silences and delays in order to respect the speakers’ emotions and give them room to express themselves

3. Paraphrase

This communication technique consists of using other words to repeat what has been said, thus letting the speaker know that the message has been understood. Paraphrasing also helps to avoid mix-ups that could lead to future complications and to ensure a common understanding of the message. The purpose of this technique is to clarify perception and vocalize non-verbal messages.

4. Adapt the words to the audience

To be well understood, instructors and community workers must know their group and adapt their methods of communication accordingly.

5. Define formal and informal spaces for communication

When instructors and community workers work with a group, it is important to designate space for formal and informal communication. Facilitators must also be able to judge the appropriate time and place for communicating their message.

Often, a message can have more impact if it’s delivered in front of the whole group, especially if the instructor or community worker doesn’t want to target a particular individual or if the whole group needs to hear the message.

In other instances, the instructor and community worker can take advantage of informal occasions to establish more personal contact based on mutual trust. An informal moment is also a good time to share feedback with a participant about certain behaviours that need improving, without the participant feeling attacked.

6. Know how to capture and keep attention

Instructors and community workers must establish visual contact with each member of the group in order to convey that they are sincere, interested and attentive to the reactions of each individual.

Gestures are also very important – in fact, some experts say that 90% of a message’s impact comes from non-verbal communication. The goal of using gestures is to make the message more visible by providing a physical explanation. Gestures are often exaggerated so that everyone can see and understand what is being expressed.

During workshops, the instructor and community worker must stand in front of the group to make sure that everyone can see them. They must occupy the space and stand front-and-centre when attention is required (e.g. at the beginning of the workshop or when giving the group instructions). Although they can approach an individual participant for a few moments at a time, facilitators must nonetheless be aware of others so that the rest of the group doesn’t feel left out of the conversation. When someone isn’t listening, the instructor and community worker can get closer to the individual and use their body, gaze and posture to get the participant’s attention.



When approaching, facilitators must always be aware of the others' reaction and respect their personal space.

Pauses (3-4 seconds of silence) are occasions for analysis, assimilation, evaluation, reflection and learning, so taking a break is often very useful. Silences can be planned, for example, right after a question, opinion, scenario or lesson is presented. These breaks can also be accompanied by eye contact in order to gauge the group's reactions.

The voice is an important tool used by instructors and community workers to capture attention and share their enthusiasm and energy with the group. Projecting the voice ensures that everyone will understand what is being said - including those at the back of the room. To make their message more appealing, instructors and community workers may vary their tone of voice, almost as if they were playing a musical instrument. For instructors and community workers wishing to improve their presentation skills and ability to grab the audience's attention, we recommend that facilitators ask a colleague to observe a workshop in real time or watch a video recording. This outside person can then give feedback, letting facilitators know if they have tics, repeat certain words too often or display gestures and attitudes that need to be corrected.

FEEDBACK

Feedback is the process wherein a transmitter receives a reaction to the message he or she has sent. Through the feedback process, individuals come to know how others perceive them. Individuals can then choose to modify their behaviour or continue as is. Feedback can be positive or negative, in that it can express agreement or disagreement. When sharing feedback, whether it's positive or negative, it's important to remember that the objective of feedback is to help others improve and develop personal confidence.

It is also critical to note that feedback is a communication technique exclusive to North American culture. It is common in Canadian culture to tell others what we think of them, but this is not so in all cultures, so it's important to respect these differences. There are various types of feedback. Here are four kinds that can be used in social circus practice.

Four types of feedback

1. Descriptive feedback

This type of feedback consists of communicating observable facts and concrete behaviours. When describing specific observed behaviours, the emphasis is put on the facts.

Example: "Each time I explain something, you turn your head and look away."

If referring to an observable fact, those receiving the feedback should be able to verify the truth of the matter by recalling their behaviour or by asking others to confirm the truthfulness of the observation.



2. Emotional feedback

This type of feedback consists of reporting feelings and emotions. When describing how and why the behaviour of others has affected us, the emphasis is put on the self.

Examples: “I feel confident when you’re leading the group.”

“It’s exhausting to repeat the same things over and over.”

By giving this type of feedback, we are letting individuals know what emotional reactions were triggered by their behaviour. This information is useful for maintaining a good relationship or modifying a more problematic relationship.

3. Evaluative feedback

This type of feedback consists of communicating information about the reactions and behaviours of others, but as they relate to personal values. The emphasis here is on the other.

Examples: “When you participate in workshops, you show a lot of respect for others.”

“You like to take up a lot of space in the group.”

Evaluative feedback can be a source of learning and personal development, since it enables individuals to evaluate their behaviour as perceived by others.

4. Interpretive feedback

This type of feedback consists of attributing intentions to other people and so interpreting their behaviours.

Examples: “Is it just me, or are you not interested in the group?”

“You prefer working with young people, don’t you?”

If expressed with respect and consideration, delivered in the spirit of wanting to help others and formulated positively, interpretive feedback can help those receiving the message to be more conscious of what they’re doing. It is particularly important for the person sharing this feedback to ensure that the receiver agrees with this interpretation. Thus, the interpretation must be delivered as a hypothesis and not as a given.

General characteristics of good feedback

When delivering feedback, there are a number of elements that must be taken into consideration.

Feedback must be specific. It must refer to a particular situation or gesture. It cannot be about general behaviour.

Feedback must be given immediately. It must refer to a recent situation and not to an event that happened many days ago – this delay can lead to misunderstandings and blow situations out of proportion.

Feedback should refer to modifiable behaviour. In order to be effective, feedback should address behaviour that is relatively easy to modify. It should not address behaviours that have been an inherent part of the individual’s personality for many years or speak to physical characteristics.



Other than these essential points, feedback must follow a certain number of rules in order to be truly effective. For example, it's important that feedback be given in a climate of established trust and mutual respect. We can only give feedback to individuals who already know that we accept and appreciate them. Moreover, feedback should be offered and not imposed. We give feedback to those who wish to receive it. Feedback should refer to what an individual has said or done, and not to presumed intentions. Similarly, it is sometimes preferable to frame feedback as if it were our own personal problem, for example, saying "I feel humiliated when you interrupt me," rather than "You're always interrupting and never listen to what others are saying." Lastly, all participants must express their own personal feelings and should not speak on behalf of the group. Every individual must have the opportunity to give feedback, be it positive or negative.



MODULE 7 | REFERENCE TEXT 2**THE ELEMENTS OF NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION²***By Christian Barrette, Édithe Gaudet and Denyse Lemay***1. PARALINGUISTICS**

Spoken language is never neutral; it is always nuanced by the tone of voice used, pitch and the emphasis on certain words... This is what we refer to as “paralinguistics.” For example, “yes” can mean significantly more than mere agreement. It can express anger, frustration, indifference or even defiance. The correct interpretation of a “yes” thus depends on the tone and inflection of voice.

2. GESTURES

Gestures were probably among the first means through which humans communicated with one another. All societies have a system of communication based on gestures. Some are widely recognized – such as nodding your head up and down to indicate “yes” or a handshake as a welcome gesture in Western society.

Some cultures are known for being more expressive than others. For example, think about Italians or the French compared to the English or Austrians. Gestures are not meaningful in and of themselves; they acquire meaning through cultural conventions. They are useful for identifying roles and social situations. For example, the welcome gestures we use in a formal situation will greatly differ from those used when we meet a friend. Similarly, some gestures are specifically associated with seductive, authoritative, disapproving or disciplinary behaviours.

3. FACIAL EXPRESSIONS AND BODY LANGUAGE

The movements of our faces and bodies, whether they be intentional or unconscious, communicate volumes about our emotions and reactions to specific situations. Think of the more relaxed posture we assume when hanging out with friends, as opposed to the more formal posture we assume when speaking with someone from a higher social status. Also, think of the gestures we make when in a position of authority.

4. EYE CONTACT

When it comes to eye contact, each culture has defined codes that must be observed. What is acceptable eye contact in one culture is not necessarily acceptable in another:

- With whom am I allowed to make eye contact?
- Which parts of the body can I look at?
- How long can eye contact be maintained?

² Excerpt by Christian Barrette, Édithe Gaudet and Denyse Lemay, *Guide de communication interculturelle*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: Les Éditions du nouveau pédagogique inc., 1996), pp. 141–43. This text is based on the following sources: R. Adler and R. F. Proctor II, *Looking Out, Looking In*, 12th ed. (Scarborough: Nelson Education, 2007); E. T. Hall, *The Silent Language* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1959); Gail Myers and Michele Tolela Myers, *The Dynamics of Human Communication: A Laboratory Approach*, 6th ed. (Montreal: McGraw-Hill, 1991). Reproduced according to the licensing terms of Les Éditions du nouveau pédagogique inc.

For example, in North America, we teach our children to look adults in the eye when they are being spoken to, whereas in some Asian cultures, the opposite holds true: looking into the eyes of an adult or person of authority is seen as an insult or an act of defiance.

5. THE LANGUAGE OF OBJECTS

Clothes and jewellery have multiple functions. They express emotions (through colours), send sexual messages and reflect socio-economic, cultural and ethnic differences.

Objects are also meaningful. For example, decor and furnishings in a house or the ownership of a car or sports equipment will speak volumes about the owner's socio-cultural status, age and gender.

6. TOUCH

Touch is a very important communication tool, as it can express a wide variety of emotions: fear, tenderness, indifference, friendship and so on. Once again, depending on the culture, touch can be taboo, acceptable or even encouraged.

For example, in North American society, we only touch those people closest to us, and touching someone in public is often considered inappropriate. Generally speaking, North Americans don't like touching in public and avoid physical contact as much as possible (in the bus or subway, while waiting in line). In some Middle Eastern countries, people will touch – even hug – in the streets, and men are known to hug and dance with one another.

When it comes to touching, each culture has very clearly defined codes:

- Whom can I touch in our society?
- How can I touch someone?
- What parts of the body can be touched in public?

7. THE NOTION OF TIME

The value given to time varies from one culture to another. In the West, time has a tangible value: we can gain it, lose it or give it. Also, circumstances will dictate whether lateness is acceptable or not: getting to work late is unthinkable, but arriving at a party late is perfectly allowed. Depending on the degree of lateness, the person waiting, and the meeting place, being late to an appointment can be seen as an insult, a sign of irresponsibility or even necessary and appropriate. The ability to multi-task also determines whether we live in polychronic or monochronic time. The monochronic person accomplishes tasks in a linear and ordered fashion, whereas the polychronic person works on many projects at the same time and is frequently interrupted. Generally speaking, time can be perceived of as cyclical (i.e. an endless repetition of the same events) or linear (i.e. an ongoing sequence of events moving from the past to the present to the future).



8. THE NOTION OF SPACE

Edward T. Hall defined three measurable distances between humans as they interact: intimate distance (7-60 cm), social distance (60 cm-1.5 m) and public distance (2-30 m).³ In North America, the so-called ideal distance to maintain between two people during a conversation is about one metre. In Middle Eastern countries, this distance is far less. When individuals violate these codes and break with the unspoken rule, we experience malaise. For example, someone who comes in closer than social distance dictates can obviously be perceived as a friend, but also as a potential aggressor. Imagine the conversation that would take place between a person from the United States and a person from the Middle East if they both followed their own space standards. Both would feel ill at ease: the American would feel as if the person from the Middle East was intruding and the Middle Eastern person would perceive the American as being unfriendly.

³Edward T. Hall, *The Silent Language*.



MODULE 7 | ACTIVITY 1

DRAWING BACK-TO-BACK

OBJECTIVE

To learn how to communicate clearly and listen attentively.

Length of activity
60-90 minutes

Materials

A series of drawings representing various geometric shapes (see "Materials" p. 156), and blank sheets of paper and pencils with which to reproduce the drawings

Number of participants
20-25



EXPERIENCE

The trainer asks the instructors and community workers to find a partner and sit back-to-back. One partner receives a drawing, which is not seen by the second partner, who receives a blank sheet of paper and pencil instead.

The first partner describes the drawing to the second partner, who tries to reproduce it on the blank paper. In this first stage, the drawing partner is permitted to ask questions. Once time is up, both partners put their respective papers face down on the floor in front of them.

The activity then continues with the roles reversed. The trainer once again distributes drawings and blank sheets of paper. In this second stage, the drawing partner cannot speak. Once the drawing has been completed, the members of each team are given 2-3 minutes to compare their drawings.



OBSERVATION

In teams of two, participants are invited to present their work briefly to the other teams:

- What did you notice?
- What was the experience of the partner drawing?
- What was the experience of the partner describing?
- What elements contributed to or detracted from the drawing process?



INTEGRATION

The trainer then facilitates a group discussion, making notes on a large sheet of paper divided into two columns:

- What makes communicating easier?
- What makes communicating harder?



The trainer fills in the gaps by presenting the techniques for effective communication: preparing the message, knowing how to listen, paraphrasing, adapting to the audience, defining formal/informal spaces for communicating, and knowing how to get and keep attention.⁴



APPLICATION

- How does this activity relate to your experiences as an instructor or community worker?
- What are the challenges you face in your work with regards to communication?
- What happens if an instructor or community worker does not communicate clearly? Do you have examples of situations that you could share with the group?
- What communication technique would you personally like to improve?

ALTERNATIVES

The two alternatives presented below would accommodate groups with odd numbers and demonstrate that the same message can be interpreted differently by each person receiving it.

1. Form groups of three: one to give instructions and the other two to draw.
2. Ask one person to describe the drawing, which will be recreated by the whole group.

For the Observation stage:

3. The more experienced trainer can use this activity to introduce the notion of feedback. When asking the instructors and community workers about which elements contributed to or detracted from the process, the trainer is actually facilitating a feedback session. At this point, the trainer can explain feedback and inform the group that the ability to give constructive feedback will be practised throughout the training session. This will allow all the participants to use their facilitating skills and exchange feedback.

For the Application stage:

4. The trainer could ask the instructors and community workers to paraphrase the instructions given by their partners, which would enable them to practise this technique for effective communication. It would also ensure a better understanding of the message.

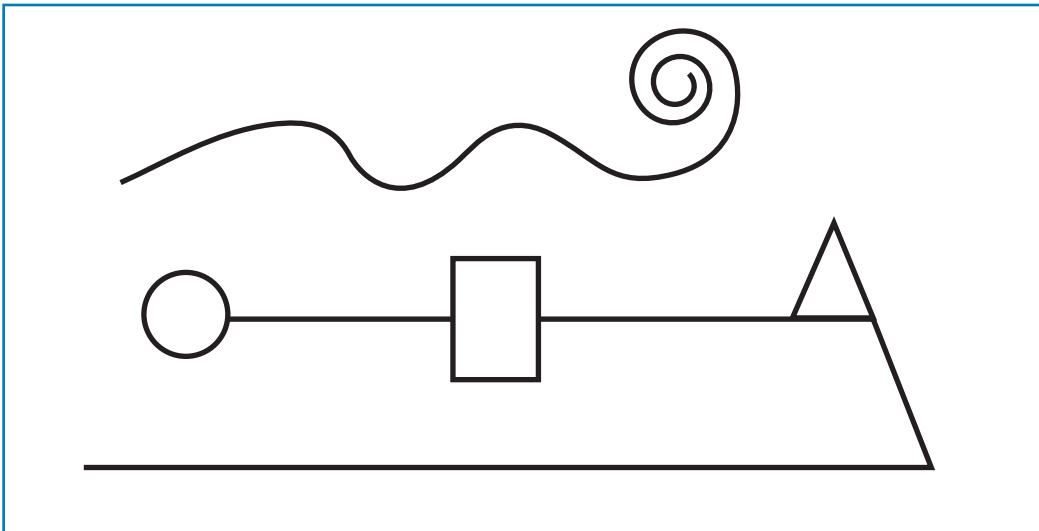
⁴ See the reference text "The Communication Skills of a Good Educator" in this module, p. 145.



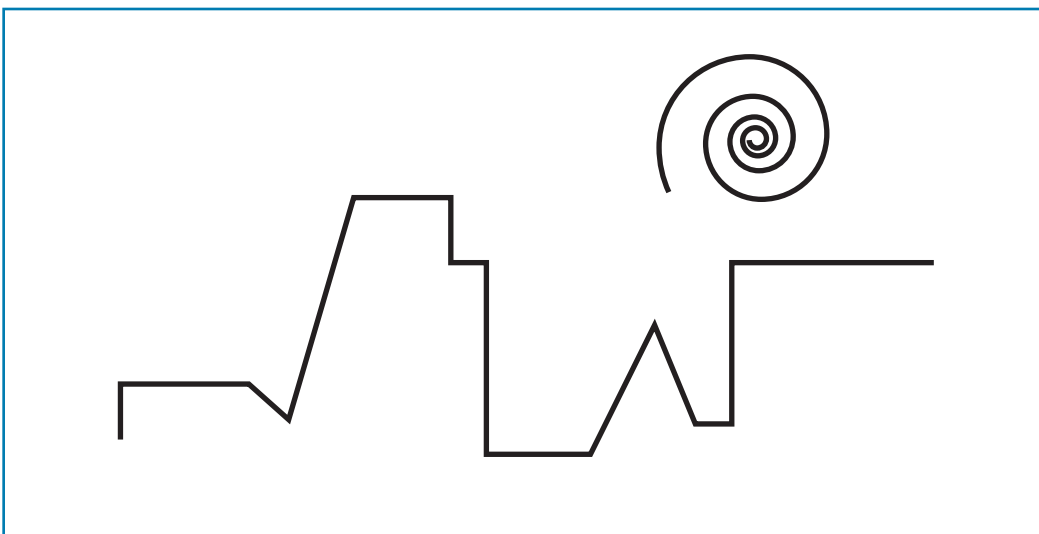
MATERIALS

For this activity, the use of relatively complex and unrecognizable geometric shapes is recommended, rather than conventional images such as a house or tree. In this way, those giving instructions must be more precise in their descriptions, and the representations of each are less likely to influence the results. Here are some sample shapes that can be used:

1.



2.



MODULE 7 | ACTIVITY 2

BOTTLE AND STRING

OBJECTIVE

To practise clear communication using verbal and non-verbal skills, as well as to hone listening skills during a group activity.

Length of activity
60 minutes

Materials

One small 350 ml bottle,
one ball of resistant string
(cut into sections 3 m long,
one for each participant).
For the alternative: many pairs
of scissors (one for each group
of four participants)

Number of participants
20-25



EXPERIENCE

The trainer invites participants to form a circle, in the middle of which a bottle and pencil have been placed. Participants must tie one end of a string around their waist and the other end around the pencil. The goal is for all participants to work together in order to insert the pencil into the neck of the bottle.

The first time around, participants are not allowed to touch the bottle, the pencil or the strings with their hands.

Once the mission has been accomplished, repeat the activity but with a new rule: the trainer asks for absolute silence. Participants must thus rely solely on non-verbal communication for the task.



OBSERVATION

The trainer facilitates a discussion about the two steps of the activity:

- How did you approach getting the pencil into the bottle?
- How did you communicate with others when you could speak? (direct, suggestive, aggressive or concise language)? How about when you couldn't speak?
- Did someone assume leadership?



INTEGRATION

- How many of you are satisfied with the completed task?
- How did you feel during the activity?
- How is communication related to obtaining a goal?
- What elements of communication contributed to or detracted from obtaining the goal?
- Why is it important to be clear and concise in our communication?
- How can we communicate more effectively?





APPLICATION

- Name five communication rules that are essential to facilitating a game or teaching a technique as part of a social circus workshop.
- Are these the same rules you use for a one-on-one discussion with a participant? If not, which rules do not apply?

ALTERNATIVES

1. Ask participants to limit their instructions to three words, maximum.
2. Distribute scissors to some participants. Add the requirement that strings must always be fully extended. If participants have a slack string, those with scissors are allowed to cut the string and thus eliminate those participants from the process.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR TRAINERS

Adding the scissors to the activity opens up the possibility of having a discussion about power and exclusion/inclusion. Participants with scissors essentially have the power to exclude certain “weaker” participants from the game. It is thus interesting to explore the priorities being expressed by these participants:

- What was more important to you? Accomplishing the task as quickly as possible? Or doing your best to include all members of the team?
- What did you do to make everyone feel included?

NOTES



MODULE 7 | KEY MESSAGES

Developing good communication skills helps to capture and keep the room's attention.

Taking the time necessary to discuss and listen attentively helps to encourage good communication.

Adapting your language to the group and its milieu is essential.

Using many types of communication (visual, auditory, gestural) allows you to reach different types of learners.

Paraphrasing is an effective way to ensure a common and shared understanding.

Learning how to give and receive feedback is a communication skill that promotes learning and harmonious relationships.



MODULE 8

TEAMWORK



We will never truly be free to grow with the other until we recognize the other as an extension of ourselves... As a trainer, I've had the privilege of working with and learning from trainers both here and abroad. I sincerely believe that our observations and exchanges allow us to transform our visions, our thoughts, and that that's how we grow. During a training session in Brazil, we were scheduled to work with a Brazilian trainer. When we arrived, we already had a plan for the week, but when we spoke to the trainer, we understood that he too had developed a plan based on his reality. It totally destabilized us. We had a long meeting, during which time we planned the next day. We realized that, in order to build something together, we needed to allot time for constructing a training session to assemble all of our strengths and contributions. We were there to give training, but the teamwork process was training for us too.

Lino De Giovanni, Social Circus Trainer
Cirque du Soleil, Montreal



MODULE 8 - OBJECTIVES

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

1. Understand how a team works.
2. Recognize the essential elements of successful teamwork.
3. Encourage participants to engage in teamwork.
4. Recognize the advantages and challenges of teamwork.

CONTENTS OF THIS MODULE

REFERENCE TEXTS

- Working as a Team
- The Flow of Energy for Good Teamwork

ACTIVITIES

- Squares Game
- Under the Rope!
- Drawing for Two



MODULE 8 | INTRODUCTION

Contrary to the social intervention model based on the individual approach, the social circus approach is based on tandem facilitation and teamwork. In every action they take, instructors and community workers must be in constant touch with each other and with participants.

In workshops, tandem facilitation with an instructor and community worker requires true teamwork. Even if this principle is a mainstay of social circus, instructors and community workers are not always comfortable with this practice and its implicit demands. Frequently, these leaders come from very different backgrounds and their methods of working with participants are not always compatible. For tandem facilitation to work, the facilitators must define and concentrate on a common goal. By combining their energies in the pursuit of this common goal, they can marshal their talents and individual strengths to overcome any issues or obstacles that will inevitably arise.

Facilitators must also take the group dynamic into consideration and encourage everyone to work as a team. Truth be told, each facilitator must be fully engaged on every level for the common goal to be reached. In particular, it is crucial that participants and facilitators establish and maintain solid personal relationships in order to transform individual energy into group energy. These are fundamental aspects of teamwork that encourage participants to develop a sense of belonging to and identification with the group, which in turn fosters their own personal and social development.



MODULE 8 | REFERENCE TEXT 1

WORKING AS A TEAM

By Michel Lafortune and Elisa Montaruli

It is easy to break one chopstick, but ten together are hard to break.
– Chinese proverb

For social circus instructors and community workers, determining the issues that impact teamwork is essential. In fact, they must work together to prepare, create and follow up on workshops in addition to facilitating the participant groups. Working as a team can be a very enriching experience on both a personal and interpersonal level. From this collective effort comes the potential to obtain higher quality results than individual work could ever generate.

To benefit fully from teamwork, it's important to understand what a team is and how to improve its functioning. A simple gathering of individuals is not sufficient for it to be considered teamwork. A small group is only considered a team once its members are fully committed to achieving the common goal and maintaining quality relationships with one another. Teamwork thus has a double focus: the task and the group.

FOR A TEAM TO WORK WELL TOGETHER...

To ensure the best possible results from a team effort, the instructor and community worker must take the following seven elements into account:¹

1. Limit the numbers

Generally speaking, we have observed that as the group gets bigger, communication between members becomes more difficult and collective action is increasingly compromised. Furthermore, interpersonal problems are more abundant and there tend to be more conflicts. The structure of a larger team also complicates relationships between individuals. When there are many members, the risk is that smaller groups - or cliques - will form teams or subgroups in their own right over the long run. Finally, it becomes difficult to get organized without members feeling bogged down by heavy procedures and the need to make everyone on the team happy.

On the other hand, smaller groups can also present challenges. Creativity is more limited and members are more likely to feel overwhelmed by the amount of work there is to do. Expressing one's disagreement also becomes a sensitive issue.

¹ According to Roger Mucchielli, *Le travail en équipe: Clés pour une meilleure efficacité collective*, Formation Permanente (Issy-les-Moulineaux: ESF Éditeur, 2009), pp. 12-14.



A duo, trio, quartet or quintet?²

The implications of working in a small group vary according to the actual size of the group. Teamwork with two people is very involving, because it provides maximum intimacy and interdependence. Duos can be very effective when members agree with one another, when they respect, trust and support one another, and when they have complementary profiles. Members of a duo are nonetheless more prone to confuse their working relationship with friendship, to feel polarized in their opinions and to be affected by outside pressures. To avoid misunderstandings, it is important to clarify each member's responsibilities before initiating the work and to fine-tune the process through the exchange of constructive feedback throughout the project.

Teams of three are considered the ideal number in popular culture: the triumvirate, the three Musketeers, trios in hockey and so on. The group's small size enables members to get to know and grow accustomed to one another quickly. This also leads to a better distribution of tasks according to each person's talents. Decision making is made easier by the "two-against-one" dynamic, which in turn makes the team more efficient, because the same two people won't always be opposing the third.

Once the group reaches four members, a basic work structure must be implemented. Teams of five or six members are recognized as the ideal size for fuelling productivity. The reason for this is the presence of various points of view. Also, all members feel able to express their opinion without slowing down decision making or drawing out meetings. Furthermore, this structure fosters work in subgroups or triads, as well as task sharing and co-facilitation. Simply put, it permits the group to stay on course as everyone works toward the common goal.

Larger groups tend to be less effective. And if there are more than twelve members, it becomes difficult for the team to maintain cohesion, which is necessary for reaching the common goal.

2. Develop a sense of belonging

In order for a team to work optimally, each member must voluntarily decide to become an integral part of the team. This willingness comes from the individual's ability to feel a sense of belonging. This ability, in turn, arises from the interaction between members; the group's ability to help individuals feel that sense of belonging; and the values, standards of conduct and common language that are established.

3. Support individual commitment

All members of a team must commit on every level, contributing their full repertoire of talents and know-how, as well as their whole personality, to the common goal. A team succeeds when complementary strengths are brought together. The team must thus recognize and validate the participation of each member, without weighing the importance of one member's skills over another's.

² Mucchielli, *Le travail en équipe*, pp. 45-48.



4. Maintain unity

A team possesses its own identity, which is forged as the energies of its members coalesce into a single greater entity. In other words, the unit allows the team to overcome individual differences, without negating the unique characteristics of its members. This creates a healthier work climate and greater mobilization of the team around the common goal.

5. Target a common goal

The *raison d'être* of all teamwork is reaching a common goal, which becomes the vision that guides every task the team undertakes. All goals defined by the team must be understood and accepted by all, and members must feel mutually responsible for achieving that goal. Finally, goals must be clear, precise and realistic, to ensure that team members can maintain focus as they work, stay motivated and be able to judge how they are progressing.

6. Accept limits

Teamwork necessarily implies certain obligations that some individuals will perceive as constraining. Working with several people initially requires an adjustment of personal rhythms to be in synch with the group. That the degree of individual liberty will be affected is unavoidable. It is also important for members to accept group discipline, decide on a common method or work approach, and agree that individual efforts must be coordinated.

7. Organize a structure

A team must organize itself according to its intended goals. Roles and tasks must be assigned to members so as to highlight the complementary talents of each. The distribution of tasks must be done in a spirit of equality, and all members of the team must agree on how the work will be divided. Nonetheless, the authority of the team leader (when there is one) must be accepted and recognized by everyone. Finally, the organizational structure must be relatively simple and flexible.

THE INSTRUCTOR-COMMUNITY WORKER TANDEM – WHAT A TEAM!

When the instructor and community worker both show a willingness to work together using the circus arts as an intervention method to encourage the personal and social development of participants, they form a strong work team.

The complementary expertise of the instructor and community worker maximizes the efficiency of the team. Together, they can plan circus activities conducive to reaching the intended goals, all the while ensuring the maximum physical and emotional safety of participants. During the workshop, one facilitator can take a leadership role while the other looks after participants in need... or simply provides support.

Naturally, in order to benefit from teamwork, both the instructor and community worker must invest the time and energy necessary to develop a bond. They must also mutually agree on which work methods to use, plan activities and distribute tasks. Compromises



must be made on both sides, but they will be easy to make if both team members know how they'll each be contributing to the common goal.

TO KEEP IN MIND...

The Star and the Straight Man

Given the different skills of the instructor and community worker, it is common for the instructor to take charge of facilitating fun activities, while the more serious tasks relating to discipline and ethics are left to the community worker. This division of labour necessarily influences the way in which the instructor and community worker are perceived by participants and may also lead to frustrations within the tandem team. To avoid this unpleasant situation, it is recommended that instructors and community workers distribute tasks according to their respective interests and needs. With the exception of circus techniques, the community worker can easily take the lead in many other activities: e.g. the greeting, warm-up, name or group games, or the review. Furthermore, if experienced community workers begin to develop some circus skills, they could certainly teach some rudimentary techniques with the help of the circus instructors.

ENCOURAGING PARTICIPANTS TO ENGAGE IN TEAMWORK

In social circus workshops, the instructor and community worker will often ask participants to work in teams. The educational value of this approach comes from collective work, which fosters the active participation of each member, equality, mutual help and respect, trust, openness and personal validation.

The instructor and community worker are key to encouraging this type of learning and making teamwork a positive experience. When calling for teamwork, they must behave as coaches on both the technical and human level: helping the team to define a realistic common goal, encouraging everyone to participate, suggesting roles for less involved participants, giving teams a sense of responsibility and teaching them how to organize themselves, facilitating the decision-making process (without making decisions for participants), removing obstacles, stimulating creativity, recognizing successes, intervening in cases of conflict or, if possible, preventing them altogether.³

When it comes to teamwork and sharing skills with participants, the instructor and community worker must behave as role models. The facilitators become concrete examples of the lessons being presented, so their behaviours and interactions, as well as their relationship with each other, actively reinforce the theory. These are the optimal conditions for participants to learn the foundations of human interaction and teamwork.

³ Peter Scholtes, Brian Joiner and Barbara Streibel, *The Team Handbook*, 3rd edition (Madison: Oriel Incorporated, 2003).



MODULE 8 | REFERENCE TEXT 2**THE FLOW OF ENERGY FOR GOOD TEAMWORK⁴***By Richard Prigent*

Good teamwork is based on how efficiently the members of a group use the total energy available in the group; that is, the team must be able to leverage the underlying energies of each individual to fuel the group's energy.

Two factors permit individual energies to become group energy: first, identification and validation of a common goal, and second, the creation of harmonious interpersonal relationships between all members of the group.

According to Quebec-based psychologist Yves St-Arnaud,⁵ the total energy available in a group (E_t) comprises production energy (E_p), solidarity energy (E_s), maintenance energy (E_m) and residual energy (E_r), or:

$$E_t = E_p + E_s + E_m + E_r$$

We will take a closer look at each of the four types of energy that constitute the total energy necessary to ensure successful teamwork.

PRODUCTION ENERGY

For good teamwork, the greatest percentage of total available energy must be dedicated to production – that is, achieving the common goal or working toward the task.

Within the group, production energy is strongest when all members have a clear and common understanding of the task at hand. Also, the more members are able to perceive the task as vital, the more they will unanimously validate the group's common goals, and the more potent the production energy in the group becomes.

However, production energy is only effective when certain obstacles aren't blocking its use, even momentarily. As we will see later on, when obstacles do arise, the team must summon a certain amount of maintenance energy to overcome them.

SOLIDARITY ENERGY

In a working team, a certain amount of the total available energy must be expended on creating and maintaining the group's solidarity; that is, establishing harmonious interpersonal relationships that are strong, enduring and based on trust. Without this element, the team risks losing production energy. The amount of energy required to build solidarity is greater than probably assumed at first glance, but it is not as great as the amount of production energy.

⁴ Excerpt by Richard Prigent, *La préparation d'un cours: Connaissances de base utiles aux professeurs et chargés de cours* (Montreal: Presses internationales Polytechnique, 1990), pp. 205-9. Reproduced with the kind permission of Presses internationales Polytechnique.

⁵ Yves St-Arnaud, *Les petits groupes: participation et communication* (Montreal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal and Éditions du CIM, 1978).



Solidarity energy within a team is strong when all members are able to show mutual sympathy, understanding and respect – despite any differences in personality or diverging points of view. Furthermore, solidarity energy is stronger when team members actually look forward to meeting and discussing things together, and relish the prospect of building interesting personal relationships as they work toward a common goal. Such a work climate leads to greater feelings of confidence and trust, which in turn optimizes the use of production energy.

On the other hand, groups with weak solidarity energy will probably find themselves working in a tense environment rife with negative undertones and personal frustration. This, of course, will result in less efficient use of production energy. At this point, the team must expend higher-than-usual amounts of maintenance energy to reach a work environment more conducive to completing the task at hand.

MAINTENANCE ENERGY

Once again, to ensure strong teamwork, a certain amount of the total available energy must be on occasion – and as needed – invested in maintaining good working conditions. In fact, even when a group is working well, it will still sometimes meet with obstacles that may deter it from completing the common task and affect the group dynamic. When this happens, the group must be able to convert some of the total available energy into maintenance energy, which can be used to overcome said obstacles.

Surprisingly, a “strong team” doesn’t imply that the team never faces any challenges. On the contrary, it is defined as any group whose members are willing and able to resolve or reduce the effects of obstacles that stand in the way of reaching the common goal or prevent the creation and natural maintenance of strong personal relationships.

There is a risk of the group being stifled when too much of the total available energy is allotted to maintenance energy. Although maintenance energy is necessary, its use should not be an end in and of itself. Why? Because the first priority of any work team is not to observe itself complacently, but to complete a task under the best possible conditions.

RESIDUAL ENERGY

When a team is working well together, there should be almost no residual – or unused – energy. Unused energy comes from individual energies that were never converted or invested in the group. Therefore, residual energy is only created when members refuse to commit, are absent or arrive late without a valid reason, remain indifferent to everything, don’t speak during meetings, hide their displeasure or other emotions, and so on.

Therefore, if the amount of residual energy in a group is greater than the sum of all other energies, this group has little chance of successfully completing its task. Conversely, if the levels of residual energy are low, then the group’s chances for success are greater.



To summarize, a strong work team is one in which all members are able to do the following:

- Understand and recognize the pursuit of a common goal.
- Create and maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships.
- Overcome any obstacles that threaten smooth operations.
- Engage on all levels.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FIRST TEAMWORK SESSIONS

When a professor [in this case, instructor or community worker] creates teams in the classroom [in this case, a workshop], it must be understood that, at the outset, the team is merely a simple gathering of individuals. It has not yet become a truly productive and living entity. At the beginning, the team is still a kind of “work in progress.”

That’s why, from the very first sessions, the team members must use a portion of the group’s total available energy for the following actions:

- Ensuring positive interactions with members
- Comparing individual perceptions of the common goal
- Defining and sharing tasks necessary to reach the intended goal
- Making certain that all team members express themselves and get involved

When all of these actions occur, the group can transform individual energies into a single group energy, and then use this energy to reach the two primary goals of any strong team:

- To understand and recognize the pursuit of a common goal
- To create and maintain harmonious interpersonal relationships

RECOMMENDATIONS TO ENCOURAGE TEAMS TO WORK MORE EFFICIENTLY

Once members of the team have begun working toward the accomplishment of the intended goal, they must continue to apply certain principles that will enable them to optimize participation and communication. Each member must always be attentive to the following:

- Participating as a transmitter, as well as a receiver
- Addressing the group as a whole and not just one individual
- Engaging in a positive way
- Getting involved in leadership
- Being attentive to others
- Communicating feelings and impressions



MODULE 8 | ACTIVITY 1

SQUARES GAME⁶

OBJECTIVE

To understand how members of a team interact.

Length of activity
60 minutes

Materials
For each team, an envelope containing 21 pieces of cardboard (see "Materials" pp. 174-76)

Number of participants
20-25

EXPERIENCE

The trainer invites participants to form teams of three to six people and to sit around a table or on the floor. The trainer then gives each team an envelope (see "Materials" pp. 174-76) and explains the procedures for distributing pieces to members (or distributes the pieces accordingly).

1. Assign a letter of the alphabet to each team member: A, B and C, if the team has three members; A, B, C and D if the team has four; and so on, up to a maximum of six persons per team.
2. Take the pieces of cardboard out of the envelope and sort them. Group together pieces marked with only one letter and do the same with pieces marked with letters and numbers.
3. For pieces marked with one letter: All members of the team must take the pieces corresponding to their own letter. All pieces marked with an unused letter should be placed back in the envelope (e.g. if the team has four members, put the pieces marked E and F back into the envelope).
4. For pieces marked with letters and numbers: Only keep the pieces marked with the number that corresponds to the number of people in your team (e.g. if the team has four members, only keep pieces marked with the number four and put everything else back in the envelope). Each member of the team must take the pieces marked with the corresponding letter (e.g. piece 4-C will be given to member C, while piece 4-D will be given to member D, etc.).

The trainer then gives the following instructions:

1. You have in your hands pieces of cardboard cut into different shapes. Your task is to use these pieces of cardboard to create squares of equal size. There exists one combination of pieces allowing all members on the team to create a square of equal size.
2. This work will be done in total silence, with no non-verbal communication. In no way can you indicate to others – either verbally or with gestures – how pieces should be placed.

⁶Inspired by and adapted from Alex Bavelas, "The Five Squares Problem: An Instructional Aid in Group Cooperation," *Studies in Personnel Psychology* 5 (1973), pp. 29-38; Ann Hope and Sally Timmel, "Cooperative Square Exercise," in *Training for Transformation, Book 2* (London: ITDG Publishing, 1984), p. 86; Rachel A. Lotan, George Bunch and Julie Gainsburg, "Broken Circles, Broken Squares," in *Teaching in Heterogeneous Classrooms* (ED284 course pack, Stanford University, Winter 2002). Also available online at <http://www.stanford.edu/class/ed284/csb/>.





3. You are not allowed to take or ask for a piece. However, you may give a piece – one at a time – to someone else on your team by placing it in his/her hand.

OBSERVATION



- What did you observe?
- Were you able to complete the task without communicating (e.g. no talking, no using your body to indicate to others where pieces should be placed, etc.)?
- Were you attentive to the needs of your team members?

INTEGRATION



- How did you feel when you noticed others holding a key piece that they did not know how to use?
- How did you feel when you were unable to see the solution and other team members became impatient?
- How did you feel when certain members completed their own square and withdrew from the activity, without allowing their solution to help others finish their squares?
- What contributed to or detracted from completing the task?
- What does this activity say about teamwork?
- How does interdependence impact the relationships between teammates? Or the results obtained?

APPLICATION

- How could these principles be applied to your tandem team?

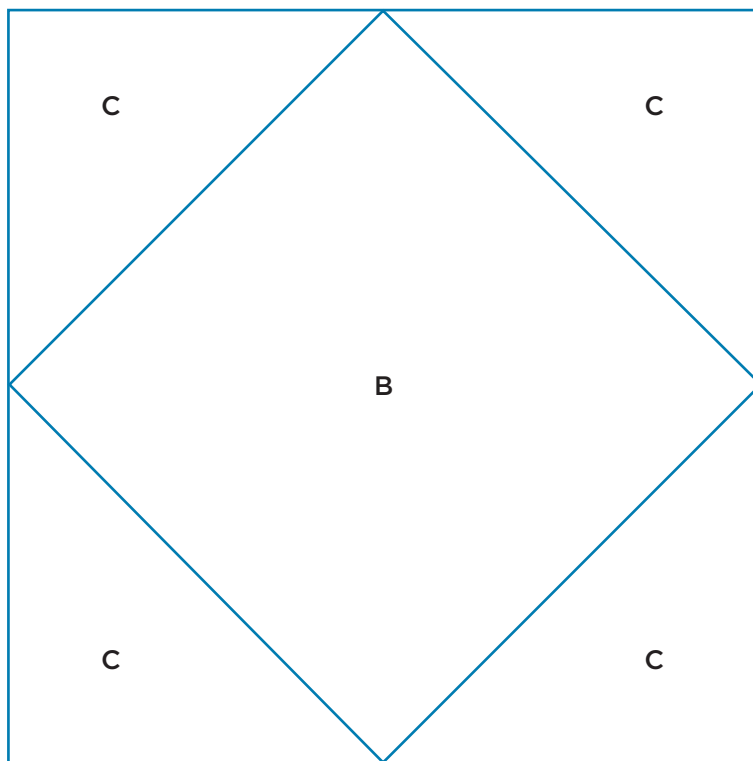
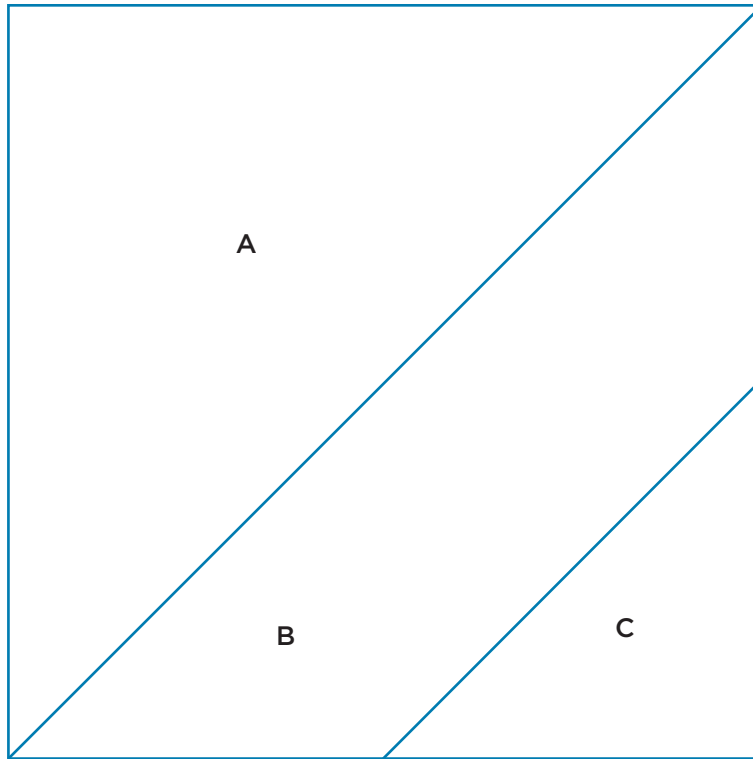
MATERIALS

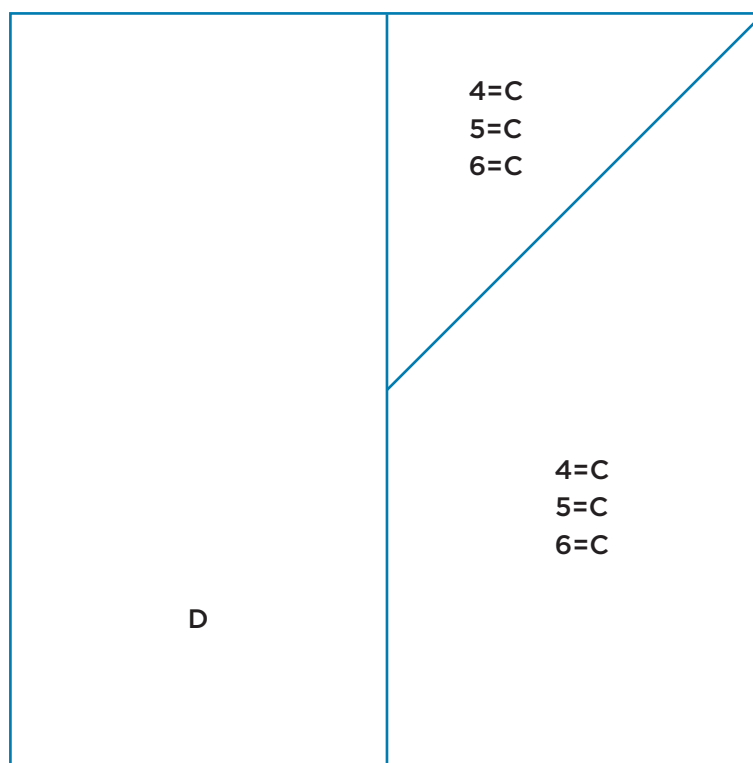
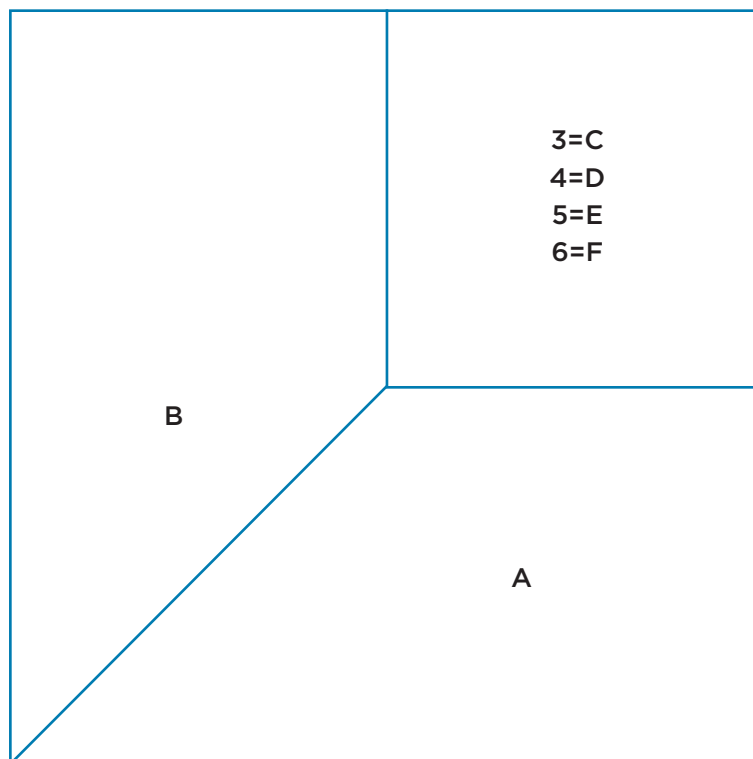
Instructions for cutting up the pieces for the squares

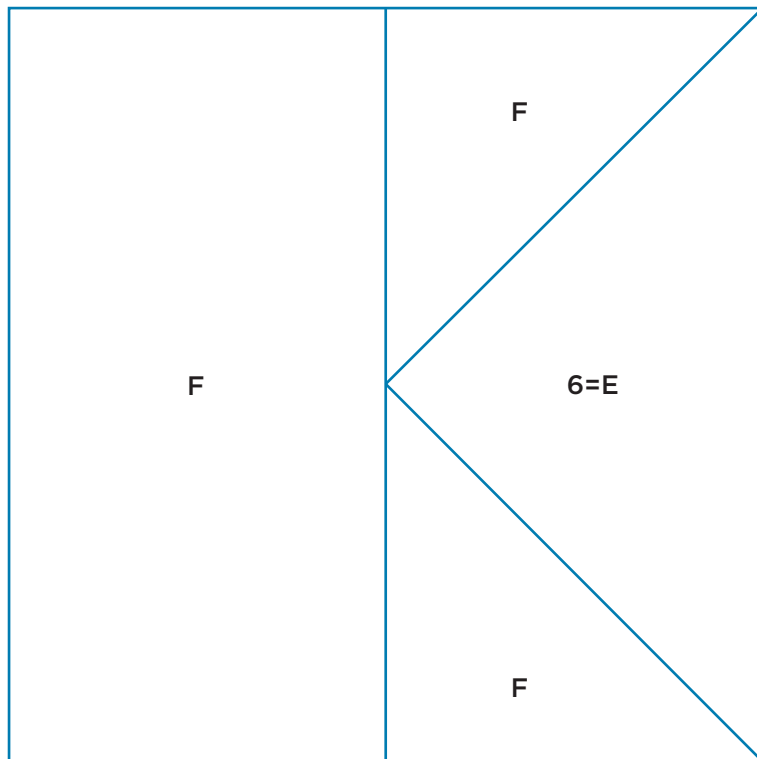
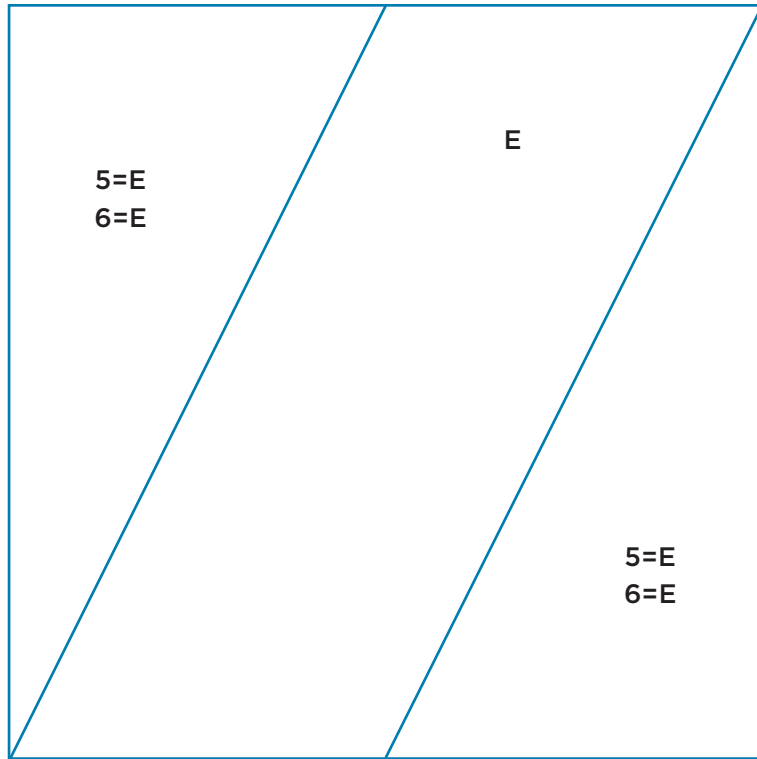
Each team of three to six members receives a full set of squares in the envelope. Each envelope contains cardboard pieces of various shapes that can be placed to create up to six squares in the same format. When cutting out the pieces, it's important to follow the proportions indicated below, as some pieces need to be interchangeable.

Using a different colour for each set is recommended to ensure that the pieces of one team do not get mixed up with that of another team. To make this activity harder, you may write on the front and back of each piece, marking it with random letters and numbers.









MODULE 8 | ACTIVITY 2

UNDER THE ROPE!

OBJECTIVE

To understand how a team works.

Length of activity
30-45 minutes

Materials
Some gym mats, a rope at least 3.5 metres long

Number of participants
20-25



EXPERIENCE

The trainer sets up the rope horizontally, about one metre from the floor. The ends can be anchored to any object. With certain advanced groups, the height of the rope can be adjusted up to 1.5 metres. The goal of the activity is to have all members of the group go under the rope without touching the actual rope – like a limbo stick! The group must develop a team strategy to tackle the goal and then put it into practice.



OBSERVATION

- What did you observe during the activity?
- Who assumed leadership? How?
- Who cooperated? How?
- Who resisted? How?



INTEGRATION

- How did you feel during the activity?
- What strategy did you use to reach your goal?
- What elements helped to achieve the goal? Or didn't help?
- How else could you have obtained the goal?
- What roles did members of your team play?
- What encouraged the development of team spirit?



APPLICATION

- As a social circus instructor or community worker, what measures do you take to promote the development of team spirit in your participants?
- How can the performance mobilize individuals to develop team spirit?
- What roles do you most often play when working in your tandem team? Which roles would you like to develop?



MODULE 8 | ACTIVITY 3

DRAWING FOR TWO

OBJECTIVE

To understand the issues around shared leadership.

Length of activity
30 minutes

Materials
*A sheet of paper and pencil
for each team of two*

Number of participants
20-25



EXPERIENCE

The trainer pairs off participants into groups of two. From this point on, all participants must maintain absolute silence for the rest of the activity. The trainer distributes a sheet of paper and one pencil per team. Teams are told that both participants must use the same pencil to make a drawing and that they cannot decide on what to draw beforehand. Once teams have almost completed their drawings, the trainer indicates that time is almost up and that each team must sign its creation. Once drawings are completed and signed, each team presents the final product to the whole group before the trainer launches the discussion.



OBSERVATION

- Who decided what you would draw? How?
- Were there moments when the pencil was frozen in place?
- How was leadership shared?
- What signs indicated that there was a change in leadership?
- How did you feel while you were the leader? Did your partner let you express your ideas?
- How did you feel while you were being led? Were you truly attentive to what your partner was communicating?



INTEGRATION

- Are you satisfied with your drawing?
- Was it difficult to work without the benefit of verbal communication?
- Did the ideas of one influence or stimulate the ideas of the other, and vice versa?
- What must be taken into consideration when you are asked to share leadership duties?
- What would happen if one person adopted the leadership role from beginning to end?



MODULE 8 | KEY MESSAGES

A strong team focuses on both the task and the group.

The definition and pursuit of a common goal help rally the talents and efforts of all team members.

Teamwork requires organization and a huge capacity to adapt.





MODULE 9	EDUCATIONAL APPROACH
MODULE 10	WORKSHOP PLANNING
MODULE 11	FACILITATION AND GROUP MANAGEMENT
MODULE 12	PARTNERSHIPS
MODULE 13	CONFLICT MANAGEMENT
MODULE 14	INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS

MODULE 9

EDUCATIONAL APPROACH



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



MODULE 9 - 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.

CONTENTS OF THIS MODULE

REFERENCE TEXTS

- The Social Circus Educational Approach
- Teaching Skills of the Social Circus Instructor
- The Educational Process
- Educating for Full Citizenship

ACTIVITIES

- The Successful Workshop
- Coat of Arms

MODULE 9 | INTRODUCTION

The educational approach used in social circus has been developed over many years, a result of the knowledge, practices and conclusions of numerous instructors and community workers with extensive experience attending training sessions and facilitating workshops around the world. Over time, affinities began to appear between our approach and other educational approaches that have already gained some popularity, including experiential learning and collaborative learning. What is innovative about our approach is that it combines circus arts with a variety of educational strategies.

The social circus approach is primarily based on participatory pedagogy. In addition to being experts who share their knowledge, social circus instructors and community workers must also be facilitators, guides, mediators and leaders. They must draw from their creative resources to generate significant learning experiences. To achieve this goal, they must pay particular attention to the quality of relationships being built with participants. It is also vital to adopt behaviours that are consistent, ethical and respectful, all the while encouraging participants to speak freely.

This educational vision is closely tied to the main goal of social circus, which is fostering the personal and social development of youth. Instructors and community workers must provide the conditions that will enable participants to use their experiences and knowledge to recreate themselves. This is achievable through the activities and exercises suggested, but also through the attitude shown toward the group. Briefly put, this approach positions the circus arts as a bridge between education, social intervention and artistic expression.



MODULE 9 | REFERENCE TEXT 1**THE SOCIAL CIRCUS EDUCATIONAL APPROACH***By Normande Hébert, Michel Lafortune and Elisa Montaruli*

The educational approach used in social circus evolved over many years of practical experience. It is based on observations and reflections shared during discussions with social circus instructors and community workers from around the world who, having already participated in *Cirque du Soleil* training, are directly involved in its programs. In total, *Cirque du Soleil* has given over a hundred training sessions to more than 1,600 participants, all of whom were inspired by what they learned and, in turn, generously offered to share their experiences.

The social circus approach is distinguished first and foremost by its educational goal, which is to offer participants another way of learning and exploring their potential through artistic disciplines. To achieve this goal, this approach provides a respectful, safe and fun learning space. This space is both physical and psychological, enabling young participants to redefine themselves through learning, find new perspectives and realize they are capable of learning. Learning circus techniques is the educational tool used to give participants appropriate and progressive challenges that will help them develop their social skills, creativity and assertiveness, as well as their physical strength. The synergy between various circus disciplines – and the fact that workshops take place in several cultural and social contexts – only contributes to the ongoing development of the educational approach behind social circus.

The first part of this text describes the characteristics of the social circus educational model, all of which relate back to the seven fundamental principles outlined in the first module of this guide covering social circus. These principles can be approached from many angles, but as our focus here is educational, we shall concentrate on the responsibilities of instructors and community workers.

The process of conceptualizing our practice enabled us to discover the affinities that exist with other current educational models. As a result, we would like to address these similarities in order to add fodder for further reflection. In the second part of the text, we will look at establishing links between social circus pedagogy and certain contemporary educational approaches, the majority of which stem from socio-constructivist theories. Although this exploration is not exhaustive by any means, it may help trainers improve their teaching skills. After all, knowing where we come from often helps us determine where to go.

PRINCIPLES OF THE SOCIAL CIRCUS EDUCATIONAL APPROACH**1. The safe and fun space**

Having a fun space is an important part of the learning process in social circus workshops. Oftentimes, at-risk individuals have a negative attitude toward learning activities. This attitude comes from previous incidents in which the individuals likely experienced many failures. The fun aspect of social circus eases them into the learning process by creating a motivating atmosphere and getting their attention. In this context, participants can rediscover their pleasure in learning and get involved in activities, because

they want to and not because they are forced to. They open themselves up to new experiences and risks, all the while slowly shedding their fears.

The physical learning space is also a key element of social circus's educational approach. Social circus workshops generally take place in a specially adapted location with specific features, for example, high ceilings or an open area ideal for large movements. This space is already extraordinary:

Whether it is a superbly equipped hall or a gymnasium with nothing to offer, let's make it a magical, sacred space. With a few spotlights or careful, artistic arrangement of equipment, let's create a protective bubble around our kids and our activities. Reproducing the same dynamics that they find in their usual haunts will not serve our purpose. This space must offer the kids a different way of relating to themselves, the others and the world. Let us also lay down rules for the use of the space. Whenever we enter, it is to work. No discussion is to be held on the premises. For that there is a space for talk. Workshop preparation will also happen in this other, quite separate space. Let's open the doors to the magic of change.

The workshops will take up between five and twenty hours per week for the participants. The rest of their lives happen elsewhere. A space for talk (this must be a physical space) is perhaps necessary as a buffer between these two realities. Since all internal changes call for and trigger external changes, participants will need to interpret and put a name on what is happening in their lives. One of the community worker's roles could certainly be to liaise between these two worlds that reciprocally reveal and create themselves. This will also be a place for meetings and individual interventions requiring some privacy.¹

The space must be conducive to the practice of rituals, that is, recognized gestures that establish a comfort zone and a prescribed code of behaviour that instills a sense of safety. Rituals include the act of preparing the workshop space, the arrival ritual and the departure ritual, all of which help to channel the group's energies toward more positive forms of expression.

2. Links with the community

Social circus relies on links with the community to make learning more meaningful. Performing a circus show in front of an audience from their own community helps participants anchor what they're learning in reality. Also, by creating this opportunity for interaction, the instructor and community worker may help members of that community change the way they perceive participants and vice versa. These changes, which emerge following the recognition of the effort and talent demonstrated onstage, are likely to extend into subsequent daily interactions. In fact, the ability of community members to transform the lives of participants with a simple look, smile or even applause should not be underestimated. These seemingly small gestures can lessen the tension and anxiety marginalized people feel and create possibilities for peaceful co-existence.

In addition to performances, social circus projects offer opportunities for more long-term involvement by community members. For example, members can help make costumes or circus materials. Each opportunity to re-establish ties between participants

¹ Dirce Morelli and Michel Lafortune, *The Phoenix: Building the Concept of Resilience into Cirque du Monde Practices* (Montreal: Cirque du Soleil, Social Affairs and International Cooperation Department, 2003), p. 29.



and the community contributes to the development of social networks, and by extension, permits access to resources. This is how the educational approach used in social circus builds the necessary foundations to help participants become citizens in the community.

3. Expression and creativity

Instructors and community workers who lead social circus workshops must provide an environment that enables all participants to contribute to the development of the entire group, independent of their individual learning levels and skills. Expression, creation and performance are the educational resources they use to help each participant find a place in the group project.

This inclusive approach encourages participants to express who they are, what they want and what interests them, but also what worries them. By naming their fears, participants can conquer doubts and gain the means to transform their reality. Both instructors and community workers support this process by helping participants use creativity to transform difficult experiences into opportunities for personal growth.

In social circus pedagogy, creativity is thus a tool for participants, instructors and community workers alike. For participants, it's a powerful means of taking charge and a catalyst for change, while instructors and community workers must be creative in the way they use educational strategies for optimal results.

4. Collaboration between social and circus

Tandem facilitation is the mainstay of the social circus approach.

In social circus workshops, participants can achieve greater self-esteem through individual practice, but this process is also boosted by peer relationships, the group dynamic and their individual and collective relationships with instructors and community workers.

Although listening and personalized attention are embraced by the social circus approach, the effectiveness of this model as an intervention tool depends on action (here represented by circus) and the framework provided by two types of facilitators with different areas of expertise working in tandem to guide the group.

This collaboration between social and circus gives the educational process greater value, as two types of expertise are applied to every problem, and solutions are found using complementary sets of intervention models and analysis. In addition, all the facilitators benefit from the fact that instructors and community workers help to support and motivate one another.

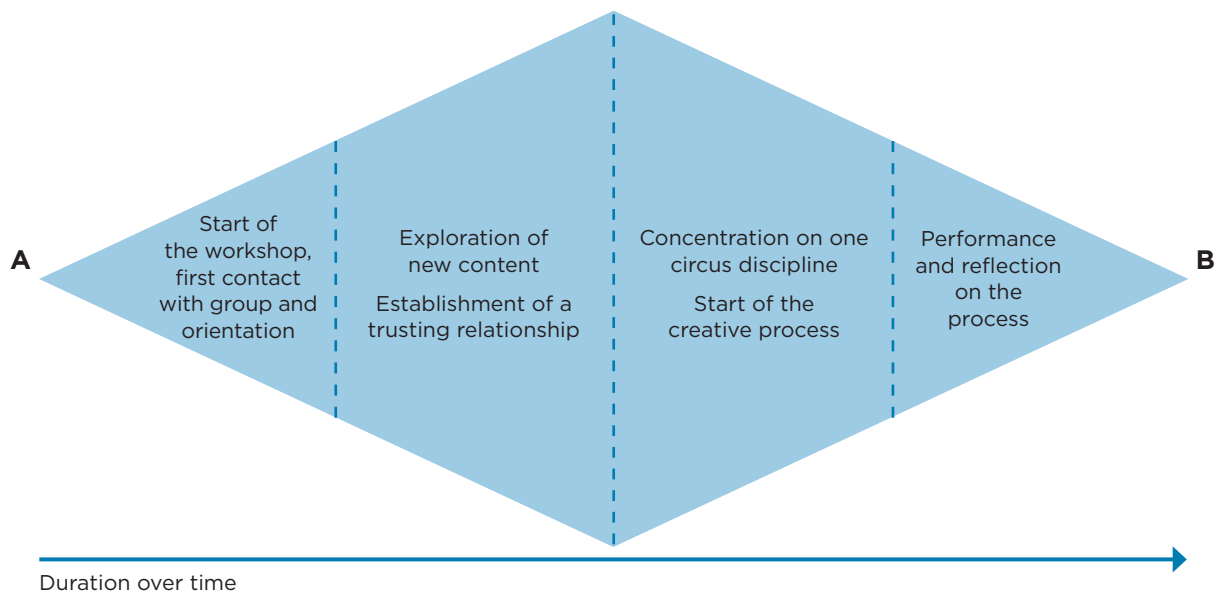
5. Duration over time

This educational approach relies on continuity over time to create profound change. The social circus approach does not support occasional interventions; rather, it favours supporting participants over a long enough period of time that they have ample opportunity to consolidate and integrate the lessons learned.



From a temporal perspective, we can visualize this educational approach as having the shape of a diamond. This diamond describes a strategy that unfolds over a period of many months and that makes use of various educational strategies during that time. At the beginning, everyone is at one end of the diamond at Point A. This is when workshops start: first contact is made with the group, participants are drawn out of their shells and the material to be covered is explained. During this period, the strategies used by facilitators focus on winning over participants and motivating them to engage fully in the workshops.

FIGURE 9.1 - THE DIAMOND



The facilitators then begin to set up the workshop rituals, rhythms and codes of conduct. Over time, and as the workshop evolves, facilitators propose new things to learn, new disciplines and new games. We are now in the exploration phase, which lasts about halfway through the foreseen duration of the project. During this stage, educators sustain the interest of participants by introducing content adapted to the group. Once a trusting relationship has been established with participants, educators must continue fervently to support the personal development of participants.

In the second phase, the tandem facilitators initiate the development process of putting on a performance or show. Participants are asked to concentrate on learning one or two specific disciplines. The creative process then begins to develop around a theme, ideally selected by the group, which will encourage everyone to work together to complete the process (the farthest end of the diamond). The end of this process is represented by the performance and reflection on what the experience was like.



6. An approach centred on participants

- **An approach that promotes equality, participation and mutual respect**

In the social circus context, group-based learning is favoured, with each member both learning and teaching. The instructor and community worker do not possess the power of knowledge so much as the motivation to share and build something together. The purpose is to develop the ability to work and learn with others, and to become actively and collectively engaged in the process. Our educational approach fosters a climate of exchange and commitment between instructors, community workers and participants. It helps instructors and community workers be more open to the skills and contributions of each participant, create an environment that is free from unhealthy competition and encourage cooperation instead.

- **An approach that requires participants, instructors and community workers to invest emotionally**

Social circus instructors and community workers are in the ideal position to create emotional bonds with participants. This kind of relationship does entail, however, that instructors and community workers become role models, acting according to the same standards they establish for participants. They must set the tone with their verbal and non-verbal communication, personal motives, teaching and learning strategies, and even flexibility as educators. In the social circus context, instructors and community workers are oftentimes the first adults whom participants have learned to trust again. Coming from isolated lives on the edges of society, participants see their instructors and community workers as their first guides on the road back to social acceptance. The ability of the facilitation team to show openness, empathy and encouragement in both formal and informal settings can make all the difference.

- **An approach carried forward by the group dynamic**

Group interventions can only work if the following criteria are met:²

- The collective group is considered as a catalyst for change. The feelings of belonging, trust and mutual support the group offers its members create a strong sense of increasing self-worth and safety.
- Cohesion within the group is perceived as a plus and not as a threat to the authority of the instructor and community worker. The facilitators are not considered as experts who must know everything. They are not so much experts of the material as they are experts of the process.
- The instructor and community worker rely on spontaneous development and the dynamic process of the group as tools. In order to use these tools well, the facilitators must listen, show a certain degree of humility and perform their role of facilitator to its full potential.

The image of a circle is very useful as a visual representation of the group dynamic. The circle symbolizes unity and is reminiscent of the track in the big top. The circle is ever-present, welcoming and encouraging reflection so that every person gets a chance to speak up and be recognized. It also helps to create a group dynamic in which participants are called upon to contribute their existing talents, as well as the talents that will emerge as the process advances. Lastly, it facilitates interaction within the group by allowing each member to see others and to be seen by others. The circle adds fluidity and makes possible a dynamic that will properly channel the group's energy.

² Ginette Berteau, "Comment pouvons-nous utiliser le groupe comme levier dans les expériences de cirque social?" (presentation, Advanced Social Circus Trainer Conference, Social Circus Department, Montreal, November 27, 2009).



7. Partnerships

As with each project, the educational approach employed by social circus is influenced by the partner organization. Whereas the circus partner contributes technical and artistic knowledge, as well as the recommended ways to combine all this with social intervention, the social partner provides the natural environment in which the social circus model must be anchored. The partner is already intervening in the community, using an approach based on in-depth knowledge of the local culture and the population with which it is working. Both partners must take these realities into consideration in order to create a project they can both agree on that will highlight their respective strengths.

RELATED EDUCATIONAL APPROACHES

Now that we have explored the connections between the principles of social circus and its educational approach, let us discuss certain contemporary educational approaches and any affinities they may have with the social circus model. Among the myriad approaches currently circulating, the most interesting to us are: experiential learning, contextual learning, collaborative learning, strategic learning and critical consciousness.

1. Experiential learning

Experiential learning is defined as the process by which an individual, after having a direct experience, begins a reflective process that will then lead to action.³ The three basic principles of this approach are continuity, interaction and reflection. Current experiences shed light on previous experiences and will also impact future experiences. All experience arises from the interaction between the individual's subjectivity (history, economic condition, emotional state) and the objective realities of the physical and social environment (the reality in which the experience is happening). It is necessary to reflect upon experiences in order to find the answers to individual questions; otherwise, the answers will not arise spontaneously.

For optimal results, experiential learning occurs in a cycle comprising four stages. The first stage - experience - corresponds to the event experienced; for example, an activity. Observation is the second stage and consists of identifying what has just happened. The third stage is interpretation. This stage requires an analysis of the causes and consequences of the experience, from which conclusions can be drawn. The final stage requires individuals to apply these conclusions to another context, for example, in their personal or professional lives. This educational strategy is discussed in more detail in the introduction to this guide, which looks at approaches for training instructors and community workers (see p. 8).

• Elements of experiential learning in social circus

Social circus offers individuals abundant opportunities to have stimulating experiences that could also lead to reflection, and consequently, personal and social development. These experiences often happen through play and the practice of circus arts, in a space that is both fun and safe. It also provides tandem facilitators a worthwhile occasion to put the fundamentals of experiential learning into action: the instructor often provokes the experience, while the community worker facilitates reflection and discussion.

³ See John Dewey, *How We Think: A Restatement of Reflective Thinking to the Educative Process* (Chicago: Henry Regnery, 1933); John Dewey, *Experience and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1938); David Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as a Source of Learning and Development* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1984); David Kolb and Roger Fry, "Towards an Applied Theory of Experiential Learning," in *Theories of Group Processes*, ed. C. L. Cooper (New York: John Wiley, 1975), pp. 33-56; Louise Ménard, "Apprentissage expérientiel," in *Modèles d'enseignement et théories d'apprentissage: De la pratique à la théorie*, ed. C. Raby and S. Viola (Anjou: Les Éditions CEC, 2007), pp. 107-34.



Together, they can offer a complete learning experience. The concept of continuity within the experiential model is also an integral part of the social circus approach. In fact, social circus relies on continuity over time to help trigger the kind of profound changes that will give meaning to the lives of participants.

2. Contextual learning

It is impossible to keep knowledge separate from the daily lives in which that knowledge is applied. Once an individual has learned something in a “real” and meaningful situation, the individual is then in a better position to acquire knowledge. Based on these assumptions, contextual (or situational) learning suggests placing participants in real situations in order to help them transfer the knowledge they’ve gained into an appropriate frame of reference.

On the other hand, knowledge acquisition also happens through participation. We learn with others and we can share our knowledge, as well as our problems and discoveries, in a group setting. As the social and cultural context greatly defines the milieu in which the knowledge will be applied, it is useful to integrate this context into the learning process. Researchers at the Institute for Research on Learning (Palo Alto, California) apparently maintain that it’s crucial to take knowledge out of its academic context and restore it to its original context, and consequently to teach the cultural characteristics of the context in which the knowledge originated using authentic activities, that is, the everyday practices of that culture.⁴

• Elements of contextual learning in social circus

The educational approach behind social circus places great importance on establishing links with the community, which is closely aligned to the principles of contextual learning. For example, the Machincuepa Circo Social project in Mexico uses local culture to integrate social circus interventions into the community’s daily life. Also, parents are very involved in running the project, and shows are presented (often for free) in numerous locations for the benefit of the community. Participants, and by extension their parents, realize that everything they’ve learned has meaning because it is useful to and recognized by the community.

Social circus uses other elements to help participants contextualize lessons learned. For example, over the period of a year, participants will practise a juggling act or choreography and perhaps wonder why they are spending so much time doing it. Knowing that there will be a performance at the end helps them to contextualize the activity: everything makes more sense when you know the order of the circus numbers, when you realize that preparation reduces the stress and well-synchronized movements within a group can produce spectacular effects, and so on. Giving a performance will also make participants feel proud of what they have accomplished to the best of their ability.

Working in partnership with a local organization is also part of contextual learning. By partnering with an organization, social circus can ensure that the educational strategies used will be meaningful to participants. For example, staff from a partner organization can help the instructor modify an activity that requires a certain amount of physical contact between boys and girls, an act which might cause tension in the group and consequently, in the community.

⁴Yves Bertrand, *Contemporary Theories and Practice in Education*, 2nd ed. (Madison: Atwood Publishing, 2003).



3. Collaborative learning⁵

Collaborative learning emphasizes the importance of peer interaction in knowledge acquisition. This approach is based on the principle of mutual aid: all participants must help one another and get involved in collective work, because teamwork on a common task improves the learning process. In fact, the active participation and critical thinking resulting from ideas being challenged by the group permit more effective integration of lessons learned. Teamwork also offers an ideal environment for 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. They also discover that working on a common task helps to improve self-esteem. Participants often feel more validated, less alone and more supported when a problem does arise. Furthermore, collaborative teaching focuses on the development of social communication skills and problem resolution, and seeks to reduce – even eradicate – delinquent and violent behaviours.

• Elements of collaborative learning in social circus

By putting the participant at the heart of the educational process, social circus indeed touches on the principles of collaborative learning. It recognizes the importance of common tasks, active participation, equality, confidence, open-mindedness, mutual respect and personal contributions. This type of learning is best seen in social circus when participants are part of a mixed group and must work with practice partners to learn a certain circus technique. This evolving and open approach based on collaboration follows a more organic and less linear learning process. In it, we learn from one another through our affinities and our ability to share information. This same principle can be applied to the mutual support that participants can provide one another at different times in their emotional lives; such as during moments of sharing and the group discussions occurring at the end of each workshop.

4. Strategic learning⁶

The strategic 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 be able to relate it to the new material to facilitate the acquisition process. The educator must also stimulate students to use their memories actively to ensure that knowledge is efficiently transferred. Emotional factors will influence the desire to learn: this approach holds that no learning is possible without a personal relationship between teacher and student. 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.

It is the educator's responsibility to teach three types of knowledge: declarative, procedural and conditional. Declarative knowledge is theoretical knowledge, comprising facts, rules, laws and principles. Procedural knowledge consists of know-how, procedures and processes that enable us to execute an action. Conditional or strategic knowledge tells us when and how to act, applying itself to the conditions and reasons for using certain knowledge (and not others) in particular circumstances. Conditional knowledge encourages participants to develop expertise, as it helps them adapt to their

⁵ Bertrand, *Contemporary Theories*, p. 153; Isabelle Marion, "Apprentissage cooperative," *Modèles d'enseignement*, pp. 67-89.

⁶ Sylvie Viola, "Enseignement et apprentissage stratégique," *Modèles d'enseignement*, pp. 135-55; Jacques Tardif, *Pour un enseignement stratégique: l'Apport de la psychologie cognitive* (Montreal: Éditions Logiques, 1992).



environment and use more relevant knowledge in every situation. This last type also guarantees that knowledge shared will indeed be acquired and integrated. It should be noted that this type of knowledge is frequently overlooked when teaching, especially in cultures where access to knowledge is perceived as a privilege.

- **Elements of strategic learning in social circus**

Much like strategic learning, the educational approach used for social circus also places importance on emotional variables. The instructor and community worker must come to know their participants very well and learn how to build a trusting relationship with them in order to ease the learning process. Another similarity is the concern for continuity over time. In order to build on previous knowledge and offer opportunities to consolidate and integrate knowledge, the instructor and community worker must discover if the participant has had similar experiences and if these can be leveraged for new learning. For example, if it is discovered that a participant already knows how to juggle with three balls, the instructor can ask the participant where the skill was learned, share tips for improvement and generally build on the lessons already learned to master the juggling of four balls by introducing more advanced learning strategies that will help the participant progress.

At the appropriate moment during the session, instructors will also teach fresh content to maintain the participants' interest. For example, they can call upon declarative knowledge by referring to the laws of physics that impact each circus discipline or discuss related safety concerns. They may also touch on procedural knowledge by talking about the basic moves required for executing a more advanced acrobatic move. By positioning themselves as procedural experts, instructors are also able to share strategic knowledge. For example, in helping participants understand the importance of warming up, an instructor helps participants determine which warm-up exercises are appropriate for the circus techniques being practised.

5. Critical consciousness⁷

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. Part of this approach also involves developing critical thought so that individuals can take greater control of their own 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, to a commonsensical notion of daily life. In essence, education cannot be limited to a learning space – it must also lead to social action.

- **Elements of critical consciousness in social circus**

The theories of Paulo Freire have influenced the social circus approach in many ways. Social circus actively inhabits its milieu, thus encouraging participants to be active citizens and become actors in their own lives and communities. In fact, social circus relies on ties with the community, as well as creativity, to help participants build enough momentum to achieve liberation from their current circumstances. The creative poten-

⁷ Bertrand, *Contemporary Theories*; Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 1993).



tial of instructors, community workers and participants contributes to the transformation of reality into a more inclusive civil space. In addition to planning performances and shows, which constitute relay points between the lives of certain participants and the larger, more formal community, instructors and community workers can also delegate tasks to participants to encourage interaction with other members of the community. For example, tasks may include booking a space, requesting a municipal permit, organizing a party or determining and voting upon organizational guidelines.

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 educational 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 do the following:

- 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, this approach must integrate existing knowledge, all the while being extremely creative in stimulating the search for new directions.



MODULE 9 | REFERENCE TEXT 2**TEACHING SKILLS OF THE SOCIAL CIRCUS INSTRUCTOR⁸***By Michel Lafortune*

Social circus instructors are, above all, artists who wish to get involved in the community. They have learned one or more disciplines in the circus arts and are pursuing an artistic career. This experience has provided them with a certain amount of knowledge that can be taught to others, but now they must develop the skills to teach.

THE INTENTION BEHIND THE EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES OF THE SOCIAL CIRCUS INSTRUCTOR

It is important to clarify the teaching intentions that should guide the social circus instructor. This entails highlighting the values and attitudes promoted by the social circus instructor training program. Social circus instructors are guided by their teaching intentions to help youth find new ways to learn and thrive. This is what sets the instructor apart from more traditional educators, who are seen as transmitters of knowledge:

[Teachers] monopolize and centralize communication, limiting opportunities for the students - or receivers - to become transmitters in their own right; thus creating the illusion of participation and minimizing the relational aspects. The act of educating is centred on the professorial word, establishing a dominant-submissive relationship founded on difference in status and the understanding that students are both young and inferior. Whether consciously or unconsciously, the teacher establishes the “monarchy of the classroom,” reinforced by the ensemble of privileges that come with the role. In addition to selecting the knowledge to be learned and authorizing the means to access that knowledge, the teacher also sets the rules, controls behaviour, resolves disputes, tempers emotions by setting conditions on how they can be expressed, oversees all classroom dynamics and determines the criteria for what is good, true, beautiful, useful and right.

To maintain this order, teachers manipulate their educational and interpersonal skills (for example - either cultivating a cold and impersonal tone or trying to win over students with sympathy and accessibility), implement a system of rewards and punishment, and absolutely control competition and rivalry. That is how they maintain the discipline necessary for collective learning and attempt to preserve harmony within the rational universe - a harmony built on the complementary roles of authority-teacher and submissive student, of course. This system works so well that if, theoretically, there were a desire for self-discipline, the sanction against giving students responsibility, which is built into this model, would make any such movement impossible. The most that we can expect from this kind of educational approach is that there will someday be a transition from imposed learning to consensual learning, thus leading students to learn voluntarily and adhere to the rules of a game they must play.⁹

⁸ Michel Lafortune, *Les compétences pédagogiques de l'instructeur de cirque social* (internal document, Montreal, Cirque du Soleil, Social Circus Department, 2000 and 2010).

⁹ Maria-Teresa Estrela, *Autorité et discipline à l'école* (Paris: ESF Éditeur, 1994), pp. 22-23.

The approach adopted by social circus is completely opposite to this model, because it favours a teaching approach based on equality, participation and mutual respect among participants, and between instructors and participants. This approach thus underscores the importance emotional connection plays in the learning process.

EMOTIONAL CONNECTIONS ARE KEY TO LEARNING

Learning cannot occur if there is no emotional connection between the one teaching and the one learning.

The social circus instructor must approach the educational context primarily as a pre-text for coming into contact with participants; a lucky opportunity permitting access to a small cluster of basic needs. Generally speaking, these needs are basic indeed, like eating, sleeping and shelter, but they also include the need for life to have meaning. For participants, giving their life meaning could mean developing small projects that gradually lead to building a dream for the future. It could also mean creating significant ties by developing warm personal relationships that inspire trust or by discovering a space where participants can understand just how precious they are. Participants need to feel useful and integrated; they need to feel that they have a role to play in the larger picture.

These needs (and others) comprise the cluster of basic needs that our interventions must address. Understanding education from this perspective enables us to tackle the task of teaching without losing sight of the whole person standing before us. It also allows people to feel as though they are more than just some participants in whom we've taken an interest. Ultimately, it helps the participants feel they are important – regardless of their difficulties.

As Jean-Pierre Astolfi once said, “A teacher understands that knowledge cannot be imposed from outside and that, in order to be effective, the individual path of each student must be respected.”¹⁰

In the same vein, American psychologist Jerome Seymour Bruner proposes the idea that there are certain educational intervention models in which the teacher can help students complete tasks (without actually doing the task for them) by providing the best environment for their completion. For example, by positively supporting their cognitive orientation, shielding them from distractions and interruptions, “enrolling” them in activities, helping them understand the link between the means and the end, calculating (as much as possible) the difficulty of an exercise, repackaging ideas in a “new format” and so on.¹¹

The instructor thus establishes a double relationship – cognitive and emotional – with the participants, acting as both strategist and model:

Teachers must act strategically when using their abilities in the resolution of personal, interpersonal and learning problems. I use the term “problem” specifically because at the beginning, every learning situation is a problem in itself. Teachers [in this case, instructors] must be role models in that they must systematically demonstrate and exemplify the cognitive and interpersonal lessons being taught in their own behaviours toward students. Teachers pro-

¹⁰ Jean-Pierre Astolfi, “Médiation,” *Résonances: Mensuel de l'École valaisanne* 10 (June 1997), <http://pmev.lagoon.nc/astolfi.htm> (accessed October 13, 2009).

¹¹ Jerome Seymour Bruner, *The Process of Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960); J. S. Bruner, *The Culture of Education* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996).



vide models for verbal and non-verbal communication, as well as models for personal motivation, problem-solving strategies, teaching and learning strategies, and flexibility in the classroom setting.

This double role of strategist and model applies on the following levels: (a) the communication level, (b) the assisted learning level and (c) the level of problem solving and care of the individual. The relationship develops, becoming positive and healthy, through these different levels.¹²

The emotional connection is transformed into a learning relationship in that there is a transfer of knowledge:

Knowledge becomes a means through which contact is established between the one who holds the knowledge and has been socially appointed to share this knowledge and the one who must acquire it. The learning relationship thus encompasses the pedagogical, political, social and psychological... However, because knowledge is both the mastery of ideas and the possibility of acting in a way that can transform the world, it bestows upon those who possess it the power to control and change portions of the real.¹³

TO KEEP IN MIND...

Stick to what you know

Artists use their artistic skills and charisma to encourage participants to develop a particular interest. This interest could lead to a trusting relationship that in turn points to the sharing of secrets. When this occurs, it's important for instructors to establish personal and professional boundaries. If the secrets shared require an intervention beyond these boundaries, participants must be guided to an appropriate resource person able to answer their questions, or else instructors should ask participants to wait for them to find an appropriate answer.

In addition to creating a space conducive to free expression, the group could also provide a space for the acquisition and creation of knowledge. The teacher (in this case, the instructor) ceases to be transmitter, judge and referee, and instead becomes a resource person for the group, primarily functioning as a facilitator. This shift requires assuming a new attitude toward students (in this case, participants): an attitude that is genuine, unconditionally positive and empathically understanding...¹⁴ The classic model for transmitting theoretical knowledge, based on the hope that it will be memorized and integrated into practical situations, is increasingly limited.

SOCIAL CIRCUS TRAINING: BASED ON HANDS-ON EXPERIENCE

This training is built on a rotation between theoretical content and action. It follows a dynamic integration process that turns instructors into active participants in their own training process and into educators open to a participation-based approach. Rather than being experts, they act as facilitators or educational mediators.

¹² Louise Langevin, "Réussir en enseignement, c'est réussir la relation maître-élève," *Actes du 16^e Colloque de l'Association québécoise de pédagogie collégiale: Moi, j'enseigne au collégial... Le contexte actuel et ses exigences* (Montreal, June 5-7, 1996).

¹³ Estrela, *Autorité et discipline*, pp. 36-37.

¹⁴ Claude Savard and Jean Brunelle, "Conceptions du savoir et formation en entraînement," *Journal de l'éducation physique et l'éducation à la santé* 64, no. 3 (1998), pp. 16-20.

The principles upon which this approach is based were set out by researchers Claude Savard and Jean Brunelle.¹⁵ These principles support a training founded on hands-on experience.

1. Interaction between theory and practice

To allow social circus instructors to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills, the approach must alternate between theory and practice, and be structured according to the following sequence: field work, analysis and synthesis, addition of complementary theories, return to field work.

2. Individualization as remedy

Individualization refers to the adaptation of content to fit the needs of trainees. To make this possible within the practice, the social circus instructor must get personally involved in the reflective process.

3. The contribution of personalization

This principle enables social circus instructors to make personal contributions to the group, all the while favouring self-learning and more exchanges between instructors.

4. The clinical approach

Based on observation, this principle allows instructors to review a practice. Instructors develop a hypothetical action plan by engaging in individual or group reflection and by exploring supporting theories, complementary viewpoints and new lines of questioning. For this practice to truly evolve, however, there must be resource persons available to provide a fresh point of view.

5. Reflective practice

This principle requires instructors to observe their own actions and ways of working. Now the subject of their own analysis, instructors become active, methodical and lucid builders of their own action plans.

6. Integration of two types of theoretical knowledge

“Knowing what to teach” and “knowing how to teach” are the two types of knowledge that figure prominently in the training of social circus instructors and community workers. Whereas “knowing what to teach” represents the content and knowledge that facilitators will share with participants, “knowing how to teach” refers to instructors’ ability to transmit that knowledge. The two types must enrich one another, but they must also blend together in a constant process:

When this principle is activated, it is manifested by a performance or, in other words, an observable behaviour. Abilities are non-observable mental processes, while performance is observable and enables the observer to infer ability.¹⁶

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Robert Brien, *Sciences cognitives et formation* (Quebec City: Presse de l’Université du Québec, 1994), cited in B. Petiot, *Guide d’intervention à l’intention des titulaires de cours du programme de l’Institut National de formation des entraîneurs (INFE)* (Montreal: Centre national multisport, 1998), p. 14.



More simply put, as abilities cannot be directly observed, they must translate into observable behaviours or a performance that demonstrates the mastery of one or more skills.

Developing a training program that alternates between applied interventions and theoretical learning poses some real logistical challenges. Such an approach implies the mobilization of numerous intervention workers and many intervention settings in various countries. Furthermore, it presupposes the planning of training sessions that could last anywhere from three months (intensive) to a year (twice weekly), which could greatly complicate the operations of this model.

Nevertheless, all attempts to create a learning space that promotes equality could never fully obliterate this truth: the instructor does possess all the knowledge. While never losing our priority to build a connection between instructor and young person,

the educational relationship cannot escape the violence that results from a unilateral imposition, because no matter how smooth or subtle it might be, it still bears more resemblance to an ultimatum than a contract. Teachers [in this case, instructors] must abstain from all unnecessary violence and legitimize their role in the eyes of students [in this case, youth], reinforcing their authority by demonstrating their professional skills in dealing with... the interpersonal. Only when students [in this case, youth] accept this authority can teachers [instructors] begin to establish partial or limited contracts within the boundaries defined by the external institution [in this case, the organization]. The educational relationship must be founded on respect for the person, as only respect can prevent and protect against emotional blackmail. It is easier to love students [in this case, youth] than it is to respect them.¹⁷

A LEARNING ENVIRONMENT THAT IS STRUCTURED, YET FLEXIBLE

This model is characterized by content strategy, rules ideally set by the group, modes of communication and gradual planning. Although more structured at the beginning, this model would eventually disappear as the group evolves, to be replaced by autonomy and accountability:

A higher degree of class structure is thus beneficial for students who learn at a slower pace and for younger students, and can help initiate the learning of new disciplines. However, once a certain level of mastery has been achieved in the disciplines taught, less structured lessons and less guidance from the teacher [in this case, the instructor] is more valuable.¹⁸

Social circus instructors should develop specific skills in order to fulfill the role of educator better. The work of Réal Charrette¹⁹ offers a summary that classifies these skills into four broad categories: planning and organization, learning and environment, training and responsibilities.

¹⁷ Estrela, *Autorité et discipline*, p. 45.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

¹⁹ Réal Charette, *Pédagogie, performance, professionnalisme* (Ottawa: Centre franco-ontarien de ressources pédagogiques, 1998).



TABLE 9.1 – SKILL SETS FOR TRAINING INSTRUCTORS²⁰

<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PLANNING AND ORGANIZATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Showing knowledge of the content and pedagogy.• Demonstrating knowledge of youth.• Defining objectives and educational goals.• Surveying the community's resources.• Preparing a clear plan for workshop content.• Evaluating lessons.	<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">LEARNING AND ENVIRONMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creating an environment based on respect.• Stimulating the desire to learn.• Managing the organizational details of the workshop.• Managing participant behaviour.• Organizing the physical space.• Building relationships with partners and the community.
<p style="text-align: center;">3</p> <p style="text-align: center;">TRAINING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Communicating clearly and precisely during the workshop.• Using different learning techniques.• Encouraging participants to learn.• Giving participants feedback.• Showing yourself to be flexible and open-minded.• Helping youth develop their motivation.	<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">RESPONSIBILITIES</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reflecting on training practices.• Following the progress of participants.• Collaborating with the organization.• Pursuing self-development and evolving professionally.• Always showing professionalism.

A good instructor is someone who has authority without being too authoritative. However, as noted by Estrela, “if teachers [in this case, instructors] have lost the monopoly over the knowledge that formed the basis of their authority and justified their charisma, their position has thus been altered by the numerous other social pressures that impose other roles upon them.”²¹

For the social circus instructor, this authority must be based on something other than a title, status or power. Ideally, it should result naturally when participants recognize or acknowledge the instructor's credibility. How is this credibility, and by extension, authority, established? Adhering to the following practices could help achieve this goal:

1. Instructors must offer participants content that is pertinent; material should be adapted to participants' stage of learning and development. Furthermore, instructors must strive to connect with participants' cultural context. This can be accomplished by using examples and language they will easily understand.

²⁰ Adapted from *ibid.*

²¹ Estrela, *Autorité et discipline*, p. 22.



2. Instructors must also develop trust-based relationships with participants using the following three tactics:
 - Getting to know participants well
 - Accepting the way participants see and do things, which may be very different from their own
 - Taking certain risks when assigning them responsibilities
3. Instructors must also be consistent in their behaviour. This will allow them to consolidate their authority.

In addition to this approach to building the instructor's credibility, there are other educational strategies for group facilitation that could be relevant, especially since these strategies reduce the possibility of having to resort to authoritarian behaviour. They consist of the following:

1. Clearly communicating expectations and demands to participants from the very beginning
2. Giving precise instructions
3. Quickly intervening in situations when participants move away from the established rules and action plan
4. Being acutely aware of what's happening in the group and letting it be known
5. Maintaining a steady rhythm by smoothly transitioning between tasks and being attentive to the group's mood
6. Proposing several work objectives to be pursued simultaneously (good preparation is key!)
7. Keeping the group occupied with a common task, all the while empowering participants and assigning them individual tasks

As Brien so aptly states,²² for the individual intervening, the educational act consists of “transforming” knowledge, “organizing” the learning environment and “guiding” learners as they engage in representation, organization, construction, reconstruction and the exploration of various learning experiences and activities.

To summarize, instructors must help the learner transition from an already existing cognitive framework to a more appropriate cognitive framework:

It is natural that we feel as though we're responsible for all the elements in the learning environment. However, we can more easily free ourselves from this overwhelming idea if we tell ourselves that it is not only false, but also harmful, because when we do it, we are depriving learners of the opportunity to take responsibility.²³

²² Brien, *Sciences cognitives et formation*.

²³ Ulric Aylwin, *Petit guide pédagogique* (Montreal: Association québécoise de pédagogie collégiale, 1994), p. 19.



MODULE 9 | REFERENCE TEXT 3

THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS²⁴

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.

²⁴ 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.



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.



EDUCATING FOR FULL CITIZENSHIP²⁵

By Lorenzo Zanetti

INTRODUCTION

“Educating for full citizenship.” As far as titles go, this one doesn’t break new ground. We can take it to mean many different things, some more meaningful than others. Like so many before us, we too have adopted this title to draw attention to a variety of issues we wanted to raise, and at the same time, to discuss those that interested us the most and on which we’d like to take a stand.

The concept of “educating for full citizenship” is a cliché. Nowadays, we can’t talk about a social project – especially when it targets children, adolescents and youth – without guaranteeing a mechanism – usually a class session – addressing full citizenship, usually a presentation on citizens’ rights and duties. In most cases, the rights presented are fairly limited: food, education, shelter... And the duties are mostly obligations demanded of youth: measures to prevent them from becoming a menace to public security. Generally, it is a very individualistic view of rights, rarely taking into consideration the other facets of full citizenship. What about the collective aspects, such as the right to organize, and active aspects, such as the possibility of becoming a true builder of society?

As educators, do we really know what full citizenship actually means? Do we have a precise idea of what we want from – and what we hope to accomplish when working toward – full citizenship? During the military dictatorship in Brazil, classes addressing moral and civic education, as well as social structures and politics, were created and imposed by the military. At the time, many educators knew exactly what the military was trying to accomplish with these measures.

Now that the concept of full citizenship is almost obligatory in all our educational programs, do we have a precise idea of our objectives? Are we convinced that a few classes on this subject will empower youth to exercise their civil rights? Is it possible that we could (unconsciously) become accomplices in a vast hoax?

How will educating for full citizenship impact those who don’t have enough to eat or a place to live? What about those who are afraid of giving out their address to a potential employer, because of the shame it might cause? Or those who, during a police raid in a bus or on the street, are consistently searched and interrogated? How does it affect those who are sought out and encouraged by politicians to exercise their civic rights (by voting) but are afraid to speak out at work for fear of being fired for insubordination? Or those who like funk music but must avoid the police to indulge in this simple pleasure?

What is our goal in educating for full citizenship? To convince youth and adolescents to feel more at home in society. But this challenge reminds us of the question posed by Saint Augustine (354-430) some 1,600 years ago about the empires of his time: “Justice being taken away, then, what are kingdoms but great robberies?”²⁶ Is this interesting to street youth or those living in slums or poor shantytowns on the abandoned outskirts of town?

²⁵Excerpt from “Cirque: éduquer par l’art” (symposium, Belo Horizonte, Brazil, October 2000).

²⁶ Saint Augustine, *City of God*, bk. 4, chap. 4.



Some of you may have already wondered whether, at the end of the day, acting as a citizen yields results. Should the idea of full citizenship be removed from our work? Our reply is that educating for full citizenship is indeed necessary, and we have an obligation to encourage youth to adopt it.

We pose the following questions: How do we prevent educating for full citizenship from becoming a sham? How do we encourage youth to rise to the challenge of building a society that is fair, united and inclusive? If we want to teach youth and adolescents about becoming full citizens, it means learning how to dream of a new society, providing the conditions conducive to believing in the transformation of society and creating opportunities and tools for real participation.

Some changes are only viable if youth get involved. We are not teaching today's adolescents to be good adult citizens. Rather, we are teaching adolescents and youth to play a role and take on responsibilities starting now. The future is full of other challenges. The task of building a more fair, humane and united society is not exclusive to adults: youth also have an important role to play. By protecting youth from their vulnerabilities, we are actually blocking them from participating.

Here are some ideas to consider in our work as educators.

THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING A FIRM GRASP ON REALITY

The educational process is a complex one. It is directly affected and influenced by circumstances and relationships (family, school, friends and colleagues), as well as other indirect factors (privatization, multinationals, the Palestinian war).

The task of educating in general, as well as educating for full citizenship in particular, cannot be reduced to its pedagogical and didactic parts. It must also be placed within its social, political, economic and cultural context. The reasoning and language used will differ according to whether the teaching takes place in a rural environment or an urban slum, whether in Rio de Janeiro or Manaus, whether we're dealing with students or non-students, whether the youth belong to an organization or not... These many factors must be considered when building a framework for the learning process.²⁷

Educating for full citizenship means helping youth become interested in – and better understand and discover – ways they can participate in and improve their world. It is true that an understanding of their reality is the starting point of any successful process seeking to teach full citizenship. The educator's role is to maintain contact with this reality, to help and motivate students to accumulate their own knowledge, and above all, to help them obtain reliable tools and mechanisms enabling them to have guaranteed access to information.

Today, thanks to television, the Internet and newspapers, there seems to be more access. However, sometimes this access is merely an illusion. A little research will bear this out. Who reads newspapers? What are the most popular television programs? How many of the youth in your classroom have Internet access? Furthermore, what is the quality of and bias in the information provided by these media? Are we better citizens simply because we have access to these communication channels? Because we can accumulate more information?

²⁷ We recognize that there are other important aspects of this process: e.g. student objectivity, male-female relationships, the relationship with nature, educational and didactic techniques, and so on. However, we have chosen not to include them as they mostly address training teachers.



It is necessary to be informed, but it's not enough. We must also obtain tools that will enable us to benefit from, and then interpret and assimilate the information. We know from experience that an event or news item can have different interpretations. Also, our interpretation will change depending on where we live, our individual interests, the personal values we uphold and objectives we pursue. Understanding reality thus hinges on information and interpretation. Most of the time, we understand that the information we receive has already been interpreted. Oftentimes, we don't know the facts at all – just the interpretation being given by Globo, Bandeirantes or the *Folha de São Paulo*.

Decoding information is a challenge. As educators, how can we help youth to interpret what's happening around them correctly, without turning them into a mouthpiece for other people and other interpretations? Fundamentally, teaching youth to become full citizens means giving them the tools to interpret their realities adequately. There are some tactics available to help with this: comparing one news item covered by two different news sources and finding alternative sources of information (such as newsletters published by unions, professional associations, etc.). These tactics surely contribute, but what gives us the most autonomy when interpreting reality is our vision of the world. Or more simply put, our understanding of that world. Information is not the only crucial element. We must also create points of reference.

This work does not consist of mythologizing pre-existing models or reproducing them (history has taught us that no model is perfect), but of focusing on the values (solidarity, hope, justice, respect for others, commitment, sharing, quality relationships with other people and with the environment) that we would like to see in our society.²⁸ This clear vision of what our society should be becomes our light against the darkness. We already possess in our hands the tools that will enable us to criticize a society that is unjust, closed, dominated by economic interests, and ready to sacrifice its citizens and the environment.

COMMITMENT: AN EDUCATION BASED ON ACTION

In addition to being a point of reference for a better grasp of reality, this new perspective on society also helps motivate young people to get involved in concrete actions that will build a better world. Understanding, or a clear and critical view of the context at hand, cannot fail, but once again, it is not enough. Our society needs youth who are aware and committed. This is a concern for all educators and of the utmost importance to all individuals directly engaged in teaching full citizenship.

We can thus reaffirm that becoming organized is the best way to improve understanding and achieve full citizenship. No stronger proof for the results of our work exists than the number of young persons who participate in social and political initiatives designed to improve our society.

²⁸ We would like to draw your attention to an aspect that very much impacts our reality and that should influence how we teach full citizenship. In the words of Oskar Negt, "People have to learn to distinguish between equality and inequality, justice and injustice. We live in a society in which it looks as though there were equality of opportunity, as though we had realized the ideal of justice in the circumstances governing people's prospects in life. Market forces, with their semblance of equivalency, force their way into our brains and confirm such illusions of equality. But this is a gigantic deception. It is self-evident that we have in Europe a North-South divide, rich and poor countries, but a sharpened awareness of invisible inequalities and hidden injustices has been one of the essential elements of political education and one of the basic tools of people active in public life since the times of the ancient polis, since Plato and Aristotle. One factor is the enduring asymmetry, the injustice in the relations between the genders; the fact that women are gaining increasing numbers of school and university qualifications in many European countries while their representation in senior positions remains very modest is one of the matters at issue, and it amounts to a Europe-wide scandal. This is an unjust relationship between the genders. I am not saying that inequality and injustice can be overcome by acquiring the skill of being aware of them. But if we are talking about the civil society, then the virtue of justice is a main objective of education." Excerpt by Oskar Negt, "Learning throughout Life," *Adult Education and Development* 54 (2000), pp. 53-82.



Until now, we have been defining our vision of what educating for full citizenship means, as well as its implications and objectives. Teaching individuals to become full citizens is important and necessary because it encourages young people to do the following:

- Keep abreast of current events, as well as the social, political, economic and cultural contexts that define their society.
- Develop a personal understanding of this context using critical analysis.
- Discover the building blocks (values, attitudes, practices) they would like to see in society.
- Be inspired enough to participate in the democratic struggle to transform society.

TAKING A LEAP OF FAITH WITH YOUTH

It is essential to have a clear sense of our objectives when educating for full citizenship. But how can these objectives be reached? Here are some considerations and suggestions, which have been culled from our experiences and the experiences of educators encountered while working with different groups.

Our attitude toward the student is the first factor to consider. Adolescents and youth can contribute to our society's success, but how much faith do we put in their abilities? What do we expect of them? To what degree are we also victims of a certain bias that sees youth as irresponsible and troublesome? Oftentimes, adolescents and youth – especially when they are also poor – are seen as incapable, overgrown children. Any tasks entrusted to them arise from an adult's good will and less from recognition of their value.

Even when dealing with adolescents and youth, we tend to maintain the same kind of control that characterizes the relationship between adult and child. Mayumi Souza Lima describes it best in *A Cidade e a Criança*: “There exists a kind of obsession with control that influences our adult behaviour toward children; we need to feel like masters of the domain, as though we need to make all the decisions for our children, as if it's the only way to feel secure. Whether we are educators, parents or simply adults, we fear giving our children freedom. We seek tranquility by speaking on behalf of the child, by imposing our imagination on theirs.”²⁹

How do we handle this situation? Do we encourage youth to assume a greater role? Or do we contribute to keeping them down? Educating for full citizenship is only successful when all stages and elements of the learning process are hinged on teaching this skill. Work that is organized and executed as a group, the division of tasks and responsibilities, and the sharing of ideas and experiences are all important tools for discovering new values that (we hope) will positively impact all of society.

In the course of our work, we, the educators who participate in this endeavour, have adopted an artistic language as a pedagogical substitute. We believe that teaching art is already an education. But do we know how best to exploit the potential represented by group work, pushing boundaries and new challenges? Or, as is often the case, do we reduce the important teaching of full citizenship to a mere lecture, delivered without consideration for the interests and ways of youth? Have we yet realized how circus, music and capoeira can make our work more interesting and useful, all the while teaching youth to grow and become aware, organized and engaged members of society? We

²⁹ Mayumi Souza Lima, *A Cidade e a Criança* (São Paulo: Nobel, 1989), p. 11.



hope that this conference will help us all discover our potential, as well as the best means for using that potential.

CONSISTENCY BETWEEN WORDS AND PRACTICE

We have already underlined the importance of linking theory with practice. However, this does not always occur, as discourse is one thing and practical application another. There are plenty of examples too. Authorities speak about the importance of full citizenship, but they never miss an opportunity to quash movements, unions and parties. It is precisely to protect the right to full citizenship that the Landless Workers Movement³⁰ intervenes, a professors' union declares a strike, or a group of organizations steps forward to promote a referendum on debt.

The same authorities that praise the value of full citizenship in speeches are the very same authorities that block measures designed to help individuals attain and exercise this right. This contradiction, which arises from ignorance concerning full citizenship, is not limited to other countries – it occurs just as often at home. We can all remember occasions when, although educating for full citizenship was guaranteed, the reigning authority of teacher over student was still pervasive. As long as students are treated as passive receptors, this relationship model cannot validate the ideas and propositions being taught. We talk about full citizenship, but without taking into account the obstacles that adolescents and youth – especially when they're at risk – must confront on a daily basis.

Can you imagine what would happen if we trained individuals to become active citizens, fully engaged in the transformation of their country and the world, but they never had the chance to exercise their civic rights in school, in a group or in preparation for a performance?

ONE LAST CONSIDERATION...

The concern over teaching youth how to envision their full citizenship can lead to discussions about the state of the world – subjects quite far from their areas of interest. Helping young people feel like global citizens seems commendable, but evidence shows that we will be more effective if we address the issues closest to them, drawing on daily life. By its very nature, art validates the local reality, without losing sight of the bigger picture. This is yet another reason for us to continue educating through art.

³⁰ *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra* [Landless Workers Movement] is a Brazilian organization dedicated to defending peasant farmers with no land to cultivate.



MODULE 9 | ACTIVITY 1**THE SUCCESSFUL WORKSHOP****OBJECTIVE**

To identify the strengths and challenges of a good educator.

Length of activity
60 minutes

Materials
Cardboard, cue cards, large sheets of paper, felt-tip pens

Number of participants
20-25

**EXPERIENCE**

The trainer asks participants to recall a successful educational experience they have had as teacher or student. Ideally, it should be taken from social circus, but if not, another context will do. The group is divided into smaller teams of 4-5 people. Trainees are then invited to recount their story in turn, describing to their team how it made them feel and explaining how the experience influenced them.

**OBSERVATION**

Each smaller group should discuss the following questions:

- What stood out or surprised you the most about what you just heard?
- What do all these experiences have in common?
- List the factors that made these experiences successful, including the behaviour and attitudes of the teacher, and those of the students.

**INTEGRATION**

- What skills should an instructor and community worker possess to be a good social circus educator? Explain why.
- In your opinion, what is the biggest educational challenge that social circus instructors and community workers must face?

**APPLICATION**

- The trainer asks the instructors and community workers to review the list of skills generated by the group on their own and then to take a few minutes to self-evaluate regarding these skills. The trainer then asks all trainees to define some objectives for improving their teaching skills.

MODULE 9 | ACTIVITY 2**COAT OF ARMS****OBJECTIVE**

To identify the characteristics of the educational approach used in social circus.

Length of activity
60-90 minutes

Materials
Large sheets of paper, felt-tip pens

Number of participants
20-25

EXPERIENCE

The trainer invites participants to form teams with people from their organization. Using felt-tip pens and large sheets of paper, each team must draw a coat of arms representing its members.

The four quadrants of the coat of arms should be labelled with predetermined themes (see figure 9.2):

1. Presentation of the social circus project
 - What is the target population of this project?
 - What is the average age of participants? How many participate in the workshops?
 - How many instructors and community workers will work on the project?
 - How often are workshops given?
2. Educational goals: What are the general and specific educational goals of this project?
3. Educational approach: Which educational models will be used to attain the goals?
4. Impact: What impact will your project have on participants? On the community?

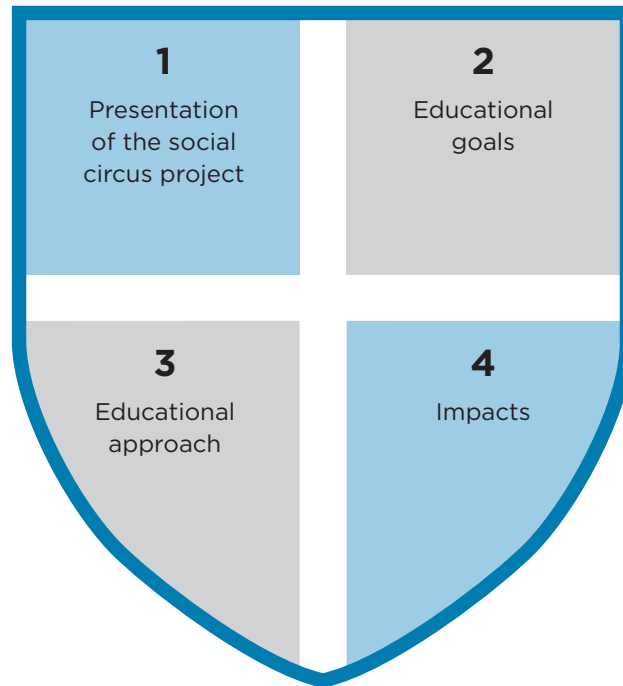
To ensure some deep reflection, the trainer encourages the teams to discuss each theme freely, giving them about 30 minutes to complete the activity.

Once done, each team takes a turn presenting their coat of arms to the whole group.

OBSERVATION

- While creating the coat of arms, did your team have a clear vision of each theme discussed? What details were easier to define? Which were harder?
- What commonalities did you identify in the coat of arms of different organizations?
- Were there any significant differences?

FIGURE 9.2 - COAT OF ARMS



INTEGRATION

- Were you surprised, shocked or charmed by the stated objectives of other organizations? What about the methods they used to reach those goals? Or the impacts they observed?
- What are the characteristics of the educational approach used by social circus? The trainer asks the group for keywords and notes them on a large sheet of paper. Once this step is completed, the trainer presents the social circus educational approach, linking the features with contributions from the group and adding details when necessary.
- What skills should an instructor and community worker possess to be good social circus educators? What challenges do educators have to face?
- What are the limitations of the social circus educational approach?



APPLICATION

The trainer invites participants to return to their smaller groups and discuss the following:

- The group's educational strengths: How to maintain them? How to enhance them?



MODULE 9 | KEY MESSAGES

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 to social circus adopted by *Cirque du Soleil* is inspired by many approaches, including experiential learning.

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

MODULE 10

WORKSHOP PLANNING



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 we 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



MODULE 10 - 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.

CONTENTS OF THIS MODULE

REFERENCE TEXTS

- Practical Guide for Community Workers
- Preparing for Workshops
- Planning Tools

ACTIVITIES

- Planning Together
- The Puzzle



MODULE 10 | INTRODUCTION

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 minimizes 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 the short-term (individual workshop) and the long-term (full session) objectives.

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 discussion 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.

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.

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.



MODULE 10 | REFERENCE TEXT 1**PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY WORKERS¹***By Michel Lafortune and Annie Bouchard*

Experience drawn from the various collaborations that have taken place in the *Cirque du Monde* program, both in Quebec and in many countries around the world (Chile, Brazil, Mexico, South Africa, Burkina Faso, etc.), shows that the adoption of a uniform model is neither useful nor feasible. Local realities are indeed multifarious and social circus must adapt while preserving what makes it unique: use of circus arts, group workshops, facilitation run by a binomial team (community worker-instructor) and the guiding principles of social circus.

This practical guide is intended therefore as a broad framework within which local organizations and community workers can develop their particular project.

A) SOCIAL CIRCUS WORKSHOPS: AN OVERVIEW**1. Portrait of the participants**

Social circus projects target mainly - but not only - children and adolescents roughly between 10 and 20 years of age living in deprived economic or social conditions: disadvantaged environments, youth living on the streets and so on. In general, groups consist of, on average, 20 participants.

In some cases, notably in countries with interethnic conflicts (South Africa, Northern Ireland), mixing members of different communities might be an end in itself, in order to bring them together. In other circumstances, projects reserved for more homogeneous groups may be more appropriate. In South Africa, as part of its regular activities, Zip Zap Circus has created a social circus program aimed precisely at children of all origins and from all environments. In Australia, the workshops of Women's Circus are aimed specifically at women, particularly those who have survived sexual assault, and offer them a haven of safety and conviviality.

2. Frequency and length of workshops

Workshops last between two and three hours each, with varying frequency - one or more times a week. They are planned into a session, which generally lasts from two to 10 months and sometimes follows the school year.

3. Content of the workshops

During each workshop, participants are introduced to different circus techniques (juggling, acrobatics, stilts, unicycle, trampoline, etc.), as well as theatre and clowning. In addition, some time periods are reserved for greeting, warming up, group games and the rituals of arrival and departure.

The program of the workshops is adapted to the makeup of the group of participants and to the available resources. Moreover, some organizations include supplementary learnings to the social circus workshops, covering such subjects as the making of circus equipment or costumes.

¹ Excerpt by Michel Lafortune and Annie Bouchard, *Community Worker's Guide: When Circus Lessons Become Life Lessons*, Social Circus Training (Montreal: Cirque du Soleil, 2011), pp. 43-51.

4. Workshop supervision

Workshops are led by a team of one or more instructors and one or more community workers. The instructors are circus experts, while the community workers are social intervention experts from the local organization.

5. Performance

A session ends with a circus performance put on by the participants. Some organizations prefer to use the term “presentation” rather than “performance,” in order to reduce the risk of confusion between social circus and circus in general. This confusion can give rise to misunderstandings, frustrations or disappointments.

6. Continuity of the project in the community

At the end of a social circus session, the local organization can implement activities to prolong the experience for participants, particularly by having them use their new skills to benefit the community (performances with or for the community, creation of a cooperative or a troupe, etc.). In some cases, it can also ensure continuity by offering other social circus sessions and other levels of workshops, which the young participants can follow over several years.

B) A STEP-BY-STEP BREAKDOWN OF A SOCIAL CIRCUS SESSION

Organizing and providing social circus workshops involves many material, practical and educational aspects. They call for a range of skills and their responsibilities must be shared between the members of the facilitators’ team.

1. Recruiting participants

Recruiting participants is a shared responsibility between the community worker and the instructor. However, the community worker has a special role to play in this, because he is part of the partner organization. This task must be carried out with enthusiasm, but also with focus and caution. The objective is not to recruit at any cost, but to ensure that the participants correspond to the profile of those the program is intended for. This is why it is necessary that the community worker have a solid grasp of social circus’s mission, and that he understand and share its values.

• Whom to recruit

Even though the composition of the participant groups can vary with the partner organization’s realities and mission, social circus social intervention programs are first and foremost aimed at youths at risk (with social, psychological and economic difficulties or in precarious living conditions). The community worker must therefore carry out his recruitment in such a way as to prioritize this population, by targeting those environments most likely to harbour at-risk youth.

Despite their differences, the youths recruited must have a marked common interest, indeed a passion, for circus arts. This motivation is of prime importance and constitutes an indispensable condition for participating in the workshops. It should be stressed that enrolling in a circus workshop is always voluntary and that no one should be forced in any way to take part. This approach makes the participants themselves responsible for their commitment to the program.



• Recruitment strategies

The community worker should make every effort to conceive and use recruitment strategies suitable to the realities of his working environment, and that respect the mission and objectives of social circus. Depending on circumstances, he can pitch the circus workshops as an alternative to boredom or isolation, as a positive experience to be lived or as a way of surpassing oneself, as an opportunity to meet new people or as a means to get some exercise. It is important to present the project in a way that incites enthusiasm, catches the attention of the youth and shows them what the workshops can do for them.

In order to achieve that, the community worker shall use eye-catching means, suited to a young public and their realities. Flyers, notices, posters, emails or even circus equipment used by the instructor or former participants for demonstrations can all be used.

He should nevertheless be careful not to create any confusion in the minds of the youths. Within the recruitment phase, the ideology behind the workshops must be clearly spelled out, as well as the fact that the participants will have to respect certain rules. By giving concrete information about the practical aspects of the workshops, the community worker can prevent misunderstandings ahead of time and let the youths know exactly what they are getting themselves into.

Recruitment can take three forms: oneoff, continual or indirect.

- A one-off operation consists of a single information session, held before the start of the session in a place where youths usually hang out. During the meeting, circus equipment and numbers can be used to show the content of the workshops. Participants from previous sessions can also join the meeting and provide testimonials.
- A continual recruitment operation is carried out through repeated contacts that the community worker keeps up throughout the year with the youths of his community and that help him target those who fit the chosen profile.
- Lastly, recruitment can be carried out indirectly, through the intermediary of the partner organization's services and community group networks. By informing the staff members of these organizations about the circus project and making them aware of the opportunities it offers, the community worker can establish some useful allies for recruitment. Moreover, he should not neglect word-of-mouth, whereby current and former participants themselves promote the circus project. In some sites where it has been going for a number of years already, this is the sole method of recruitment.

2. Planning the session

The period in which the community worker and the instructor meet to plan the session is a particularly important stage that allows them to get to know each other and deal with the session's content as well as its many logistical aspects.

• Sharing visions and objectives, determining the means

The planning stage gives the two facilitators the chance to learn about each other, to share their visions and their objectives, and to begin building the indispensable cohesion that will unite them during the session.



The community worker should explain his organization's mission and present his intervention philosophy. He should also provide a general portrait of the group of participants and describe the profile of each participant. As for the instructor, he can share his experience in social circus intervention.

Together, the two facilitators define their roles and choose a mode of communication between them. They establish the general and specific objectives for the session that is about to begin, and analyze the results, reports and assessments of previous sessions. It is also a good time to decide on educational tools to be used in the different disciplines, depending on the available resources and specific needs of the participants. Lastly, the community worker and the instructor jointly draw up the outline of a code of conduct, which the participants will be asked to complete during the course of the first workshop.

- **Logistical planning of the session**

The two facilitators will also use this planning stage to deal with numerous logistical questions. The first thing is to find a safe and accessible place for the participants and make a list of equipment and financial resources available. Once an inventory of existing circus equipment is made and its condition checked, the facilitators can determine which purchases, loans or repairs need to be made. Likewise, existing educational tools need to be inventoried and any shortfalls remedied. In addition, it is important to plan alternatives and have backup plans in case of problems.

Some activities can be organized in parallel to the circus workshops: vaccinations, conferences, hosting a charity clothing booth and so on. Lastly, it is essential for the facilitators to plan emergency procedures.

3. Giving the first workshop of a session

During the first workshop, the main tasks of the community worker and the instructor are to lay down the ground rules for the working of the session and introduce the different aspects to the group of participants. It is nevertheless important to ensure that the communication move in both directions and is not limited to a lecture from the facilitators. To avoid the workshop being dominated by talk, some points may be dealt with through play, which helps give this first meeting something of the dynamic of a circus workshop.

- **Introducing the facilitators and describing their respective roles**

It should be noted that unlike the community worker, the instructor is generally unknown to the participants. A presentation of his origins, the path of his life and his achievements helps the youth make contact with him more easily.

- **Introducing the participants**

The youths introduce themselves in turn and briefly state their interest and expectations in the circus workshops. The community worker can help them express themselves.

- **Introducing the social circus approach and the goals of the session**

The facilitators emphasize the guiding principles of social circus (voluntary participation, adaptation of the activities to the group, respect of the individual, excelling without competition, safety) and outline the educational approach.

- **General presentation of workshops content**

The typical structure of the workshops, with main subdivisions (greeting, warm-up, games, workshops, discussion) is presented without going into details. Facilitators also give an overview of the different disciplines suggested.



- **Adopting the code of conduct**

Alongside the guiding principles of social circus, the code of conduct is a collection of rules that the group of participants and the facilitators establish together to ensure the proper running of the workshops. The code of conduct should also contain sanctions in case of infringements.

Code of conduct

Adopting the code of conduct is an exercise in practical democracy that can prove very instructive. Each group of participants and facilitators sets up its own code of conduct. However, some aspects must necessarily be covered. These include rules concerning the premises, equipment (tidying up, cleaning, breakages, loans, use of equipment) and schedules. The group must also take a stand regarding the consumption of drugs, cigarettes and alcohol and adopt very clear safety standards. Lastly, the code of conduct should determine the norms of respectful communication.

Once these rules have been established, the group should come to an agreement about what sanctions should be applied in case of infringement. These should never involve excluding or making fun of a participant.

- **Inviting youths to have their say**

Participants are asked to suggest activities, express their expectations or dissatisfactions and propose ideas for improvement. The facilitators also encourage them to start thinking about the personal and technical objectives that they wish to achieve during the session.

The attitude adopted by the facilitators toward the participants during the first meeting will have considerable repercussions on subsequent workshops. Right from the start, the youths should feel that they are in an environment structured by listening and respect, where collective unity is important. This initial encounter should ignite the participants' enthusiasm and motivate them to learn new things. They should leave that first meeting convinced that the workshops will be a source of pleasure and achievement for them, but should also be aware that they will need to comply with certain requirements and respect a shared code of conduct.

As for the facilitators, they should use this first encounter to assess the motivations, needs and abilities of each participant. This assessment will allow them to gear the activities and the educational approach to the group.

4. A typical workshop

A workshop lasts an average of three hours and can take place in the morning, afternoon or evening, generally once or twice a week. This duration is divided into several periods that are each important in their own way and serve to structure time for the participants.

- **Planning of the workshop**

Each workshop needs rigorous planning to define the objectives to be achieved and the means to be employed in the most targeted way. It is also a chance to make adjustments to cater to individual and collective dynamics. To this end, it is necessary to assess the motivation of each participant and the state of relationships between the group members at the beginning of each workshop. The number of participants can also have an impact on the types of activities offered.



The two facilitators should re-evaluate the relevance of their approach before each workshop and, if necessary, reformulate objectives, teaching methods and intervention strategies. The development of the workshop, specifically in terms of content and timetable, should be outlined and structured, and the tasks to be undertaken should be clearly distributed between the community worker and the instructor. Lastly, on a more practical note, the condition of the equipment necessary for the workshop should be checked.

• Greeting

The greeting period is a moment for renewing contact with the group. Insofar as it is possible, each youth should be welcomed individually. One should take a bit of time to show interest in each participant, his life and experiences, and be available for him. Even though workshop participation is voluntary, facilitators should note the presence of each participant as a measure of his assiduity and motivation, and where need be, identify possible problems. If new participants arrive, they will be integrated into the group during the greeting period. Lastly, this period allows for checking on equipment loaned to the youths.

• Arrival ritual

A symbolic moment marking the beginning of the workshop, the arrival ritual should, unlike the greeting period, be a set ritual of whatever form that points to the strength of the collective. For example, it can involve forming in a circle and expressing themselves together (singing, succession of sounds, movements, etc.). Through such practices, movements and the decor, the ritual takes on first and foremost a symbolic dimension. It also generates loyalty among the participants and cultivates the sense of belonging to a group sharing a common space.

• The workshop itself

The circus workshop itself begins with a warm-up period, which is intended to avoid injuries and adjust the physical posture, but also to become self-aware and increase the group's motivation. It is performed together and consists in a series of movements and exercises.

The duration of the workshop is then subdivided into several periods of organized or free games and activities, which can vary depending on the groups and the circumstances. The games period can take many forms. The objective is to have the participants get to know each other, listen to each other and build up trust. Partnerships are born, affinities emerge and the right chemistry is found.

During organized activities, participants are taught several circus disciplines: juggling, pyramids, stilts, acting, tightwire, unicycle, acrobatics and so on. They can then choose one or more of these circus disciplines and practise them in more depth during the free activity period.

Lastly, there should be a break in the middle of the workshop, so as to encourage the participants to get together and develop the sense of belonging to the group.

• Discussion

The discussion period allows the group to look back over the workshop and its various moments. All forms of discussion are possible, whether to suggest improvements, point out difficulties encountered, relive good moments, ask for explanations, clarify situations of conflict, share impressions and so on. In order to avoid monotony and make this period more stimulating and less redundant, it is a good idea to change the way it works once in a while, such as by organizing subgroups or using games and so on.



Facilitators should make use of this period to point out progress made, reinforce participant enthusiasm, praise responsible actions, encourage the youths to express themselves and guide them in making constructive criticisms. They should also ensure that each participant takes an active part in putting away and repairing the equipment.

- **Departure ritual**

The end of the workshop is marked by a period of ritualized togetherness that can take the same form as the arrival ritual.

- **Review of the workshop**

After the participants have left, the community worker and the instructor discuss between them how the workshop went.

5. Conditions for the success of a workshop

In leading each circus workshop, the community worker and the instructor make every effort to ensure both balance and dynamism within the group of participants. By their general attitude, their actions and their decisions during the workshop, they seek to arouse and maintain the young people's interest and motivation, encouraging them to participate and helping them along their paths. Leading a circus workshop requires a level of intuition for adapting to certain situations, but it also requires structure.

- **General attitude of the facilitators**

Creativity, dynamism and spontaneity as well as the facilitators' ability to listen are what help motivate the youths. These qualities also help foster a positive and stimulating atmosphere within the group. Moreover, the community worker and the instructor should ensure that their actions, attitudes and decisions are consistent.

- **Encourage participation**

Active and positive participation of the youths in the various workshop activities is essential. Facilitators should encourage this participation without rudeness, respecting each person's learning pace, interests, strengths, difficulties and path, while striving to encourage perseverance, regularity and assiduity. It is important to push young people to surpass themselves, but never at the cost of enjoyment. A balance needs to be found between technique, having fun, discipline and freedom.

Facilitators can stimulate the interest and participation of the youths by keeping up a steady pace during the workshop, while varying the activities and teaching methods.

- **Assisting the participants**

The role of the facilitators also consists in guiding each of the participants and helping them find their place in the workshop, in the group and in relation to their own objectives. At first, clear instructions and explanations must be given about the activities, and participants need to be helped in drawing up realistic goals. It is equally important to pay attention to the difficulties encountered by the youths, so as to recognize warning signs of a possible weakening of motivation, such as passivity or asking what point there is in participating in the workshops.

6. The end-of-session performance

A session normally ends with the presentation of a circus performance, whereby participants share their new skills with their community and their families and friends, and show what they are capable of learning and doing. This shared objective, toward which they gear their efforts during the whole session, can often turn out to be a decisive



experience, which can have a major impact on the course of their lives. It constitutes a sort of rite of passage marking the end of a learning period and recognition from the community.

Putting on a performance incites the young participants to stretch their limits and be responsible for their undertaking. It also helps them overcome shyness and fear of ridicule, as well as changing the image they project and the image they have of themselves. By emphasizing creation and teamwork rather than delinquency and lack of motivation, public performances are remarkable catalysts for bringing young people and their community together. Moreover, they offer families and the community the chance to express their appreciation and gratitude to the youths for the efforts they have put into preparing and putting on the performance.

• Preparation of the performance

Preparation of the performance is a progressive process spread over the entire duration of the session and involves constant efforts and numerous discussions. Obviously, it is not exempt from difficulties. Conflicts between the youths, participants who back out, irregular attendance and disrespect of the schedule are all factors of tension or discouragement that can undermine the preparation of the performance. The intervention team should be attentive and sensitive to the fact that the performance can be a source of stress for the youths. They should therefore try to control this aspect as best as possible and see how to handle it with the participants. In addition, problems can also arise from participants overestimating their abilities.

These hazards can be avoided with the vigilance of the two facilitators, who must not only handle the material and practical aspect of the performance, but also assist the participants in their progress. In this respect, several points need special attention:

- The youths must be prepared for the performance physically, mentally and emotionally.
- The content and concept of the show should be worked out with the participants in a genuine concerted effort, and adapted to the group's progress during the session.
- Responsibility for supplementary tasks connected to the show (costumes, sets, music, technicians, makeup) should be given to members of the group or to an outside team who should be encouraged and supported.
- Each participant's level of readiness should be regularly checked and the objectives redrawn where appropriate.

From a material and practical point of view, the community worker and the instructor should also undertake certain tasks in collaboration with the partner organization:

- Choosing and reserving a venue for the performance;
- Analyzing the characteristics of the place and assessing the available material resources;
- Designing and distributing promotional material indicating the place, date and time of the performance;
- Encouraging the youths to contribute to the promotion of the performance;
- Inviting local partners to the performance;
- Preparing the venue and installing the equipment;
- Welcoming the guests.



After the performance, some time should be set aside, generally the equivalent of a workshop, to go back over the experience and talk about what has been learned and the emotions experienced. This period of exchange and discussion should also provide a chance to talk about the future: how can the participants integrate the life lessons drawn from their training into their daily lives? This debriefing exercise helps prepare for what comes next and helps ensure continuity both for the participants and for the project.

7. Continuity of the circus project in the community

Once the session is over and the instructor's contract has ended, the partner organization and the community worker are the only remaining points of anchorage for the youths, and it falls to them to continue the work begun in the workshops. Even if the type of social intervention goes back to the standard form, the gains from the workshops will not disappear and they can continue to serve as ways of bringing young people together and building their self-esteem.

Various activities can thus be set up by the community worker to encourage the development of young people's citizenship and the community's concern for them. It can consist in leading workshops during neighbourhood festivities and putting on shows in retirement homes or for the partner organization's fundraising dinners.

By organizing these types of activities, the partner organization can ensure that the circus project is not limited to a given time period, but that it is prolonged well beyond the duration of the session. The circus lessons and life lessons learned by the participants help them not only to strengthen their self-confidence, but also to take their place within their community.



PREPARING FOR WORKSHOPS²

By Daniel Turcotte and Jocelyn Lindsay

During the work phase, facilitators³ must be constantly attentive to the needs of the group and its members, in order to ensure that workshop content is always adapted to their reality. Even if the type of preparation varies according to the group's makeup, it is necessary for facilitators to ensure that each workshop is beneficial for participants and conducive to their goals. Each workshop must then be meticulously planned. In a very structured group, like an education group, it is possible for workshop content to be established when the contract is signed. In this case, it is the facilitators' responsibility to organize the planned activities and purchase the necessary materials, prepare exercises suited to the content of the workshop and contact specific resource people who will provide the necessary information. In a less structured group, facilitators will generally prepare each workshop according to perceptions of participants' immediate needs and the expectations expressed.

Regardless of the type of group, facilitators can better plan workshops if they keep a journal to record their observations during each encounter. This will also enable facilitators to track the development of individual participants more precisely and evaluate the group's overall performance. For example, after noting that participants seem particularly anxious about a certain topic, the facilitator can plan a discussion or information session addressing that topic. Similarly, after noting that some participants find it difficult to express their thoughts and feelings, the facilitator can plan an activity to stimulate verbal expression.

Planning workshops requires more attention when very structured activities are anticipated. Activities have been a part of the process since the very beginning of social services for groups, when the intervention tended toward structured education and recreational activities. In the past, facilitators have questioned the usefulness of such activities – especially for adults – indicating that verbal exchanges and discussions were more appropriate. That's how there came to be differing points of view on how much importance should be accorded to *doing* rather than talking, or *action* rather than discussion, in a group setting. Nonetheless, it is widely acknowledged that when carefully planned, activities can be extremely conducive to a group's development.⁴

The activities use concrete methods, aside from verbal exchange, to encourage interaction and learning within a group. These methods include the expressive arts, such as painting, dancing, singing and theatre, as well as games, exercises and even social or recreational activities. According to Middleman,⁵ an activity is a way of establishing relationships between individuals, as well as fulfilling the needs and interests of a group and its members. Although the terms “program” and “activity” are sometimes used interchangeably, a program has a much larger scope. More specifically, a program generally includes a series of activities planned within an intervention framework, or a series of events designed around a larger event. Either way, it implies numerous activities...

² Excerpt by Daniel Turcotte and Jocelyn Lindsay, *L'intervention sociale auprès des groupes*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: Chenelière Éducation, 2007), pp. 144-49. Reproduced according to the licensing terms of Copibec.

³ Inspired by a book about social intervention. We are using the term “facilitator” in a broad and inclusive manner. In this guide, the term refers both to the social circus instructor and the community worker.

⁴ Ronald W. Toseland and Robert F. Rivas, *An Introduction to Group Work Practice*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Allyn and Bacon, 1998).

⁵ Ruth R. Middleman, *The Non-verbal Method in Working with Groups: The Use of Activity in Teaching, Counseling, and Therapy*, enlarged ed. (Hebron: Practitioners Press, 1982).



When preparing, it is crucial to clarify an intended goal. The impact of the activity must also be determined, both on the group and on the group's environment. It is this projected impact that gives an activity meaning. According to Heap,⁶ facilitators must remember the following two principles:

1. The activity must be relevant; that is, it must fulfill the needs of participants.
2. The value of the activity comes not only from its results, but also from how well it proceeds. This value is essentially based on the desire to work together and does not correspond to the performance level achieved.

As the same activity can provoke two entirely different reactions, it's important for facilitators to be accurate when they gauge the needs and characteristics of the group and its members beforehand. In fact, the activity itself can help a group evaluate if the activity is indeed well adapted to the participant profile and the intervention context. Facilitators planning an activity must take the following into consideration:

- Participants: needs, characteristics, values, social skills and abilities, as well as the interpersonal and environmental problems affecting them
- Group: composition, development, cohesion, standards, climate, etc.
- Group environment: resources available for the activity
- Their own profile as facilitator: characteristics, creativity, imagination, skills, interests

With certain groups, it is possible – even preferable – to ask participants to undertake the preparation and organization of activities. This permits them to acquire social skills and constitutes direct recognition of the group's power in the intervention process. Toseland and Rivas⁷ suggest a method for selecting activities that fulfill the needs of a group. The factors to take into consideration include: the goals that the activity would promote; the group's goals; the materials, resources and time available for the activity; the profile of participants and the elements of the activity. Figure 10.1, inspired by Toseland and Rivas,⁸ illustrates the selection process and specific aspects to consider. The success of any activity is largely due to how well it relates to the intended goals, the characteristics of group members, the intervention context and the facilitator's skills. It is thus important to pay particular attention when making selections.

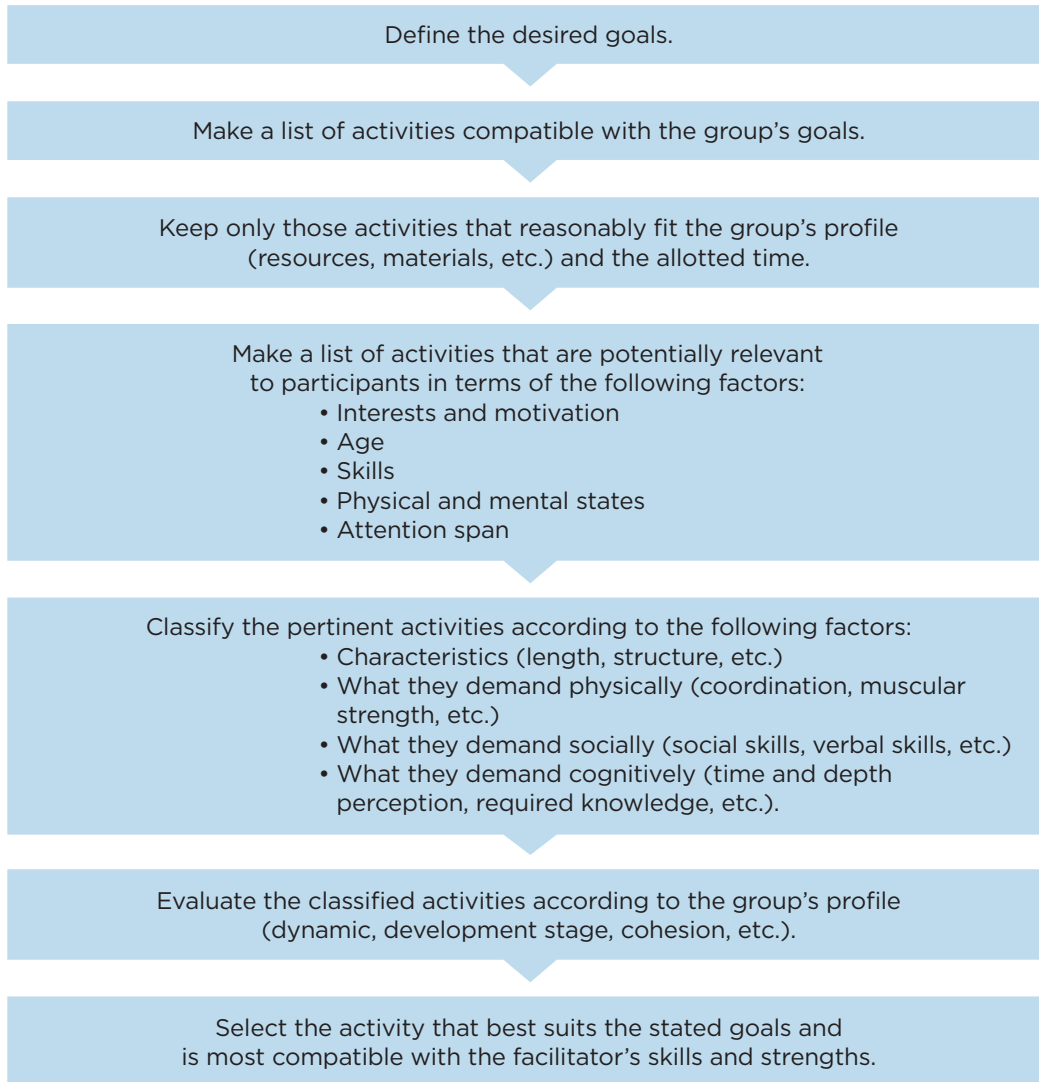
⁶ Ken Heap, *The Practice of Social Work with Groups: A Systematic Approach* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1985).

⁷ Toseland and Rivas, *An Introduction to Group Work Practice*.

⁸ Ibid.



FIGURE 10.1 - HOW TO SELECT ACTIVITIES⁹



⁹ Inspired by *ibid.*, p. 238.



MODULE 10 | REFERENCE TEXT 3

PLANNING TOOLS

By Michel Lafortune, Emmanuel Bochud and Elisa Montaruli

Social circus workshops require both long-term (full session) and short-term (individual workshop) planning. The planning tools below were created to make this important preparation process easier. In this document, you will find user-friendly grids for social circus instructors and community workers. Of course, to increase their relevance, the grids can be modified to suit the circumstances of the specific milieu and the rhythms of each community.

PLANNING A SOCIAL CIRCUS SESSION

The first grid is a sample plan for a 15-week session, broken down into two three-hour workshops a week.

The first step when planning a session is to define the general objective of the session. Here are some examples:

- 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.

The session is divided into many blocks, during which time key technical and social goals will be pursued. The technical goals correspond to lessons in the circus arts, while social goals are associated with life lessons.

Block 1: Weeks 1-4

• Introducing circus techniques [technical goal]

Lasting approximately four weeks, this block is designed to introduce participants to circus techniques (in relation to social goals, of course). Instructors take advantage of these first encounters to evaluate the physical abilities of participants. Activities are selected to be increasingly challenging, all the while being sensitive to aspects that require physical contact.

• Form a group [social goal]

This first block serves to greet participants and foster mutual support. Instructors and community workers take advantage of these first encounters to evaluate the group and its composition and needs. For example, this is when they determine who the leaders are, the interaction models at play and so on. During these first few weeks, it's important to define a code of conduct with the group.



Block 2: Weeks 5-10

- **Gaining a greater command of circus techniques [technical goal]**

This block, which lasts about six weeks, aims to teach participants a greater command of circus techniques, all the while supporting social goals too. Instructors begin to diversify and take a deeper look at all techniques, meanwhile intensifying the practice of those techniques that require participants to trust one another more, for example, pyramid building or hand-to-hand. Instructors also put more emphasis on creative exercises and theatrics.

- **Establishing group cohesion [social goal]**

This second block encourages the exploration of exercises that continue to build group cohesion and togetherness. To achieve this, instructors and community workers must stimulate interaction during formal and informal gatherings. They must consistently integrate exercises that encourage personal and social growth (self-affirmation, confidence building), as well as enable participants to develop a certain degree of physical comfort around one another. Furthermore, they encourage participants to use the group's resources for learning and social support.

Block 3: Weeks 11-13

- **Concentrating on one circus technique [technical goal]**

This three-week block is designed to prepare participants for the circus performance. Instructors allot time for creation, rehearsal and determining the order of the numbers.

- **Intensifying the group process [social goal]**

During this same three-week period, participants develop the skills that contribute to the completion of the group project. Instructors and community workers guide participants through the process of making decisions about the performance. They must also address stress management.

Block 4: Week 14

- **Final run-through and performance [technical and social goals]**

Lasting one week, this block consists of two workshops: the final run-through and the circus performance.

Block 5: Week 15

- **Reviewing what's been learned [technical goal]**

This block, which often consists of only one workshop, allows for a review of the performance (e.g. watching a video recording of the show) and an evaluation of the techniques learned.

- **Reviewing the group's experience [social goal]**

The last block provides a review of how individuals and the group have evolved throughout the session. It's also an opportunity to share information about the next session or refer participants to other resources.



PLANNING SOCIAL CIRCUS WORKSHOPS

The second grid features the main aspects to consider when planning a social circus workshop. First and foremost, the grid urges instructors and community workers to agree on the technical and social goals that the workshop will promote, without ever losing sight of the general workshop objective being pursued by all activities in the session.

The grid also serves as support for developing the workshop schedule. Instructors and community workers must determine those activities most conducive to achieving the intended goals and fulfilling related needs. Facilitators can indicate the length of each activity, including the greeting, breaks and review of the workshop, as well as who will be responsible for facilitating the activity.

Space has also been provided for follow-up after the workshop. Facilitators may note attendance (how many participants, number of instructors and community workers), identify activities which were successfully completed, and make general comments about various aspects (e.g. the group dynamic, challenges faced, social interventions initiated in the group or with one particular participant, activities worth continuing or delaying until the next workshop, how to modify an activity the next time around, etc.).

TO KEEP IN MIND...

Plan ahead or improvise?

The successful achievement of learning goals begins with quality planning. It is thus necessary to invest time in the planning process in order to have an overall vision of all planned learning activities and the available resources. However, “planning” does not have to be synonymous with “rigid.” It is crucial to maintain flexibility, follow the rhythm set by the group and let the magic of the moment happen. Even if you have a set plan, there is no need to get upset or frustrated if an activity doesn’t take place. Perhaps it can be rescheduled for a later date. Also, the more planning experience we gain, the more flexible we become in getting the rhythm and content right. In this way, the plan gets easier to follow, and the cornerstones upon which we build our practice become more solid, enabling us to adapt to any situation.

Having a proper follow-up to the workshop and its events enables facilitators to modify goals for the next workshop.

Whether it’s during the planning meeting or the project post-mortem, the grid used for planning a social circus workshop was designed to enable instructors and community workers to document and reflect on their process.

To illustrate, the following grid has been filled out to show you what the second workshop of a session might look like. The abbreviation “BTCA” in the Activities column refers to *Basic Techniques in Circus Arts*.¹⁰ This document, published by *Cirque du Soleil*, could be a valuable tool for your planning process.

¹⁰ Social Circus Department, *Basic Techniques in Circus Arts*, Social Circus Training (Montreal: Cirque du Soleil, 2011).



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.



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		



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 (see <i>BTCA</i> , Group Games, p. 11)	Genevieve	3 balls, 3 teams	X	
15 min.	Warm-up	Mamoudou, Genevieve	Gym mat	X	
20 min.	Build team spirit: Under the Rope! (see Module 8, Activity 2, p. 178)	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 (see <i>BTCA</i> , Juggling) and hand-to-hand (see <i>BTCA</i> , 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 (see <i>BTCA</i> , Pyramids)	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: The Rope Circle (see <i>BTCA</i> , Group Games, p. 25)	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.



MODULE 10 | ACTIVITY 1

PLANNING TOGETHER

OBJECTIVE

To determine the elements that must be taken into consideration when planning a social circus workshop.

Length of activity
60-90 minutes

Materials
Pieces of paper, each featuring a workshop theme that needs planning and the workshop's length, one copy each of the planning grid for social circus workshops¹¹

Number of participants
20-25



EXPERIENCE

The trainer creates teams of 3-4 people each. If the group consists of instructors and community workers, make sure that the teams are mixed. Each team randomly chooses a piece of paper featuring a workshop theme and the workshop's length. For example: the instruction could be to plan the content for a two-and-a-half-hour workshop promoting the development of a specific skill or attitude (confidence, self-esteem, teamwork, communication, etc.).

Each team determines the planning steps and then the factors that must be taken into consideration when planning. Teams must also discuss which activities will best contribute to developing the intended skill or attitude. Teams have about 15-20 minutes in which to discuss and note down their ideas on a large sheet of paper. Teams then take turns presenting their ideas to the whole group. After each presentation, the trainer invites a team or the entire group to give feedback on what was just discussed.



OBSERVATION

The trainer suggests a review of all the presentations:

- How did you proceed with the planning?
- What factors did your team take into consideration when planning the workshop?
- Were you surprised by what other team members proposed? What other teams proposed?



INTEGRATION

- Are you in the habit of planning your social circus workshops?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of planning?
- How does tandem facilitation enrich the planning?
- How did you approach planning the social and technical goals?

¹¹ See the reference text "Planning Tools" in this module, p. 233.



MODULE 10 | ACTIVITY 2

THE PUZZLE

OBJECTIVE

To determine the planning steps for a social circus session.



EXPERIENCE

The trainer creates teams of 3-4 people. Individual teams then receive an envelope containing eight slips of paper, each featuring a planning step for a social circus session. Teams are given about 15 minutes to put the steps in order.

Length of activity
45 minutes

Materials
Planning grid for a social circus session,¹² large sheets of paper and pens, one envelope for each team containing eight slips of paper and two blank slips (see p. 244)

Number of participants
20-25

A social circus session comprises the following planning steps:

1. Sketch out a general profile of the participant group and its needs.
2. Define the general goals for social development.
3. Define the general goals for learning circus techniques.
4. Evaluate the financial resources and materials available.
5. Decide which educational tools (social and circus) will be used.
6. Determine evaluation methods for the session.
7. Make an intervention plan in case of emergency.
8. Distribute responsibilities.

Once the teams have finished sorting their cards, the trainer gives each team two blank slips of paper. Instructors and community workers must then determine if any steps are missing. If there are, teams must write them down on the slips of paper and classify them among the other slips. The trainer waits until all teams have completed the task before telling them that the blank slips were simply introduced to stimulate reflection and discussion.



OBSERVATION

The trainer invites instructors and community workers to share their results:

- Did all teams present the steps in the same order? What other sequences were suggested?
- What steps provoked debate within your group?
- What steps surprised you (in the sense that you don't usually include these steps in your plan)?
- Did you add any other steps?

¹² See the reference text "Planning Tools" in this module, p. 233.



MATERIALS

When preparing the envelopes, photocopy this page and cut the steps into strips.

Sketch out a general profile of the participant group and its needs.
Define the general goals for social development.
Define the general goals for learning circus techniques.
Evaluate the financial resources and materials available.
Decide which educational tools (social and circus) will be used.
Determine evaluation methods for the session.
Make an intervention plan in case of emergency.
Distribute responsibilities.



MODULE 10 | KEY MESSAGES

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.





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. Often-times, getting the leaders involved will yield positive results.

Karine Lavoie, Social Circus Instructor
Cirque du Monde, Montreal



MODULE 11 - 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.

CONTENTS OF THIS MODULE

REFERENCE TEXTS

- Facilitation and Group Management
- Managing Problematic Situations
- Facilitation Essentials

ACTIVITIES

- Facilitating a Game
- Telling a Story

MODULE 11 | INTRODUCTION

Facilitation consists of injecting momentum or stimulating a certain dynamic within a group. The instructor and community worker will necessarily adapt their facilitation techniques to suit the particular profile of the group and thus help them achieve their common goal. To do so, they must be able to “read” the group with which they’re working. In fact, each group is different, whether in its composition, functioning, relationship dynamics, energy, rhythm or personality. The reading of the group, which takes place at the outset, will influence how the instructor and community worker adopt a (more or less) direct approach that encourages participants to become increasingly more responsible.

One of the foundations of good facilitation is the attention paid to rhythm. To set a rhythm, the instructor and community worker must put effort into planning and global organization, vary the type and intensity of activities, alternate between group work and individual work and pace their interventions. Good rhythm can increase or motivate a group, all the while limiting downtime and reducing sources of boredom and behavioural problems.

Other than rhythm, facilitators are also responsible for managing the content, methods and the socio-affective climate within the group. Efficient handling of these elements contributes to better learning and development for participants. Nonetheless, instructors and community workers will face problematic situations. These conflicts can be caused by an unpleasant group dynamic, individuals misbehaving or the dysfunctional roles played by certain participants. Facilitators must react to behaviours deemed unacceptable by recalling and demanding respect for the ground rules set by the group. In a difficult situation, they must also avoid taking sides for or against an individual and be careful to maintain neutrality.



MODULE 11 | REFERENCE TEXT 1

FACILITATION AND GROUP MANAGEMENT¹

By Michel Lafortune

INTRODUCTION

Facilitation consists of animating a gathering, the content of which is preplanned and aims to guide participants toward a common goal. Also, facilitation encourages both individual and collective expression within a group. When facilitating a workshop to teach circus arts to a group of participants, the roles of instructor and community worker converge in that both are there to help participants have a creative experience and excel.

Group facilitation is essentially a social intervention: the actions of the instructor and community worker (gestures, words and attitude, as well as listening, managing the group, dealing with conflicts, etc.) have repercussions that will impact the experience of each participant and of the group as a whole. The rules for facilitating and managing the group serve as guidelines that will help the group reach the intended goal.

This text was written to provide the basic information necessary to understand the concept of a group and outline the principles of facilitation and group management that will help social circus workshops run smoothly.

THE NOTION OF A GROUP

Defining the group and types of groups

Our lives are mostly spent interacting with others, through encounters or other types of relationships. At what point can we define a network of relationships between individuals as a group?

The first condition is the existence of ties, which help members of the group be aware that other members exist. The second condition is the existence of interactions and the use of verbal and non-verbal communication, which determine how members will influence one another.² The third condition is a common denominator, which is something shared by all members of the group.

The group thus becomes “a set of relationships (a dynamic network of relationships), which has an energy and which, in one way or another, tends to structure itself; this structure becomes embedded in the method of functioning; and this functioning leads to evolution.”³

There are different types of groups: groups can be formal or informal, closed or open, made for learning or action, designed for catharsis (e.g. group therapy) or recreation, based on politics or work, created for youth and so on. Naturally, these groups have very distinct characteristics, but it is also important to understand the reasons why each

¹ Michel Lafortune, *Animation et gestion de groupe* (internal document, Montreal, Cirque du Soleil, Social Circus Department, 2000 and 2010).

² Gail Myers and Michele Toleda Myers, *The Dynamics of Human Communication: A Laboratory Approach*, 6th ed. (Montreal: McGraw-Hill, 1991).

³ Gilles Morand and André De Carufel, “Éducation et formation en développement communautaire,” *Techniques d'intervention auprès des populations cibles* (course notes, Sherbrooke and Quebec City, Collège de Sherbrooke and Collège St-François-Xavier-Garneau, 1999), p. 1.



type of group is formed, the type of interactions that members tend to have and the results that they can produce.⁴

A group becomes a team when members have a common goal. This entails completing common tasks and pooling the efforts of all members to achieve the intended goal.⁵ Smaller teams can form within a group, for example, the work team that organizes and plans the group meetings, the team tasked with certain responsibilities or creative work, and so on.

The need to belong to a group: some basic reasons

For any individual, belonging to a group fulfills basic social needs. Jocelyn Jacques⁶ has looked at the fundamental reasons why individuals want to join a group or even change their membership. These needs can be generally applied to all individuals belonging to any type of group.

1. The first need that can be fulfilled by the group is the need for attachment; that is, the need to accept others and be accepted by others, to feel the presence of others and to interact with them.
2. The need to identify with a group is equally important, in that it permits comparison to and a sense of belonging with others, which in turn leads to the development of individuality.
3. The need to feel safe leads individuals to try and address their insecurities through the group, as well as to seek out support from peers who have the same life experiences. They tend to leverage this support system to find the strength needed to confront challenges.
4. The need to understand one's worth and power are two reasons that are intimately related to the need for attachment and recognition from peers. The group can contribute to building self-esteem and learning more about how power can be exercised.
5. Lastly, the need for cooperation means that every member of the group contributes to achieving the common goal and sharing information, knowledge and the resources necessary to reach that goal.

Stages of group development

The group cycle and its different stages can be compared to the life cycle. The group cycle consists of birth (formation of the group), development (the long maturation process) and decline, which leads to dissolution of the group or a transformation of its members.

As illustrated in figure 11.1, Bouvard and Buisson propose three stages in a group's development:⁷

1. Dependency stage

After individuals have been rallied around a common cause, members of the group begin to discover one another and identify themselves in relation to other members. During this period of "fusion," each member strives to identify and promote the values and standards of the group.

⁴Myers and Myers, *The Dynamics of Human Communication*.

⁵Morand and De Carufel, "Éducation et formation en développement communautaire," app. 1.

⁶Jocelyn Jacques, "Le groupe, sa nature," in N. Côté, H. Abravarel, J. Jacques and L. Bélanger, *Individu, groupe et organisation* (Montreal: Gaëtan Morin, 1987), pp. 164-78.

⁷Claude Bouvard and Monique Buisson, *Gérer et animer un groupe* (Paris: Éditions d'organisation, 1988), p. 22.



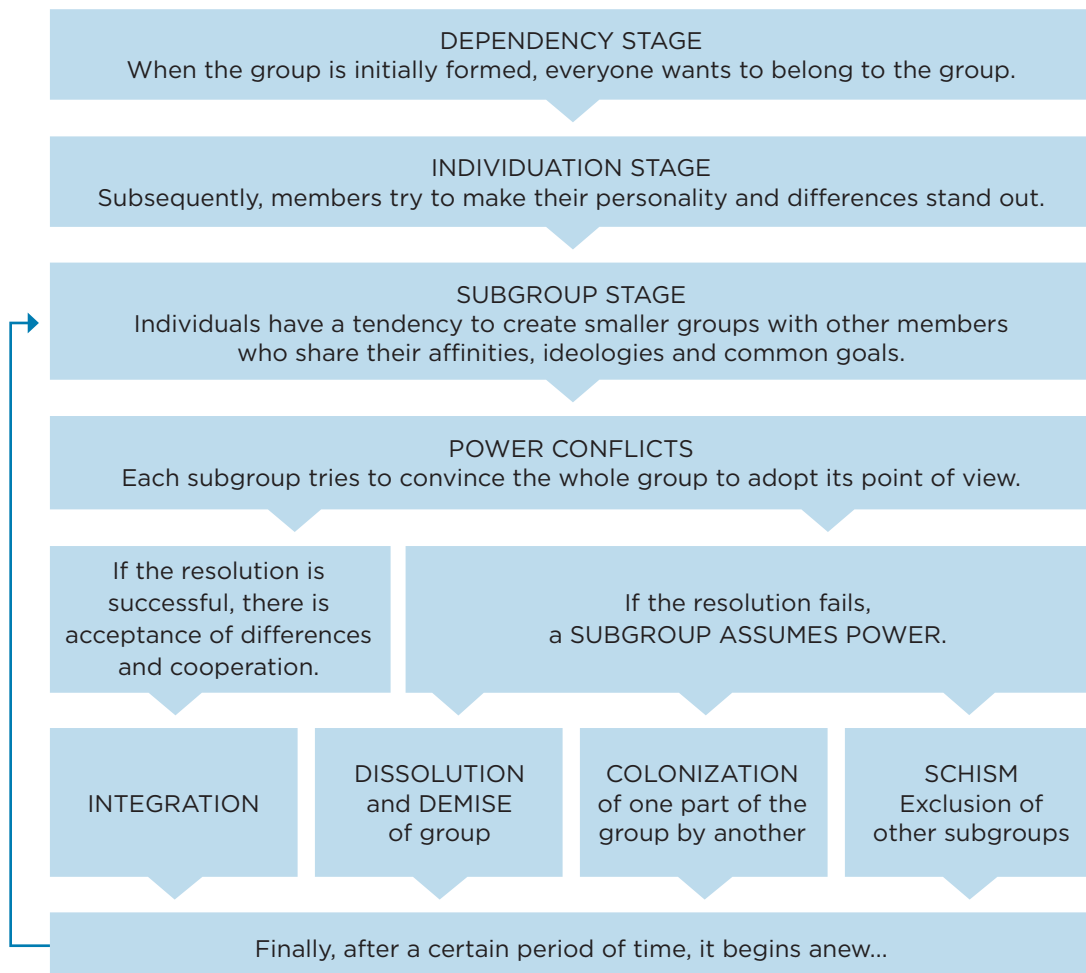
2. Individuation stage

A fragile solidarity is established. The role of each group member is clarified and differentiated from that of the others, mostly through exchanges of power. Members question the role of each individual in achieving the intended goal.

3. Subgroup stage

Some members form subgroups with other members who share the same ideas, affinities and goals. There may be clashes or confrontations, but if dealt with in a positive manner, these events could become clarifying moments that help the group achieve greater cohesion. Affection will be forged between members, thus facilitating the conditions for production and creativity. At this stage, members also accept their differences, complementarities and limits. However, if conflicts are addressed in a negative fashion - without communication - this could lead to a breakdown of the group, a schism or the domination of a subgroup over the whole group.

FIGURE 11.1 - THE GROUP DYNAMIC⁸



⁸ Excerpt by Bouvard and Buisson, *Gérer et animer*, p. 46. Reproduced according to the licensing terms of Groupe Eyrolles.



MAIN GUIDELINES FOR FACILITATION AND GROUP MANAGEMENT

Facilitating a group is an art form: it's the art of instilling each participant with group awareness in the pursuit of a common goal.⁹

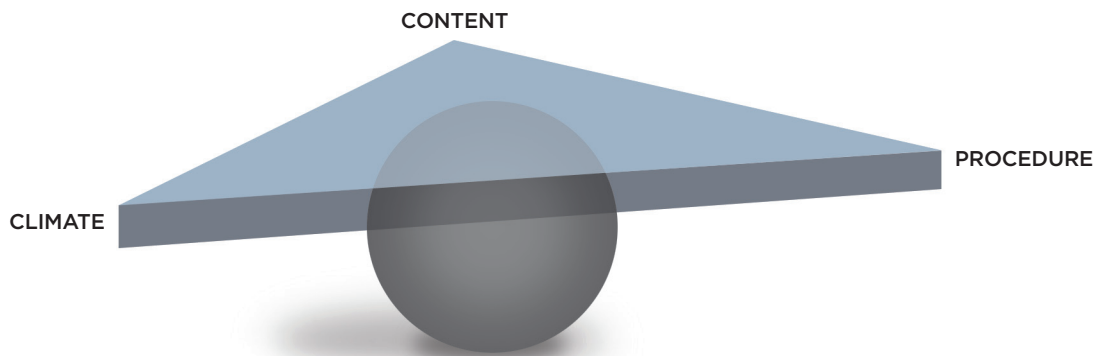
Therefore, facilitation comprises three basic characteristics:

- **Inspiring soul** (breath) by creating an ambience – or climate – in which members feel free to be themselves
- **Inspiring life** (movement) by using all available resources to encourage the personal growth of each member, each group and each organization
- **Inspiring meaning** (relationships) by encouraging communication between members during encounters, and during the evolution of the group or the organization...

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 procedure that is conducive to sharing knowledge and be sensitive to the socio-affective climate within the group.¹⁰

FIGURE 11.2 - THE FACILITATION TRIANGLE



• 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. They are responsible for the following:

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

⁹ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁰ Jean-Marie Aubry, *Dynamique des groupes* (Montreal: Les Éditions de l'Homme, 2005).



• Procedure

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

- Stimulating participation
- Curbing energy levels when they become too frenetic
- Managing time
- Encouraging individual participation

• Climate (the group's socio-affective aspect)

The instructor and community worker must also be sensitive to the group's emotional state. Their role is to maintain a positive socio-affective climate for the group, which leads to better learning and development. By talking about what participants feel in the group and being aware of the different behaviour types of various group members, the instructor and community worker help establish a positive climate for the group. In particular, the following behaviours are a must:

- Greeting and validating participants by showing interest in their individual lives
- Encouraging relaxation and solidarity during formal and informal moments
- Being objective about ideas, tensions
- Voicing difficulties, obstacles, the unspoken

Table 11.1 illustrates how different socio-affective components evolve as the group moves through the various stages of development proposed by Naud.¹¹ The components are liable to impact the interventions used by instructors and community workers to promote a favourable environment.

Facilitation styles

Numerous authors¹² have identified three main facilitation styles: autocratic, democratic and laid-back. These styles, presented in table 11.2, are not mutually exclusive; in fact, numerous combinations are possible. Furthermore, the adoption of one facilitation style to stimulate work efficiency, information sharing, member participation or the socio-emotional climate will not elicit the same response from the group. It is thus important to understand how the attitude adopted can impact interpersonal interventions; this contributes to adopting an open and attentive attitude and encouraging the group to participate democratically.

Non-participation

Facilitators will often be confronted by situations or certain participants who do not express themselves verbally and do not participate in discussion. This act of non-participation is damaging to the silent participant, as well as to the entire group. In fact, participants who don't express themselves are not getting involved or contributing: any interesting ideas they may have are not shared and used for the benefit of others. Moreover, the non-participation of one member gradually creates a feeling of malaise in the group, which could lead to bigger problems.

¹¹ Gérard Naud, *La gestion d'organismes bénévoles* (Quebec City: Télé-Université, 1983).

¹² Including André Beauchamp, Roger Graveline and Claude Quiviger, *Comment animer un groupe* (Montreal: Les Éditions de l'Homme, CIM Collection, 1976); Myers and Myers, *The Dynamics of Human Communication*; and Jean Proulx, *Le travail en équipe* (Sainte-Foy: Presses de l'Université du Québec, 1999).

TABLE 11.1 – STAGES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIO-AFFECTIVE COMPONENTS¹³

Socio-affective components of the group dynamic	STAGES			
	Preliminary encounters	Experimentation	Confrontation in action	Cohesion in action
Communication	Difficulty in finding a common language. Surface attitudes dominate.	Opinions and feelings begin to be expressed. Informal communication networks are formed.	Open expression of opinions: surface attitudes and defence mechanisms fall away; true conflicts occur.	Easy communication, even if conflicting opinions still stand.
Conflict	Conflicts do not occur, as there is no open expression of opinions and feelings.	Conflicts begin to arise relating to values, opinions and feelings (tensions).	Conflicts are openly manifested.	Conflicts are less frequent and perceived as surmountable.
Leadership	Some influence begins to manifest.	Attempts at leadership.	Leadership is established, mostly because of difficulties experienced by the group.	Leadership is clearly manifest, but still has a tendency to be shared.
Sense of belonging	Still at the “first impressions” stage.	Development begins with more active members.	Flows from the feeling of satisfaction that the group generates.	Increasing development, as each one feels more validated by the group.
Group consciousness	Limited to the common goal. Artificial consensus.	Begins to manifest depending on the results achieved by the group.	Put to the test and directly stemming from the group’s success.	Clearly manifest. The group has proved itself and shown itself capable of reaching goals.
Individual motivation	Diversified and still personal.	Inspires greater action or withdrawal from the group.	Manifests occasionally during conflicts.	Becomes increasingly clear and more accepted by others.
Participation	Certain members are withdrawn.	Participation is centred on discussion.	Strong participation (generally). Some members withdraw rather than get involved in direct confrontation.	Participation occurs according to the interests and needs of the group.

¹³ Excerpt by Gérard Naud, *La gestion d’organismes bénévoles*, p. 28. Reproduced courtesy of Télé-Université.



TABLE 11.2 – GROUP FACILITATION STYLES AND IMPACTS¹⁴

ASPECTS	AUTOCRATIC	DEMOCRATIC	LAID-BACK
Definition of goals	Imposes goals for the group and expects everyone to abide by the decision.	Asks the group to define goals and helps them make a clear choice.	Poses the question and then leaves it up to the group.
Selection of procedures	Predetermines procedures and informs the group. Does not ask for the group’s opinion, which often leads to departures.	Proposes a range of options and invites the group to suggest others. Helps the group choose those that are best suited to the context. Once the selection is made, firmly supports the decision.	Does not propose options and if so, the options are vague. To fill the void, group leaders will take responsibility for selections, which may lead to frustration.
Participation	Leads all, does all, rules all. Members do what they are told.	Helps the group to distribute tasks. Everyone takes initiative and has responsibilities.	Laissez-faire. Some will take initiative, while others remain passive.
Evaluation	Rejects any kind of evaluation and avoids questions about role and attitude. Evaluates and judges others, however.	Places a lot of importance on evaluation. Sees it as a way to improve. Chooses evaluation methods with the group.	Either doesn’t think about evaluation, or it’s done in a lax fashion that is not constructive.
Work	The total amount of work done by the group is often considerable.	Good amount of work is accomplished (variable).	Work is inefficient, according to individual initiatives.
Climate	The work environment is not very motivational in the long-term.	Good work environment.	The group has a tendency to play, rather than work.
Information	Information is centralized.	Good distribution of information and transparency.	Lack of information.
Decision-making process	If the group has more than one leader, there is a high risk of conflict.	Friction could occur if there are conflicts between popular ideas.	Group leaders dominate the discussions.

¹⁴ Excerpt adapted from Scouts Canada, *Formation modulaire: Animation d’un groupe de personnes* (ANI 1001), 2nd ed. (Montreal: Scouts Canada, 2000), p. 10; Beauchamp, Graveline and Quiviger, *Comment animer un groupe*, pp. 32-35. Table reproduced courtesy of Scouts Canada.



According to Édouard Limbos,¹⁵ reasons for non-participation are associated with three broad categories:

- Reasons inherent in the individual: fear of being judged or speaking out, fear of being perceived as incompetent, personal preoccupations, feelings of rejection or of not belonging, etc.
- Reasons relating to the facilitator: facilitator is too direct, too detached, not competent enough with the subject, suggestible, not prepared, etc.
- Reasons relating to the group: existence of tension, cliques, taboos or hierarchy in the group, lack of cohesion, attention, empathy, etc.

To avoid or resolve instances of non-participation, it's crucial for the facilitator to understand as quickly as possible the reasons that could lead an individual to withdraw.

TO KEEP IN MIND...

We should always stick together!

We should not underestimate the power that the creation and composition of a team can have on an activity. There are numerous methods to use when dividing a group into work teams. We don't recommend naming a captain or captains and letting them create their own teams. It's preferable for the instructor and community worker to group participants randomly or assign team members themselves. This last method has numerous advantages, chiefly the ability it gives the instructor or community worker to control the composition of each group. The instructor or community worker can take the opportunity to pair stronger members with weaker ones, separate troublemaker friends, place a leader with positive energy in a group with less motivation and so on. These small acts could greatly improve how a group works!

Strategic use of games

In addition to the classic facilitation and group management techniques, group games are another central element of social circus. Depending on the game used, group games can create connections and strengthen bonds between members, energize the group or calm it down, stimulate creativity and even awaken new emotions. The seasoned instructor and community worker will strategically plan these games to influence the socio-affective climate in the group or perhaps even use them spontaneously to refocus energies and adapt to the ever-evolving group dynamic.

¹⁵ Édouard Limbos, *Les problèmes humains dans les groupes: Applications pratiques* (Paris: ESF Éditeur, 1984).



MODULE 11 | REFERENCE TEXT 2

MANAGING PROBLEMATIC SITUATIONS¹⁶

By Daniel Turcotte and Jocelyn Lindsay

MANAGING PROBLEMATIC SITUATIONS

When a problematic situation arises in a group dynamic, it is usually the result of individual behaviours from certain members, dysfunctional roles within the group, the overall group dynamic or the presence of conflict.

A problematic situation stemming from an individual's behaviour basically results from the mode of participation that person has adopted to satisfy personal needs. This mode of participation usually elicits a negative reaction from other members of the group, which could then lead to exclusion, rejection or open conflict. However, in some situations, individual behaviours are leveraged by the group, which consequently assigns dysfunctional roles to problematic members, thus using them to maintain a certain balance in the group. Problematic situations relating to the overall group dynamic stem from behaviours displayed by all members – or even just the majority of them. Lastly, some conflict situations tend to arise from tensions between certain members or between subgroups. Although these situations are difficult on the surface, they can become opportunities for growth – thus the interest in addressing them as issues that impact the whole group.

Problematic individual behaviours

Writings about groups, and more specifically about task groups, have already presented numerous paradigms for understanding inappropriate individual behaviours. In this text, we will limit the discussion to an overview of certain behaviours, which have been classified under two broad categories: disruption and withdrawal.

- **Disruption**

Disruptive behaviours are more obvious and generally require a solid and quick response from facilitators;¹⁷ otherwise, they could interfere with the group's progress and make other members less eager to participate. These behaviours are associated with two types of members: those who want to impede the group's process and those who oppose it.

We can identify five profiles of members who wish to impede the group process: 1) the Chatterbox, who thinks out loud, constantly expresses thoughts and seeks to draw all attention by talking non-stop; 2) the Distractor, who does everything possible to derail the conversation with abrupt changes in topic or by launching into personal subjects that have no connection with the discussion at hand; 3) the Specialist, or the resident expert, who comes off as always having an answer and constantly gives unsolicited opinions; generally, the Specialist draws attention by proclaiming expertise and recalling past successes; 4) the Fusspot, who slows down discussion by endlessly picking at details or by constantly interrupting others, with the excuse that there's an aspect that's not being taken into consideration; and finally, 5) the Clown, who blocks the group by

¹⁶ Excerpt by Daniel Turcotte and Jocelyn Lindsay, *L'intervention sociale auprès des groupes*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: Chenelière Éducation, 2007), pp. 166-71. Reproduced according to the licensing terms of Copibec.

¹⁷ Inspired by a book about social intervention. We are using the term "facilitator" in a broad and inclusive manner. In this guide, the term refers both to the social circus instructor and the community worker.



turning everything into a joke, avoiding serious topics and laughing about everything, with little thought as to whether or not the interjection is pertinent.

We can identify four profiles of members who oppose the group process: 1) the Mule, who adopts an idea and stubbornly adheres to it without taking the thoughts of others or the developing discussion into consideration; 2) the Objector, who is anxious and inclined to criticize everything, throws up roadblocks by making exaggerated objections and hindering possible decisions or actions; 3) the Thinker, who acts above it all, knows more, has better relationships and possesses more experience than others; and, 4) the Aggressor, whose oversensitivity and impulsive nature makes all rational discussion impossible, and who attempts to influence the group through scare tactics, manipulation or blackmail, and also generally instills a climate of mistrust and destructive hostility in the group.

• **Withdrawal**

Withdrawal behaviours are adopted by members who exist on the group's periphery. This kind of behaviour makes the facilitator's job harder because individuals become difficult to read quickly and interpret accurately. There are also five profiles of members who withdraw: 1) the Downer, who doesn't speak because of disagreeing with the group or the ways in which things are being done; 2) the Wallflower, who doesn't get involved for fear of being seen as inferior to others or less able to discuss the subject at hand; 3) the Snob, who refuses to participate due to feelings of superiority and of being above it all; 4) the Yawner refers to those members who behave as if they could care less about what happens in the group or as if there are more important matters outside the group; and 5) the Conformist, who doesn't seem to have any personal opinions, who is always happy to agree with others and who only repeats opinions already expressed. The first two profiles are considered to be "on the sidelines," whereas the last three represent members considered to be "dead weight" in the group.

Based on Grzybowski's writings,¹⁸ table 11.3 presents an overview of different individual behaviours labelled 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 attitudes 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 so as to 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?"

¹⁸ B. Grzybowski, "Comment réussir une réunion," *Psychologie* 81 (1976), pp. 7-12.



TABLE 11.3 – CATEGORIES OF PROBLEMATIC INDIVIDUAL BEHAVIOURS AND PROFILES

DISRUPTION		
The deterrents	The Chatterbox	Thinks out loud, talks non-stop
	The Distractor	Derails the conversation, abruptly changes the topic
	The Specialist	Always has an answer, gives unsolicited opinions
	The Fusspot	Gets bogged down in the details
	The Clown	Avoids all serious topics, turns everything into a joke
The opponents	The Mule	Stubbornly sticks to ideas
	The Objector	Criticizes non-stop
	The Thinker	Imposes ideas, knows everything
	The Aggressor	Instills a hostile atmosphere
WITHDRAWAL		
On the sidelines	The Downer	Does not speak due to disagreement
	The Wallflower	Feels incompetent
Dead weights	The Snob	Always spurs debate
	The Yawner	Feels indifferent
	The Conformist	Has no personal opinions

Dysfunctional roles

Some problematic individual behaviours can be framed by how they are instrumental to maintaining a certain balance in the group. These problematic behaviours are related to the roles that individuals play in the group. Generally, these roles are not self-assigned or explicitly decided upon, but rather arise from a unique dynamic combining personal characteristics and the group's needs at a specific moment in its development. They appear to fulfill the need for balance and survival within the group. There are six types: 1) the Silent Member; 2) the Deviant Member; 3) the Internal Leader; 4) the Diverging Member; 5) the Defensive Member; and 6) the Scapegoat. These roles can have a more or less negative effect on the group. Table 11.4 illustrates each role, suggesting some functions attributable to each member of the group and outlining some possible interventions.



TABLE 11.4 - DYSFUNCTIONAL ROLES WITHIN A GROUP¹⁹

NATURE	DEFINITION	FUNCTION	INTERVENTIONS
The Silent Member	This person remains silent for long periods of time. Other members, not knowing how to interpret this behaviour, will begin to feel malaise.	May indicate the individual's importance. Is sometimes an indication of reflection. Helps to regulate conversation.	Try to understand the reason for this silence. Work with the member to explore the reasons for this silence.
The Deviant Member	This person's behaviour puts him or her on the periphery of the group.	Provokes certain emotions. Expresses what others dare not speak. Guides the group toward certain questions.	Tolerate the deviant behaviour, while underlining the standards and rules of the group. Try to understand the reasons for this behaviour. Wait and see what this behaviour contributes.
The Internal Leader	This person is perceived as superior by the others, but may present a threat to the official leader.	Indicates the hierarchy within the group. Adds something to the task or general environment.	Avoid jockeying for power. Look for positive contributions. If only negative contributions follow, try to understand the reasons for this behaviour.
The Diverging Member	This person derails the discussion whenever the group approaches a sensitive topic.	Slows down the conversation to take the group's malaise into account.	Talk about what's happening.
The Defensive Member	This person has difficulty understanding the problem, assuming responsibility and accepting suggestions.	Avoids approaching problems head on.	Talk about what's happening. Ask the member to talk about what he or she is feeling. Ask others if they've had similar experiences. Understand the nature of the problem.
The Scapegoat	This person possesses a characteristic that other members don't like or fear.	Redirects attention to a specific member to avoid confronting a difficult experience or scary situation.	Observe how the dynamic repeats itself. Understand their feelings about this situation. Study the dynamic. Determine the underlying theme.

¹⁹ Adapted from Lawrence Shulman, *The Skills of Helping: Individuals, Families and Groups* (Itasca: Peacock, 1992).



Facilitators must take two considerations into account when dealing with dysfunctional roles: promoting the flexibility of these roles and understanding the function of these roles within the group. To help some members avoid being trapped in roles they cannot escape, the facilitator must underline that these roles are flexible by varying the contributions of each. It is often the case that models of behaviour adopted during the first encounters are crystallized by the group's reaction; the group then expects the individual always to behave in the same way. That's how some members come to feel as though they are not allowed to behave otherwise, even if they would like to. It's also possible that some types of behaviour initially deemed appropriate will eventually come to be viewed as problematic. To help members avoid feeling trapped in unsuitable roles, the facilitators must once again promote flexibility and fluidity.

This crystallization of roles is especially challenging in the case of dysfunctional roles, which do have a use within the group, regardless of the obstacle they pose to development. In a group, roles are established via dynamic reciprocity; that is, roles are conditioned by members' reactions, which in turn are conditioned by emerging roles. As there's a link between the group's needs and roles – even if they are dysfunctional ones – the facilitator must be particularly attentive to what's happening in order to understand how these roles can better serve the group. To this end, the facilitator must attentively observe the interactions between members in order to understand the dynamic that contributes to maintaining these dysfunctional roles. Facilitators must also share their observations with the group and frame the situation as an issue that concerns the whole group and not just the members enacting these roles.

When mediating between certain members of the group, facilitators must be careful to avoid two pitfalls. First, facilitators must not be overprotective of the member with a dysfunctional role by always defending that member to the group or whenever that member's name is mentioned. Second, facilitators must not be seen as siding with the group, as this will only reinforce the dynamic that contributes to keeping that member in the role. Facilitators must thus adopt the role of participant observer and must not hesitate to explain clearly to members what they have observed happening in the group.²⁰

²⁰ Rosselle Kurland and Robert Salmon, *Teaching a Methods Course in Social Work with Groups* (Alexandria: Council on Social Work Education, 1998).



MODULE 11 | REFERENCE TEXT 3

FACILITATION ESSENTIALS²¹

By Annie Bouchard

It is impossible to ensure the balance and growth of a group without a structure and framework. That's why the following elements must be taken into consideration when facilitating workshops.

PLANNING A WORKSHOP²²

Sharing visions and objectives, determining the means

- Share philosophies and intervention experiences.
- Define the role of each facilitator.
- Evaluate the characteristics and specific needs of each participant.
- Establish the general objectives and specific goals for each session.
- Agree on which educational tools will be used in different disciplines, taking into account the group's needs, objectives and available resources.
- Plan different scenarios for activities that can be adapted to the number of participants.
- Adapt the workshop content according to individual and group dynamics.
- Reassess the relevance of interventions before each workshop and, if necessary, reformulate objectives, educational tools and intervention strategies.
- Establish the foundation for a code of conduct.

Logistical planning of the session

- Find a safe and accessible location for participants.
- Make a list of available materials and financial resources.
- Plan intervention procedures in case of emergency.

RUNNING THE WORKSHOP

Greeting participants

- Greet each participant individually, if possible.
- Take an interest in all participants, in their lives and personalities, all the while encouraging them to talk about what's been going on since the last workshop (e.g. check to see if they've been eating properly, follow up on previous conversations, etc.).
- Make yourself available to everyone.
- Follow up on loaned materials.
- Take attendance and note if participants have been coming regularly.

²¹ Annie Bouchard, "Éléments essentiels à retenir pour l'animation," adapted from *Document de référence s'adressant à l'intervenant de cirque social* (internal document, Montreal, Cirque du Soleil, Social Affairs and International Cooperation Department, 2005), pp. 33-34.

²² Consult Module 10 of this guide: "Workshop Planning."



Activities

- Effectively communicate important information:²³
 - Orient the group according to the objective.
 - Explain how the workshop will function.
 - Give instructions.
 - Be consistent within the team when it comes to decisions made by facilitators.
- Keep participants interested and stimulate their motivation:
 - Be creative, dynamic and spontaneous.
 - Keep a sustained rhythm throughout the workshop and frequently change activities.
 - Vary workshop styles (led, recommended, freestyle) and teaching styles in order to create greater appeal for all participants.
 - Maintain a balance between technique, play, discipline and freedom; this fulfills the participants' need to keep moving and avoids loss of interest.
 - Actively participate in workshops.
- Encourage participants to participate without rushing their development:
 - Help participants set realistic goals.
 - Encourage participation, perseverance, stability and diligence.
 - Push participants to exceed their own expectations and give them the support they need.
 - Negotiate for more participation using their individual, as well as their collective interests, challenges and strengths.
 - Identify and constructively handle questions that may come up, disappointments, loss of motivation and moments of passivity.

Reviewing the workshop

- Facilitate a feedback session in order to obtain more information.
- Frequently change the way feedback is given in order to avoid redundancy and monotony. For example, create subgroups or frame discussions within a game (e.g. the talking stick).
- Validate the progress that's been made and reinforce participants' feelings of optimism.
- Praise responsible behaviours.
- Orient the group toward expressing constructive criticism and suggest ways to improve.
- Enable discussion and recognition between participants, while synthesizing feedback and preparing the group for future workshops.

²³ Consult Module 7 of this guide: "Communication."



MODULE 11 | ACTIVITY 1

FACILITATING A GAME

OBJECTIVE

To practise facilitation skills.



EXPERIENCE

At the beginning of the session, the trainer forms teams of two participants and then pairs two teams that will work together. Each duo must then choose a game to facilitate for the group. The game facilitations will take place throughout the training session. While a team facilitates, the partner team observes the game and does not participate. The members of this observation team complete the Facilitator Observation Grid so as to give their peers constructive feedback on their performance.

Length of activity

20 minutes the first day for creating teams and assigning games, 20 minutes for each team presentation (distributed across all training days), and 20 minutes on the last day to review the activity

Materials

Copies of the Facilitator Observation Grid (see p. 266). For the alternatives, slips of paper and pencils

Number of participants

20-25



OBSERVATION

After each game, the trainer invites the facilitation team to stand before the entire group. The trainer then asks the facilitation team and the observation team to share their thoughts. At this stage, comments should be limited to behaviours and specific emotions.

- List all the strengths and weaknesses of this game facilitation.²⁴



INTEGRATION

The trainer then asks the observation team the following questions:

- How do you think the facilitators were feeling during the game? What were they thinking about?
- What would you do differently the next time?

Before the first facilitation activity of the week, the trainer should explain the importance of the three elements described by the facilitation triangle (content, procedure, climate). Following each facilitation, the trainer asks the following question:

- How were the notions of content, procedure and climate handled?

²⁴ See the reference text "Facilitation and Group Management" in this module, p. 249.





APPLICATION

Following each facilitation activity, the trainer writes the lessons learned by the facilitation team on a large sheet of paper.

- What have you learned from this experience that will help you in the future?

At the end of the training session, once all teams have facilitated a game, the trainer asks the group to review the lessons learned after each game.

- Is this list complete? If you had to write a list of tips for a new instructor on how to facilitate a game, what would you add to this list?

ALTERNATIVES

1. Games can also be selected at random from a pooled list. Another possibility is to ask participants to write their names and the name of their favourite game on a slip of paper: during the training session, participants will be chosen (at random) to facilitate their game with another team member.
2. Once there have been a few facilitation activities, the trainer could introduce disruptive participants for the facilitation team to handle. To do so, the trainer could note down four or five problematic behavioural profiles on a piece of paper (e.g. the Chatterbox, the Fusspot, the Aggressor, the Wallflower, the Yawner)²⁵ and then ask other instructors and community workers to play these roles during a game facilitation (one or two per facilitation).

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR TRAINERS

Once the problematic behaviours have been thrown into the mix, it's useful to add the following subjects to the discussion:

Observation:

- What problematic behaviours did the facilitators notice? How did they react? How did the disruptive participants and other individuals feel?

Integration:

- Have you ever had to deal with this kind of participant before? What are the needs of a person displaying these behaviours? What intervention strategies are possible? Was the intervention used by the facilitators realistic? Effective?

Application:

- What could you do at the beginning of a session to establish a climate that would encourage individuals and the group to take action (self-regulation) when faced with these types of behaviours?

²⁵ See the reference text "Managing Problematic Situations" in this module, table 11.3, p. 259.



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:



MODULE 11 | ACTIVITY 2

TELLING A STORY

OBJECTIVE

To learn how to get a group's attention.

Length of activity
45-60 minutes

Materials
Various images

Number of participants
20-25



EXPERIENCE

Each participant must take a turn telling a story to the rest of the group. The goal is to practise keeping everyone's attention for at least two to three minutes. The trainer begins by sharing a few basic tips, such as speaking loudly, maintaining eye contact with the audience, using gestures and varying the tone of voice.

The first storyteller faces the group while sitting next to the trainer, who acts as coach. The trainer gives the storyteller an image that will serve as inspiration for the story. The storyteller thus improvises a story for the group. Each time the story stalls, the trainer gives the storyteller another image to keep it going. The storyteller can never look at or speak to the trainer, even if the trainer whispers additional instructions during the performance (e.g. "Speak louder").



OBSERVATION

- Where were you looking while telling the story?
- What were the physical reactions of your audience (laughter, yawning, silence, whispering, etc.)?
- What elements of the story or of the storyteller most attracted your attention?
- What strategies did the various storytellers use to capture your attention?
- How did you feel when you were trying to get the attention of your audience?
- What was the most difficult part of this activity for you?



INTEGRATION

- What elements of verbal, non-verbal and paraverbal communication attracted the most attention? Which ones distracted your attention?
- What is the role of communication in facilitation and group management? What about the role of creativity?





APPLICATION

- What strategies are the most effective for capturing the attention of young participants in a social circus workshop? What about older participants? And more timid participants?
- What have you learned from this experience that can be used to improve the way in which you teach difficult circus techniques?

ALTERNATIVE

The group is divided into teams of four. The first person chooses an image that will inspire the beginning of the story. This person then improvises a story for the group. After a few sentences, another member of the team chooses an image and uses it as inspiration for the next part of the story. This process repeats itself until each member of the team has had three or four turns each. The last person is required to wrap up the story.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR TRAINERS

This activity is ideal for thinking about making a presentation to a group. Even if they are accustomed to standing in front of a group, some instructors and community workers may nonetheless feel uncomfortable when they have to improvise in front of their peers. It is comparable to the feeling that participants in social circus workshops have when they are asked to step out of their comfort zone and perform a circus technique in front of other participants - or perform an entire show in front of their community. It's important not to belittle what they're feeling. Rather, we must gradually lead them toward building more self-confidence and feeling less vulnerable in front of others.

NOTES



MODULE 11 | KEY MESSAGES

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.



MODULE 12

PARTNERSHIPS



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



MODULE 12 - 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.

CONTENTS OF THIS MODULE

REFERENCE TEXTS

- The Body and Soul Supply the Potential, the Community Supplies the Opportunities
- Local Organization, Challenges and Responsibilities
- Sample Partnership Agreement between a *Cirque du Monde* Program of *Cirque du Soleil* and a Community Organization

ACTIVITY

- Forum Theatre



MODULE 12 | INTRODUCTION

Partnerships are a mainstay of social circus. They unite the expertise of the circus partner with that of the social partner to create a joint intervention project.

When healthy and balanced, a partnership offers numerous advantages. The pooling of resources and complementary talents leads to more diversified and ambitious actions than one partner alone could have offered. Furthermore, establishing a partnership with a community organization is essential to helping community members get involved, take responsibility and invest themselves in the project.

To ensure the long-term sustainability of a project, the terms of partnership must be the result of authentic dialogue and total equality. Moreover, terms must be very clearly established from the beginning. This is why the writing of a formal agreement is desirable and even necessary.

When interacting with community workers and members of the community organization hosting the project, it is important for social circus instructors to display the skills and attitudes that will reinforce their status as meaningful partners. A successful partnership demands that both partners be extremely adaptable, open, respectful and committed to collaboration.



MODULE 12 | REFERENCE TEXT 1

THE BODY AND SOUL SUPPLY THE POTENTIAL, THE COMMUNITY SUPPLIES THE OPPORTUNITIES¹

By Michel Lafortune

Some communities have a lot to offer, while others have scant resources. Regardless of the circumstances, it's crucial to pool the partners' complementary strengths in order to maximize the project's available potential. Establishing a partnership is the best way to accomplish this goal. However, this approach does require that a certain number of conditions be met.

Whether working in northern or southern regions, social circus instructors will always be called upon to work with other partners. They must therefore know what a partnership is, as well as the related advantages, challenges and conditions that will affect its implementation, maintenance and success.

Experience gained through the *Cirque du Monde* program over the last few years has enabled us to determine the common characteristics of this type of intervention and problems arising from it.

CHARACTERISTICS OF A PARTNERSHIP

Partnership entails joint decision making and the sharing of authority, risks, advantages and responsibilities. It should add value to the services offered by each partner and to the status of each. In a partnership, there must be give and take.

The following definitions will help outline the main characteristics of a partnership:

A partnership is a relationship in which two parties with compatible goals agree to work together and share risks, and thus also share the results or gains.²

The first step when moving from a help-based relationship to a partnership is redefining the status and roles of each respective party that is willing to get involved in the project, that recognizes and truly accepts the dignity and equal responsibility of each partner, and that is willing to transcend different cultures and degrees of development. The type of partnership that we should encourage is not based on a vertical relationship, based on authority, restraint, imposed power, a sovereignty of substitution and the transposition of models - in other words, paternalism and condescension. On the contrary, partnership should be founded on authentic dialogue, and enjoy a horizontal relationship in which parties mutually recognize one another as equals and willingly contribute to discussions that are mutually beneficial and enriching - and this, in spite of differences. In this spirit, it's important for us to cultivate our ability to listen to institutions, individuals, cultures and internal procedures that will determine what happens in the real world. This step is essential if we ever hope to achieve better comprehension of individual needs and a joint understanding of development goals and strategies.³

¹ Michel Lafortune, *Le corps et l'esprit fournissent les potentialités, la communauté fournit les opportunités* (internal document, Montreal, Cirque du Soleil, Social Circus Department, 2003 and 2010).

² Flo Frank and Anne Smith, *The Partnership Handbook* (Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada, 2000), p. 11.

³ Abdou Diouf, President of Senegal (opening address, Biennale de l'Association pour le développement de l'éducation en Afrique, Dakar, 1997), as cited in D. Debourou, *Évaluation de l'éducation pour tous en l'an 2000: Contribution de la consultation collective des ONG relative à la participation communautaire* (Paris: Aide et Action, 1999). Also available online (in French only) at <http://www.unesco.org/education/partners/cco/Fichiersdoc/commun.htm>.

The length of time a partnership operates can vary from short-term to long-term, and they can be either simple or complex in their design. Partnerships could be formed for any number of reasons and purposes; however, they have certain similarities in that they do the following:

- Share authority
- Have joint investment of resources
- Result in mutual benefits
- Share risk, responsibility and accountability⁴

PARTNERSHIP'S ADVANTAGES

A partnership has many advantages:

- It allows partners to act more directly by eliminating redundant tasks.
- It permits the workload to be shared without increasing costs.
- It enables partners to undertake actions or activities that could not have been undertaken otherwise.
- It encourages sustainable and integrated development that leverages the strengths of the community.⁵

Christopher Bryant⁶ has explored the advantages of partnerships. We have adapted his ideas to the social circus context:

1. Having partners multiplies the available means because resources are pooled.
2. Partnerships increase the scope and reach of planned actions.
3. Partnerships also encourage members of the community to assume greater responsibility in their development.
4. Partnerships generate impressive results because they recognize the diverse and complementary roles that parties contribute to the project.
5. When it comes to teamwork, partnerships give partners the opportunity to contribute to the development of other partners.

PARTNERSHIP'S CHALLENGES

A partnership also brings about certain challenges:

1. Coming to an agreement and facing conflicts is sometimes difficult.
2. Power can be appropriated by a small group.
3. Accepting that others don't work at the same pace as you do can be frustrating.
4. The prospect of change can arouse fear.
5. Controlling access to information or the non-availability of information can be an issue.

⁴Frank and Smith, *The Partnership Handbook* (Ottawa: Human Resources Development Canada, 2000), p. 5.

⁵Ibid., p. 18.

⁶See Christopher R. Bryant, *Working Together through Community Participation, Cooperation and Partnerships. Sustainable Community Analysis. Workbook 1.* (St. Eugene, Ontario: Econotrends Limited, 1994).



CONSIDERATIONS FOR ESTABLISHING AND MAINTAINING A PARTNERSHIP

Attitude

Attitude, whether positive or negative, is the most important factor in a partnership. Attitude will make or break a partnership faster than any other two factors combined.⁷

A good definition of what a partnership is gives us some idea of the manner in which a partnership must be approached, particularly where partners from different cultures are concerned. The instructor and community worker must have an attitude based on sharing, openness and collaboration. Instructors support the partnership with their expertise by encouraging the community to take charge and by integrating the circus arts into the local culture.

It is sometimes difficult to understand and accept the way that people do things. For example, an instructor is often tempted to take charge of a task in order to get it done faster. Well-intentioned as this may be, this attitude nonetheless detracts from the transmission of expertise and the community's ability to learn the skills, which is crucial to building sustainable change.

The role of the instructor in a partnership

Experience gained through the *Cirque du Monde* program over the last few years has enabled us to define some common problems faced by social circus instructors.

The prevailing political and cultural climate may lead the instructor to feel political, sociological and cultural pressure from the community during the intervention. Furthermore, if there are numerous partners involved in the same project, instructors may receive orders that are eventually contradictory. Sadly, even if preparations were thorough and attitudes are positive, it is still difficult to eliminate this blurring of lines completely.

Instructors must develop skills that will enable them to complete their mandate, regardless of the complex environment in which they work. To do so, they must emphasize the following: knowledge of the milieu, ability to adapt, respect for the mandate and ability to resolve conflicts and negotiate.

Knowledge of the milieu

Knowledge of the milieu may sometimes seem rather subjective, but it is important to note that this skill becomes an indispensable tool when the [partnership] project is starting up.⁸

In addition to thorough preparation before arriving, instructors should also embrace openness and humility, two attitudes that will help them develop a good understanding of the intervention context in which they'll be working.

⁷ Frank and Smith, *The Partnership Handbook*, p. 20.

⁸ Debourou, *Évaluation de l'éducation pour tous*.



Before arriving, instructors should receive training to learn important facts about the host country and region, including its general characteristics and its ways and customs. They should also learn more about past interventions with other social circus instructors, any conflicts that arose and the manner in which they were resolved. Other interesting facts worth gathering: the recent political climate, and the roles, powers and characteristics of others involved in the partnership.

The ability to adapt

Ideally, instructors should have a preplanned educational program for the upcoming intervention. However, instructors must also accept the fact that once on site, they may have to adapt to the situation at hand and make do with available resources and the prevailing mood. For example, instructors may discover that the promised materials are actually in poor condition. On the other hand, instructors may also arrive to discover that their partners have plenty of resources from which to choose.

Respect for the mandate

Instructors may be subject to pressures that cause a deviation from the original mandate. For example, a partner may ask the instructor to complete unexpected tasks, change a program or work toward goals not part of the original agreement. Even the instructor might be tempted to pursue new objectives explored after the process had begun that appear to be more appealing.

Frequently, in cases like these, frustrations, ambiguities and conflicts will arise. In such circumstances, it is important to review the initial mandate and evaluate possible adjustments. The instructor must also be ready to refuse certain requests, all the while working with the partner to find other solutions. As a last resort, instructors may also ask their employers to clarify the mandate.

The ability to resolve conflicts and negotiate

As we have seen previously, instructors should develop negotiation and conflict-resolution skills to prevent being inundated with requests from partners. Furthermore, instructors must maintain a harmonious relationship with partners, which requires instructors to be very clear about their mandate and use tact to avoid tense situations.

To be truly effective, a partnership also demands that partners display certain competencies. Two types of skill sets are of particular value:

- Management skills: strategic planning, financial management, human resources and evaluation
- Teamwork skills: facilitation and the ability to adapt to diversity, as well as the ability to resolve conflicts, solicit support, be dynamic and motivate⁹

⁹ Frank and Smith, *The Partnership Handbook*, p. 84.



THE INSTRUCTOR'S PERSONAL INVOLVEMENT IN THE SUCCESS OF THE PARTNERSHIP¹⁰

Aside from common goals and the parties involved, the other factors that will influence the success of a partnership are power, history, resources, competition, leadership, values and ideology, personal interests and perceptions. What follows is a brief overview of these factors and the ways in which they can affect a partnership.

Power

A partnership entails an exercise of power, both on individual and collective levels. For some, the word “power” has a negative meaning or connotation: it implies control, coercion or abusive influence. For example, one might think of power based on gender, race or social status.

However, power can also have a very positive association when it relates to strength, wisdom and the ability to act. In a partnership, powers are united and then channelled to generate the greatest good for all.

Power is always present and rarely equal. We must appreciate and openly and honestly recognize the power held by each person and each organization that joins the partnership. This allows all parties to confront the issues and conflicts apt to come up when authority must be exercised.

History

A partnership's success can also be influenced by the existence of a shared history – positive or negative – between certain partners. It is thus important to discuss prior experiences, both good and bad, and to extract lessons from both in order to avoid repeating the same mistakes. It's best to approach this issue with a constructive attitude and to inform other partners of any prior work relationships between members.

Resources

All partners have resources at their disposal, but they are not necessarily in a position to make them available to the partnership. It also happens that some partners are not able to provide the necessary resources when the partnership needs them. It is thus important to make sure that the partnership's expectations are realistic. Time, expertise and funds will not necessarily be available when the partnership is created or when partners agreed to deliver. These considerations must be addressed in the partner agreement so that each party clearly knows exactly which resources can or cannot be used.

Competition

Partnerships created solely for the purpose of accessing resources or fake partnerships rarely succeed. They may even provoke instability and dissatisfaction among those involved. However, partnerships can create positive competition when they encourage others to get involved in activities that will bring about change or improvements.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 76-80.



Leadership

Every group needs leaders. Good leaders create cohesion, help groups overcome obstacles and encourage others to become leaders in turn. On the other hand, bad leadership generally results in a dismantling of the group or failure.

In a partnership, leadership must be fostered and reinforced. The selection of a good leader, whether as facilitator or director, determines the group's destiny, even if several persons take turns occupying this role. If a partnership doesn't have solid leadership, it's a good idea to find or groom someone for the role. The long-term efficiency of any partnership depends on its ability to offer opportunities for fostering leadership skills or a mentorship program for the next generation of leaders.

Values and ideology

Describing the values of the partnership means defining its strengths and character. Partners tend to have different values and convictions, which they bring into the relationship. Discussions about values and beliefs often leave little room for compromise, so it's important to establish the partnership's values at the very beginning. Each individual also has a set of personal values, some of which can be reflected in the partnership's values. However, the partnership's values rarely reflect the exact values of its members.

Personal interest

Partnerships serve the personal interests of their members, whether those interests be personal or professional. An individual's desire to participate in a project, group or movement always comes from the degree of personal interest in the project or the anticipated benefits of participation. Knowing precisely what that benefit is beforehand, and being able to talk about it openly, will greatly help to build the partnership.

The fact is that most people are motivated by personal interest. The benefits to be had from a partnership vary. It's important to encourage discussion about the way in which the partnership serves the personal interests of each member as well as the organization. If all members in the group explain why they are participating, the answers will greatly contribute to establishing an atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding in the partnership.

Perceptions

The partnership's true nature and what it represents to others are potentially two very different things. It's important to understand that outsiders will take an interest in the partnership and observe what happens when the parties are united in partnership.

The perception that outside observers will have is different from the partners' perception, in that they may exaggerate what they see. This gap may be made manifest if the partnership experiences difficulties or if it takes longer than expected to reach the goal. In such circumstances, those with high expectations will (perhaps needlessly) worry, while those that doubt the necessity of a partnership or think the partnership is receiving undue attention will eventually start forecasting the imminent failure or success of the partnership. It is possible to avoid the rise of negative or false perceptions by clearly communicating the partnership's position and integrating certain key elements. To be



perceived positively, the partnership must be able to communicate clearly and encourage others to participate.

FOR A PARTNERSHIP TO SUCCEED

Terms of a partnership

- Partners pursue a common goal that is well-defined and by which all agree to abide.
- All parties know why the partnership exists and what they can expect from it.
- Roles and responsibilities are well-defined, and in such a way that all parties know how tasks will be completed.
- Partners communicate well, take the time to maintain the relationship, respect the project's development process and assume their responsibilities.

Christopher Bryant¹¹ has defined some important points for establishing and maintaining a partnership. We have adapted his ideas to the social circus context:

1. Do not impose your point of view from the beginning.
2. Do not forget that the community's interest is the primary focus of the partnership.
3. Clearly define how the planned actions will help achieve the common goal.
4. Openly determine the roles, costs, benefits and risks that will be shared.
5. Avoid taking inflexible starting positions.
6. Start with smaller projects and smaller successes before creating more long-term partnerships.
7. Make communication a priority at every stage of development.
8. Plan with all partners present.
9. Evaluate together.

TO KEEP IN MIND...

Start off on the right foot!

Oftentimes, a social circus project is the result of the partners' good will, the affinities they share and their enthusiasm. Even before time has been invested in clarifying the mandate and the responsibilities of each party, partners are already dedicating time and resources to help move things forward. If partners sometimes resist making their relationship formal, it's usually out of fear of depriving the project of the spontaneity and genuine bonds that have developed over time. However, these noble intentions can sometimes lead to consequences that could threaten the project. It is thus important to take the time and put the terms of partnership down in writing in order to avoid unnecessary tensions and ensure the sustainability of the project.

¹¹ Bryant, *Working Together*.



10. Constantly re-evaluate the partnership's terms.
11. Don't forget that individuals form the partnership and are responsible for its success.

CONCLUSION

To succeed, partnerships must be properly understood, defined, adapted and maintained. The presence of several partners will entail challenges with communication and the pooling of resources. There are also risks, fears and interests that must be recognized and addressed.

Social circus instructors are often parachuted into these very complex situations. That's why they must have the necessary skills - and develop the right attitude - to fulfill their role, that is, to be the kind of meaningful partners that can help the partnership achieve its goals for youth intervention.



MODULE 12 | REFERENCE TEXT 2

LOCAL ORGANIZATION, CHALLENGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES¹²

By Michel Lafortune and Annie Bouchard

Currently, in the social circus model adopted by *Cirque du Soleil*, the local organization has the prime responsibility for organizing circus workshops and fulfilling goals, in the short and long terms. It must therefore deal with some challenges and take on specific roles. It is also responsible for ensuring the continuity of the social circus program in its community.

A) CHALLENGES OF SOCIAL CIRCUS INTERVENTION

When undertaking to organize social circus workshops, local partners should be aware of the particularities of this approach compared with their usual ways of working. These differences in approach can represent serious challenges, notably in terms of obligations and adaptation.

1. Commitment

Mobilizing the local organization is the first condition of success in using circus arts as a means of social intervention. Whether in preparing, facilitating or monitoring, organizing a session of social circus workshops demands a high level of time and energy commitment. However, the local organization should not consider this effort as an additional task, for a social circus project can fit perfectly well into the framework of its regular activities. It is therefore its responsibility to find the best ways to fit it in, geared to its characteristics and objectives.

In addition, the local organization should not be content to merely organize the workshops; it should also provide support to the young participants and ensure follow-up before and after the workshops. This is a longer and more demanding process, but it is also more complete.

2. Adapting to a new method of intervention

The social circus approach hinges on a method of intervention unlike usual methods, generally based on one-to-one contact. While listening and personalized help are also part of the social circus approach, the approach's effectiveness as a means of intervention stems primarily from action – in this case, the practice of circus disciplines. In addition, the development of young people's self-esteem is not solely the fruit of their individual practice of circus disciplines. It is also the result of contacts that they make among themselves, the dynamic established within the group and the individual and collective relationships that develop between the youths and the facilitators.

Intervention in a group, tandem facilitation and the nature of circus activities are often new realities for the local organization and they can represent challenges of adaptation. Facilitating circus workshops is also quite different from standard methods of intervention, offering community workers an opportunity to learn and master a new approach, acquiring experience that will prove beneficial in subsequent work with youth long after the workshops have ended.

¹² Excerpt by Michel Lafortune and Annie Bouchard, *Community Worker's Guide: When Circus Lessons Become Life Lessons*, Social Circus Training (Montreal: Cirque du Soleil, 2011), pp. 27-30.



B) RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE LOCAL ORGANIZATION

Apart from its standard organizational role, the local organization must bear two very important specific responsibilities, namely selecting community workers and ensuring safety.

1. Organizational responsibilities

• Material infrastructure

The local organization is responsible for the circus project's infrastructures: premises (for meetings, training and putting on a performance), circus equipment (including costumes, makeup, stage sets) and management material. These infrastructures must be suited to the planned activities and must comply with safety regulations. They must also comply with the country's effective regulations and laws.

• Strategic and financial partnerships

The organization of workshops or certain activities (travelling, shows) sometimes requires setting up partnerships (with other organizations, private companies, public administrations, media) in order to find financing or ensure publicity for the project. This responsibility is also essential for the long-term continuity of social circus activities.

2. Selecting and supporting community workers

The profile of social circus community workers, in particular their qualities and their aptitudes, is detailed in Section 3 of the Community Worker's Guide. These factors must obviously be considered by the local organization when selecting community workers. However, other aspects must also be taken into account: their experience, their enthusiasm and their availability.

• Experience

A minimum of six months of hands-on experience in social intervention is recommended. In addition, experience with group work and team facilitation are two criteria that merit the greatest attention when selecting the community workers.

• Enthusiasm

A community worker must not only possess the experience and the professional and personal capacities required, but he must also demonstrate the desire to get involved in the circus project. This enthusiasm combined with genuine commitment to the social circus approach is important.

• Availability

Community worker commitment for the whole duration of the session is of prime importance, for it ensures the continuity of the relationship of trust with the participants and the stability of the intervention. The departure of a community worker who is liked by the participants is an event that can jeopardize the project's effectiveness. The organization must therefore make sure that the community workers will be available for every step of the project. A candidate whose presence cannot be guaranteed for the duration of the session should not be considered.

• Support for the community worker

The organization is responsible for supporting its community workers throughout the social circus projects. For example, if one of them runs into serious problems, he ought to be able to turn to the organization for help. In case of a deadlock situation or if a facilitator is unable to continue his role for whatever reason (sickness, departure, etc.),



the organization should quickly designate another facilitator from among its community workers.

In order to ensure the best support possible for its community workers, it is recommended that the organization's staff have an understanding of the educational approach specific to social circus.

3. Safety of participants and facilitators

Safety is one of the defining principles of social circus. This element applies to the physical and emotional safety of the participants and facilitators. Group members should be able to count on having a safe space that gives them the opportunity to escape from their regular social environment.

Consequently, the local organization is responsible for furnishing the means of organizing such a space, particularly regarding premises and equipment. Its responsibilities cover the following specific points:

- To guarantee a place that inspires the youths and the facilitators by allowing them to express themselves freely, a place that can become a space of freedom, a point of reference and belonging
- To provide sufficient appropriate equipment that is safe to use
- To ensure the upkeep of the premises
- To establish an emergency safety plan
- To ensure access to first aid
- To comply with safety instructions
- To take care of the quality of the environment
- To take out the necessary insurance to cover its own employees (community workers, circus instructors if they employ them) as well as the young participants

Facilitators must also carry out an assessment of the risks and instill awareness among the participants of their own safety and encourage them to be responsible for their protection and the protection of others. Circus instructors can manage the responsibility for assessing physical safety, while community workers can manage the emotional safety side, given their knowledge of youth and their needs on the psycho-social front.

C) CONTINUITY OF THE SOCIAL CIRCUS PROGRAM

The vision of social circus held by *Cirque du Soleil* implies a partnership approached in the spirit of sustainable development. One of its objectives is to ensure the long-term continuance of circus activities in the communities that hold the workshops. To attain this objective, local organizations play a crucial role.

1. Responsibility of the organization

Historically, in the context of the *Cirque du Monde* program, agreements were made to shift responsibility for organizing, implementing and financing of circus workshops to the local organizations after a certain number of years to be determined by common accord. Today, *Cirque du Soleil*, in its capacity as expert advisor, provides support in the form of instructor and community worker training, and the supply of educational and assessment tools. This requirement means making the partner organizations themselves responsible for ensuring the continuance of the program, whether by ensuring the



transfer of expertise from one community worker to the next, by finding local sources of financing or by implanting the circus program within their community.

2. Continuance within the organization

The social circus project must first take root within the heart of the local organization. To that end, it is important to systematize and circulate the information generated by the workshops. This can be preserved using different types of documents, such as log books and summaries, that can be passed on to community workers and instructors who will be leading the next circus sessions. Moreover, it is advisable that community workers or instructors attend regular meetings of the organization to provide updates on the project's development and receive feedback. They should also be asked to provide regular session reviews to the organization's management and their colleagues. Lastly, the organization should receive and integrate new staff to pass on all the knowledge acquired in the workshops.

3. Continuance within the community

The continuance of the circus project should also be rooted in the local community. It is therefore essential for the partner organization to ensure the project's local visibility, especially through the media, and develop partnerships with different local socio-economic players (community organizations, companies, municipalities, foundations, etc.). This synergy can be established in the context of workshops or performances or as part of the organization of parallel activities.

In its steps to form alliances, the local organization should highlight the special role of social circus within the various types of social intervention applied to youths at risk. It can also point out possible synergies of this type of intervention with those of its potential financial partners.



MODULE 12 | REFERENCE TEXT 3

SAMPLE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT BETWEEN A *CIRQUE DU MONDE* PROGRAM OF *CIRQUE DU SOLEIL* AND A COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION¹³

THE *CIRQUE DU MONDE* PROGRAM

The *Jeunesse du Monde* NGO and *Cirque du Soleil* worked together to create *Cirque du Monde*, an international program that has been using the circus arts to intervene with at-risk youth since 1995. In 2009, circus workshops took place in 80 communities spread over five continents. The participants in these workshops include marginalized youth, street youth and other at-risk youth from poor socio-economic backgrounds.

The *Cirque du Monde* workshops are first and foremost an opportunity for youth to have a positive experience that could boost self-esteem and help to forge a personal identity. These experiences also enable young participants to fulfill their potential, express themselves and use their marginality as a tool for creating new relationships with a society that has often rejected them.

A PARTNERSHIP-BASED APPROACH

The *Cirque du Monde* program is based on close cooperation between the groups that collaborate to deliver these workshops, but it does not belong to one group in particular.¹⁴ This program is shared, developed and implemented by all partners involved, and it strives to offer youth a positive model for consensus decision making, while also encouraging dialogue and action. Partners include the following:

Local community organizations

One of the fundamental aspects of the *Cirque de Monde* program is the choice of local organizations that are credible and actively intervening with at-risk or troubled youth. These organizations have gathered crucial information in the field, knowledge that provides invaluable assistance to instructors and helps these circus workshops to have a more holistic approach.

More concretely, the role of local organizations consists of hiring instructors, reaching out to youth who might benefit from the program and encouraging them to participate, as well as guiding youth through the process. These organizations also have community workers and street workers who can take part in workshops and leverage these special opportunities to intervene with youth.

Local organizations are chosen according to the following criteria:

- Their credibility in the eyes of the local community
- Their mission as it relates to at-risk youth
- Their desire to become an active program partner
- Their ability to support the program
- The quality of their relationships with established networks
- The proactive nature of their financing

¹³ Internal document, Global Citizenship Service, *Cirque du Soleil*.

¹⁴ The *Cirque du Monde* trademark belongs to *Cirque du Soleil*, Inc.



- The guarantee that their community workers will be present during the workshops and during planning, budget and coordination meetings, ensuring that the program reaches its goals

Cirque du Soleil

Cirque du Soleil is an international artistic entertainment company specializing in the creation and production of circus shows. These productions are distinctive for their innovations and for bringing together various disciplines. *Cirque du Soleil* productions are original and non-traditional, based on a dramatic mix of circus arts and street entertainment. Committed to being a socially responsible organization, *Cirque du Soleil* has established good citizenship practices that are proactive, engaged and based on partnerships. Instead of supporting numerous causes, *Cirque du Soleil* has decided to make a more effective contribution by focusing on at-risk youth. Its social action programs take place on every continent and go far beyond the regions in which it does business.

OBJECTIVES

The main objective of *Cirque du Monde* is to promote the social and personal development of youth.

More specifically, it has the following goals:

For young participants:

- To develop self-esteem, self-confidence and trust in others
- To encourage the discovery of constructive pursuits through which youthful energies can be redirected into more positive channels
- To stimulate the desire to create
- To promote the development of perseverance and concentration
- To encourage discovery and development of the body's abilities (flexibility, strength, agility, etc.)
- To foster team spirit
- To nurture a sense of belonging
- To ease reinsertion into the community
- To help develop social conscience
- To encourage the exploration of new options (returning to the family, going back to school, choosing a career, etc.)
- To favour the learning of circus techniques

For the local community:

- To think of new ways to intervene with youth
- To help prevent the marginalization of youth
- To assist youth in going back to school or finding work
- To help to change the negative image that youth have in the community



WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

Participants

Youth participating in *Cirque du Monde* workshops generally suffer from socio-economic and socio-affective problems. Each project targets a particular clientele, according to the specific mission of the local partner. Generally speaking, most participants are between the ages of 12-25.

The recommended ratio is one circus instructor per 8-10 youth, but this also depends on the number of community workers present during the workshops and the type of circus technique being taught: if the discipline is more risky, the number of participants for which the instructor is responsible must be lower.

Schedule

The workshop schedule varies from one project to another, according to the resources of the local partner, availability of staff, and the motivation and availability of youth.

PARTNER ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

***Cirque du Soleil* and the community organization agree to the following:**

- To make sure that the *Cirque du Monde* program incorporates the community's culture and values, which serve to encourage and support the community as it learns to take charge, manage and provide for itself
- To evaluate the program jointly every year and maintain regular contact.
- To use the evaluation to determine jointly the future orientation of the program
- To come to a mutual agreement on how the names, logos and brands of *Cirque du Soleil* and the community organization will be used
- To convene a preliminary consultation between *Cirque du Soleil*, the community organization and other local concerned partners whenever a new potential partner emerges

The community organization agrees to the following:

- To protect the *Cirque du Monde* program philosophy, vision and values, that is, to work with at-risk youth, produce social circus workshops (partnership between circus instructors and community workers) and work in concert with other community organizations
- To assist youth who may benefit from the program and encourage them to participate
- To guide youth during the workshops (community workers, street workers or others participating in the workshops, who can leverage these special opportunities to intervene with youth and help maintain an atmosphere conducive to operations)
- To hire circus instructors needed for the project and offer them working conditions similar to those at *Cirque du Soleil* (salary, benefits package, etc.)
- To select jointly (with *Cirque du Soleil*) the instructors for the first transition year
- To conduct a criminal-record check on all new instructor candidates



- To find an adequate site for holding the workshops and covering the cost (if necessary)
- To buy the additional circus equipment aside from the basic kit (which will remain their property) and ensure its storage, maintenance and repair (if necessary)
- To determine the dates for the workshops, all the while keeping the same annual activity period (e.g. September to May) for the first transition year (20XX-20XX)
- To ensure the participation of field teams (instructors and community workers) at local and provincial coordination meetings and at training sessions organized by *Cirque du Soleil*
- To secure adequate insurance to cover participants and staff working on the project
- To submit a report on activities and a financial report to *Cirque du Soleil* on September 1, 20XX
- To collaborate on different evaluation procedures to be jointly conducted by *Cirque du Soleil* and the community organization
- To get approval from *Cirque du Soleil* for media communications (radio, television, newspapers) covering the *Cirque du Monde* program

***Cirque du Soleil* agrees to the following:**

- To provide financial support of \$X, payable in two equal payments due on January 1, 20XX, and September 1, 20XX, the sums of which will be used exclusively to produce social circus workshops, in conformity with the distribution indicated in table 12.1
- To organize coordination and training meetings for instructors from the community organization and cover expenses for housing and meals, according to the guidelines (*Cirque du Soleil* will decide, at its own discretion, how many instructors will take part in the training, the dates and location of the training, and where instructors will be housed)
- To offer their expertise to the community organization for the implementation and development of the *Cirque du Monde* program in the community
- To consult with the community organization about the referrals for social circus instructors
- To consult with the community organization on self-financing strategies for certain aspects of the *Cirque du Monde* program, as determined by *Cirque du Soleil*



TABLE 12.1 – PARTNERS’ ANNUAL INVESTMENT IN THE CIRQUE DU MONDE PROGRAM FOR COMMUNITY X

BUDGET ITEM	EXPLANATION	COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION	CIRQUE DU SOLEIL (partner donation)	OTHER
Circus instructors	Salaries and travel expenses for two instructors (part-time)		X	
Community workers	Salaries and travel expenses for one or more community workers (part-time)	X		
Premises	Location rental fees (gym)	X		Sponsorship or loan of premises
Equipment	Expenses for purchase or maintenance of circus equipment (a basic kit already exists at each site)		X	
Other	Snacks, transporting participants, etc.	X		Sponsorship
Operating costs	Salaries, office expenses, miscellaneous	X		
Special projects	Making costumes or sets, professional training or site visits, etc.		X	
Local training	First-aid training or other		X	



MODULE 12 | ACTIVITY 1

FORUM THEATRE

OBJECTIVE

To define the responsibilities of each party in a partnership.

Length of activity
60-90 minutes

Number of participants
20-25



EXPERIENCE

The trainer asks for volunteers to act out two problem scenarios. The trainer must fully prepare the actors for the roles they are to play.

The first problem scenario must be played out – without interruption – until the final impasse. At this point, the trainer tells the group that when the actors play the scene a second time, other participants have the power to intervene, if they so wish, and either resolve the final impasse or propose other outcomes for the situation. To do so, they must clap their hands and take the place of the actor they wish to replace. The trainer allows the instructors to intervene and resolve the situation until it is decided that all possible avenues have been explored.

Another team will act out the second situation, according to the same rules.

First situation:

You are a new social circus instructor and have been assigned to work with an NGO. Since your arrival, the director of the partner organization has been asking you to undertake a variety of tasks that were not outlined in your mandate. You are starting to lose patience. The youth group you're working with will be presenting a show out of town, and the director wants you to coordinate travel, meals for your young charges and so on. How do you react?

Second situation:

You have been hired as an instructor or community worker for a social circus project. When you arrive on the premises to lead the first workshop, you notice that the site is dirty, a window is broken and the floor is littered with debris. The first participants will begin arriving in a few minutes. You know that the premises are not safe enough for the workshop, but you also know that if you cancel the workshop, there's a possibility that the youth won't come back. What do you do?





OBSERVATION

- What happened? (list the facts of each situation)
- What strategies did you use to resolve the problem?
- How did the individuals involved react to these strategies? What emotions did they display?



INTEGRATION

The trainer splits the group into two smaller groups, each one comprising instructors and community workers. The first subgroup will discuss the first situation from the point of view of an instructor or community worker, and the second situation from the point of view of the partner organization. The second subgroup also discusses both situations, but from the opposite standpoint. The trainer encourages participants to go beyond appearances in each situation, and explore the power and resource issues at stake.

- What problems lie at the heart of each situation?
- What are your concerns? Your priorities?
- What strategies were the most satisfactory? Why?

Both subgroups can then share their observations during a general discussion.



APPLICATION

- In a partnership, what are the responsibilities of the circus partner? Of the social partner?

The trainer will use the sample partner agreement for the *Cirque du Monde* program to supplement the discussion.¹⁵

- As an instructor or community worker, what can you do to build a good partnership and prevent situations like those you just witnessed?

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR TRAINERS

Forum theatre is a type of theatre developed in Brazil by Augusto Boal, as part of his “Theatre of the Oppressed.” In this method, a problem scenario (social or personal) is acted out. Members of the audience (Boal’s so-called “spect-actors”) are then invited to intervene by replacing the actors in the scene and possibly resolving the situation being acted out, or, at the very least, offering alternative actions.

¹⁵ See the reference text “Sample Partnership Agreement between a *Cirque du Monde* Program of *Cirque du Soleil* and a Community Organization” in this module, p. 287.



MODULE 12 | KEY MESSAGES

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.





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



MODULE 13 - 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.

CONTENTS OF THIS MODULE

REFERENCE TEXT

- Conflict Management

ACTIVITY

- Conflict under the Big Top



MODULE 13 | INTRODUCTION

Conflicts are an inevitable part of life in society: as soon as people come into contact with one another, conflict situations are sure to arise. A conflict can be defined as a disagreement between at least two people or two groups, provoked by a difference of opinion about, interest in or perception of an objective, project, resource or behaviour that concerns both parties. Conflicts can be real or symbolic, personal or imperative, and they can lead to physical or psychological manifestations of (sometimes dangerous, even violent) disagreement. However, conflict situations should not necessarily be considered as negative; rather, conflicts can sometimes be powerful catalysts for change and creativity.

In the context of an intervention, social circus instructors and community workers may find themselves involved in conflicts with one or more participants, other members of the intervention team or even representatives from the hiring or host organization. Interpersonal or inter-group conflicts happen most often between participants. Instructors and community workers are frequently called upon to manage these situations by finding a solution that is both appropriate and non-disruptive to the group dynamic.

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

In order to overcome or defuse an interpersonal or inter-group conflict between participants, it's best to refocus the individuals or the group on a common goal, which could help those in conflict overcome their differences. In the context of a social circus workshop, the most natural choice for a common goal is the end-of-session performance.



MODULE 13 | REFERENCE TEXT 1

CONFLICT MANAGEMENT¹

By Michel Lafortune

Moving through the various stages of life, all human beings will inevitably become involved in a conflict with other humans – or at the very least, witness conflicts.

Interestingly, the impact that a conflict will have on someone is directly related to the way in which that individual perceives the role of conflict in general. For example, those who think of conflict as a situation to avoid at all costs will enact a series of behaviours to help them avoid conflict. Repression of emotion, withdrawal and escape are examples of such behaviours. These people may also systematically vent all pent-up reactions by redirecting feelings of aggression or frustration toward targets other than those provoking the emotions in the first place. Targets include colleagues, family members or even an inanimate object.

On the other hand, others consider conflict to be an inherent result of human interaction. In this scenario, conflict is considered to be an inevitable and common occurrence that helps to maintain the constant process of adaptation. Some even see conflict as a normal stage of the creative process. Conflict is thus used as a tool for bringing out different points of view and then channelling them toward a more constructive and all-encompassing vision.

Conflicts can thus be seen as obstacles that obstruct proper functioning or as ideal opportunities for generating change.

WHAT IS A CONFLICT?

The origins of the word “conflict” will slightly differ depending on which dictionary you consult. Some dictionaries trace the word back to the Latin noun *conflictus*, which means “a fight,”² or the Latin verb *confligere*, which means “to come into collision” or “to clash.”³

Conflict can be defined as a disagreement between two parties engaged in a relationship, whether it be financial, emotional or professional. This encounter or clash need not necessarily be violent, but the closer the relationship between the parties, the greater the chance of the conflict intensifying. Other factors may also contribute to increasing the conflict, including: ambiguous roles, incompatible goals, the perception of limited resources, the suspicion of interference by another party in the pursuit of goals or the absence of regulating mechanisms.⁴

Most of us are able to find a compromise in the great majority of conflict situations – and it’s something that we do frequently, since things rarely happen as we’d like them to. However, if these situations build up and repeat themselves without a solution being proposed, conditions will increasingly lead to a full-blown conflict.

¹ Michel Lafortune, *La gestion des conflits* (internal document, Montreal, Cirque du Soleil, Social Circus Department, 1999 and 2010).

² *The Oxford Universal Dictionary*, 3rd ed., s.v. “Conflict (v).”

³ *Ibid.*, s.v. “Conflict (sb).”

⁴ Lewis Coser, *The Functions of Social Conflict* (New York: Free Press, 1956); Joyce Hocker and William Wilmot, *Interpersonal Conflict* (Dubuque: William C. Brown Publishers, 1985); Gregory Tillet, *Resolving Conflict: A Practical Approach* (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1999).



When a conflict arises, the situation can be summed up as immobilized human capital and improperly used human resources.

CONFLICTS THAT INSTRUCTORS AND COMMUNITY WORKERS WILL REALISTICALLY FACE

There are two types of conflict that instructors and community workers will face: inter-personal conflicts and group conflicts. In the context of social circus, these conflicts are manifested in one of the three following situations:

- Between the instructor or community worker and participants, or between participants
- Between colleagues
- Between the instructor or community worker and the different organizations that have hired or are hosting them

Conflicts between instructors or community workers and participants, or between participants

Social circus instructors and community workers are called upon to work with participants – boys and girls – from a variety of backgrounds. When facilitating groups of at-risk individuals, conflicts will necessarily arise. In some extreme cases, these individuals may begin to display rebellious, anti-social or even aggressive behaviours. The instructor and community worker must deal with these conflicts using group management strategies (if appropriate) or by intervening personally with the participant involved to ensure that the whole group functions well.

Conflicts between colleagues

When creating a facilitation team, instructors and community workers bring their own vision of their respective roles, as well as different practices and attitudes. The sharing of these visions, which is crucial to pursuing the common goal, happens through discussion. But it may also happen through conflict, as people are often convinced that they have a partial truth and on occasion, even the whole truth. It is thus important to find a way to reconcile these points of view and approaches in order to eliminate tension.

Conflicts with the hiring or host organizations

Inevitably, an instructor or community worker hired by an organization will be confronted with conflicts caused by disagreements and differing points of view. As previously discussed, conflict may also arise from ambiguities relating to the operational framework, tasks or even individual roles. The incompatibility of intended goals and values may also contribute to the conflict. Lastly, the intensity of a conflict will increase if there is little margin for manoeuvring, if individuals are too dependent on one another and if there are no mechanisms in place to help defuse tension.



UNDERSTANDING CONFLICT⁵

Understanding a conflict between two parties comprises the following:

1. Understanding how the parties are dependent on one another:

- How much do the parties need one another?
- How much power does one party have over the other?

2. Understanding incompatibility:

- Why do the individual objectives seem incompatible?

3. Understanding how conflicts manifest in social interactions:

- Who are the parties involved?
- What behaviours have they displayed?
- What are the effects of their behaviours on others?

ANALYZING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CONFLICT: A THEORETICAL MODEL⁶

By analyzing how a conflict evolves, we can better understand the different stages crucial to this development. This analysis also provides valuable information, enabling us to determine the stage of development we have reached and to determine which strategy is best for resolving the situation.

Here is a quick overview of the different stages:

Stage 1: Perception of the other deteriorates.

1. Perception changes.

- The perception of at least one party changes.
- A frustrating event provokes the change in perception.
- Sensitivity to how the other is behaving increases.
- One party begins ascribing intentions to the other (“You’re trying to provoke me...,” “He’s just looking for attention...”)

2. Arguments begin to break down.

- The judgment of one or both parties begins to waver.
- Everything is evaluated as black or white, good or bad (polarization).

3. Approval is sought from a third party.

- Communication is distorted.
- The ability to listen to each other disappears.
- The dialogue ends, and the search for approval from a third party begins.

4. Communication collapses.

- There is a complete breakdown of communication with the other.
- The resources to modify differing perceptions are lost.

⁵ Adapted from Alain Rondeau, “La gestion des conflits dans les organisations,” in J. Chanlat, *L’individu dans l’organisation: Les dimensions oubliées* (Quebec City: Les Presses de l’Université Laval, 1990), pp. 507-27.

⁶ Adapted from *ibid.*



Stage 2: Attempts to coerce the other increase.

5. The original argument falls away.

- Parties have lost sight of the reasons why the conflict started.
- Each party is now committed to vanquishing the other.

6. Equal compensation is sought.

- One partner perceives the conflict as being more damaging to him- or herself than to the other.
- One partner demands compensation before reconciliation.

7. Parties are incompatible.

- Parties are increasingly convinced that the conflict resolution cannot include the other.
- The adversary becomes an obstacle to the fulfillment of personal needs.
- Separation from or destruction of the other is increasingly seen as the only solution.

At this stage, the risk of a communication breakdown is high.

Stage 3: Resolution.

Once the conflict has reached this stage, there are only two possible solutions for the problem:

8a. Catharsis.

- The parties successfully “purge” their mutually held negative feelings in a controlled environment.

8b. Breakdown.

- The parties put an end to their collaboration.

HOW SHOULD A CONFLICT SITUATION BE APPROACHED?

There is a general consensus of 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.

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

Stage 2: Encourage mutual understanding.

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

⁷ Inspired by Ronald B. Adler and Russell F. Proctor II, *Looking Out, Looking In*, 12th ed. (Scarborough: Nelson Education, 2007); Yves de la Rochefordière, *Du conflit au dialogue, tous gagnants* (Paris: Éditions d'Organisation, 1990); Rondeau, “La gestion des conflits.”



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 assist with 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.

TO KEEP IN MIND..

Conflict or crisis?

Conflicts between participants in a social circus workshop will arise for various reasons. The conflict management model suggested in this guide is useful for resolving most conflicts. However, certain crisis situations require greater intervention that may go above and beyond the abilities of the instructor and community worker, for example, cases of intoxication, psychosis, suicidal thoughts, illegal behaviour, psychological or sexual harassment, violent altercations or even a conflict involving criminal groups. Despite their good intentions, instructors and community workers must recognize when situations are beyond them and contact the appropriate resources, whether it be professionals with expertise in dealing with certain crises or even emergency services.

THE CONFLICT RESOLVED

Conflict resolution does not imply total reconciliation. The attitude of the parties involved, time and production constraints, as well as limited resources will often determine the extent to which resolution can be achieved.

The following are different satisfactory results that could follow the conflict-resolution process:

1. Parties are reconciled by reaching a win-win compromise.
2. Parties stick to their positions, but they have found common ground where their interests have been reconciled.
3. Parties maintain feelings of hostility toward one another, but they have re-established an acceptable working atmosphere.
4. Parties have a solution forcefully imposed upon them; both parties lose in the deal, but the project can continue nonetheless.



CONCLUSION

Conflicts arise in any environment where individuals strive to communicate, to assert themselves and to be liked. They are thus a part of life, reflecting the desire for life experiences and providing a forum for opposing forces. If individuals are left to their own devices, stronger parties will always prevail. This is why social circus instructors and community workers must take their roles as mediators and stewards of balance quite seriously when working with participants.

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MODULE 13 | ACTIVITY 1**CONFLICT UNDER THE BIG TOP****OBJECTIVE**

To determine the stages of conflict resolution and mediation.

**EXPERIENCE**

The trainer opens the workshop by noting that circus offers numerous opportunities for magical moments, but that conflicts will naturally arise and should not be ignored.

The trainer divides the group into four teams, asking participants to recall a past conflict they've experienced or imagine a potential conflict in the following configurations:

Team 1: with participants

Team 2: with colleagues

Team 3: with members of the partner organization

Team 4: between two participants

After the teams have discussed these experiences (approx. 10 minutes), each team must then choose an example of a conflict that occurred in a circus context and prepare a presentation (15 minutes). This presentation may take any form: theatre, mime, dance or television (sports, news, weather, arts, etc.). The presentation must share the details of this conflict and the solutions used to resolve it.

Teams make their presentations before the whole group (15 minutes).

**OBSERVATION**

Each situation is described in turn:

- What was the conflict?
- Who was involved in the conflict?
- Who was affected by the conflict?
- What were the reactions of the persons involved in the conflict?
- How was the conflict managed?
- Who did what?

Length of activity
60 minutes

Materials
*Large sheets of paper
and felt-tip pens*

Number of participants
20-25





INTEGRATION

The trainer asks participants to analyze the four situations presented:

- How did the individual parties – either directly or indirectly involved – feel during the conflict?
- What was the cause of this conflict (competition, desire for revenge, jealousy or envy, dislike of a person present, betrayal, incompatible personalities, incompatible goals, etc.)?
- Have you ever experienced a conflict similar to the ones presented here?
- What other possible strategies could have been used?
- How can we recognize when a conflict is happening?
- What other types of behaviour, other than those already mentioned, can we observe in a conflict situation?
- What are the different ways of managing conflict?
- Why must we face conflicts head on?

The trainer then rounds out the discussion by using the large sheet of paper to list the stages of conflict resolution:⁸ explaining one's perception of what happened, fostering shared understanding and finding a solution.



APPLICATION

- How are conflicts in your workplace managed?
- How can you use this model with workshop participants? With your colleagues? Or with members of a partner organization?

ALTERNATIVE

When making their presentations, teams do not offer a resolution to the conflict. Instead, once all presentations have been given, each team is randomly paired with another team, for whom they provide a solution and then communicate that solution.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR TRAINERS

Once the discussion about conflict has been launched, instructors and community workers will frequently use the opportunity to vent their frustrations about a conflict they're dealing with in their current social circus project or even ask for help in resolving the conflict. Trainers are not there to play the part of mediator; rather, they are there to propose a general approach for conflict management. Trainers must clarify their roles in advance so as to avoid such situations. After all, if too much time is spent on a specific case, other non-involved participants will quickly lose interest in the discussion.

⁸ See the reference text "Conflict Management" in this module, p. 299.



MODULE 13 | KEY MESSAGES

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.



MODULE 14

INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS



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



MODULE 14 - 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.

CONTENTS OF THIS MODULE

REFERENCE TEXT

- Intercultural Basics

ACTIVITIES

- Anthropologists
- Signature



MODULE 14 | INTRODUCTION

For instructors and community workers asked to work in communities with a different socio-cultural background than theirs, intercultural relations can represent a huge challenge. Discovering a new culture means learning about new 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.

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, while others, such as worldview, beliefs, values and mind-set, are less evident. The latter nonetheless acts as a filter that constantly influences our perceptions.

To create harmonious intercultural relations when intervening in a community, instructors and community workers must strive to go beyond the most easily identifiable cultural characteristics and try to discover the community's less evident dimensions. We must overcome our stereotypes and prejudices, which prevent us from seeing the nuanced reality that lies beyond the unknown. These biases also block intercultural communication and could even lead to discriminatory or racist behaviour. Having an open and humble attitude will help instructors and community workers learn and understand, and thus be able to maintain relationships of true equality.

In a social circus workshop, instructors and community workers are called upon to create a space where reconciliation can happen. They must behave as role models in every interaction, encouraging openness to other cultures, allowing the circus culture to emerge (all the while recognizing the reality shared by participants) and acknowledging differences. Social circus workshops also present ideal opportunities for teaching participants how to be curious and open to others, and for helping them discover the creativity that comes from diversity and difference.



MODULE 14 | REFERENCE TEXT 1

INTERCULTURAL BASICS¹

By Christian Barrette, Édithe Gaudet and Denyse Lemay

IDEAS RELATING TO HUMAN DIVERSITY

Culture

Culture is a set of elements that a society teaches its members. These elements include actions, thoughts (reasoning, beliefs, emotions, feelings) and perceptions.

There are two major trends that will inevitably emerge in any attempt to define culture.² Some definitions relate to observable behaviours (social relationships, interactions, behaviours, institutional organizations, etc.) and ways of thinking (representation, perceptions, etc.). Meanwhile, others will disregard behaviours as merely social and focus their ideas on mindset alone. However, in practice, this distinction is not sustainable because when observing or analyzing, it's impossible to separate an action from the meaning we give it. That's why our definition of culture falls into the category of those embracing both behavioural aspects and mental attitudes. Culture thus includes spheres of action, thought and perception.

Kohls³ addresses these two interpretations of culture using the analogy of an iceberg (figure 14.1), hinting that there's more to culture that we think.

Certain elements of culture relating to mechanisms of perception and thought (assumptions, worldview, ways of thinking) are strongly embedded in each one of us and are associated with a very strong emotional component. These represent the parts of the iceberg that we do not see: they are difficult to spot and slow to change. Other elements relating to the knowledge gained through the conscious learning processes are more visible: historical memory, language, ways and customs, observable behaviours and ways of being. There is an emotional component here as well, but it is less evident than in the hidden portion, and generally conscious and well-defined.

The richness of a culture does not reside solely in the range of behaviours it displays; it also comes from the wide variety of forms it takes among populations or even within the same population.

Culture's propensity for diversity is surely due to the fact that it comprises a collection of adaptive behaviours. Exposed to certain conditions, each population tries to adopt a way of life that is best adapted to the resources, means and knowledge available. Thus, the basics of cultural diversity manifested by human populations can be explained by culture's adaptive tendencies. This aspect is far more efficient than biological adaptation, because it is implemented far more quickly and generates many more diverse forms of behaviour.⁴ In fact, it is not hard to see that human populations will have an

¹ Excerpts by Christian Barrette, Édithe Gaudet and Denyse Lemay, *Guide de communication interculturelle*, 2nd ed. (Montreal: Éditions du renouveau pédagogique inc., 1996), pp. 26-28, 39-43, 143-49, 154 and 158-59. Reproduced according to the licensing terms of Éditions du renouveau pédagogique inc.

² Marvin D. Harris, *Culture, People, Nature - An Introduction to General Anthropology* (Toronto: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1975), pp. 144-45.

³ Cited in Margalit Cohen-Émérique, "La tolérance face à la différence, cela s'apprend," *Intercultures* 16 (January 1992), p. 81.

⁴ Bernard Campbell, *Human Ecology* (New York: Aldine, 1985), pp. 8-9. Other writers, such as Marvin D. Harris, have also proposed that cultural behaviours are essentially adaptive.



FIGURE 14.1 - KOHLS' CULTURAL ICEBERG MODEL⁵



easier time adjusting to new situations if they use cultural change as a strategy, rather than wait for biological changes to take place.

But adaptation does not only produce diversity between distinct populations: the subgroups of a population, because they adapt to their respective conditions, also end up acquiring distinctive characteristics. If a human population is composed of numerous subgroups, then its culture will also be composed of subcultures. That's why it's incorrect to think that a given population corresponds only to one culture - and yet, that's what we do every time we talk about "African culture," "Asian culture" or even "Quebec culture." Each significantly sized human group has subgroups that follow particular rules of conduct and distinct values, most conveniently referred to by the term "subculture." The more or less porous borders that divide these subgroups can be geographical, or perhaps tied to a social class, working environment, age group and so on.

The presence of these various permutations must be taken into consideration when presenting a group's culture. Otherwise, we run the risk of propagating an extremely narrow point of view that borders on stereotyping.

⁵ Cohen-Émerique, "La tolérance face à la différence," p. 18.



Worldview

Having a worldview is a way for members of a culture to define, perceive and understand their reality.

Although very broad, this notion comprises the sum total of the norms, values and models shared by members of the same culture. From this collective portrait, a certain logic emerges that members of the culture integrate – even without formal learning – and use as a tool to interpret their experiences. This worldview predisposes individuals to perceive certain facts before others and conditions their reactions to situations that may occur.

In his exploration of intercultural communication, Robert Kohls describes the elements of this vision as hardcore culture. In fact, he places them in the invisible portion of the “cultural iceberg.” For example, perception of space and time impacts our worldview, and yet, it is always fascinating to discover that our assumptions (time, space, colours, odours, etc.) are perceived and mentally organized in a very different fashion by other cultures.

IDEAS RELATING TO INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

Filters

When discussing intercultural communication, we often refer to filters, which can block a common understanding of reality. These filters exist between members of the same culture, as well as between different cultures.

Margalit Cohen-Émerique has duly noted that “there are filters or screens that exist between people from different cultures; these filters warp how they view one another and interfere with their understanding (prehension) and thus their relationships... When those anchored in their culture confront the differences of the other, they will spontaneously return to their own world, which to them represents truth, universal values, expected behaviours... In other words, they cling to their frame of cultural reference.”⁶ Different communication filters indicate that we have learned how to assign an appropriate social role, age, gender, position, social class and profession to given words, gestures, attitudes, perceptions and behaviours, that is, according to culture and sub-culture. These meanings vary according to the people engaged in the same act of communication. In order to illustrate how these filters work, we must look at how they act through assumptions and ethnocentric judgments.

Assumptions

Assumptions are useful in daily life. If they are based on extensive experience with a certain set of circumstances, they are merely efficient ways of navigating reality. In fact, we can use our repeated experiences to make accurate predictions about which actions to take; this saves us time in that we are not required to analyze every new experience down to the last detail. For example, when I come to a green light, I will continue rolling forward because I assume that cars at the red light will stop. As a professor, I can assume that a student who repeatedly arrives late to class will also probably find it dif-

⁶ Ibid., p. 79.



difficult to hand in assignments on time. We can safely say that when assumptions are the product of experience, they are useful in helping us adjust to the environment and react quickly to situations that commonly occur. For example, professors, nurses and police officers who have worked in their profession for 20 years can often rightly predict how students, patients and offenders will react. However, these assumptions are only useful if they arise from repeated life experiences and if they are re-adjusted as necessary.

Indeed, the less we measure our assumptions against reality and the less we know about the realities about which we are making assumptions, the more our assumptions risk becoming prejudices. And if they arise not from personal experience, but from hearsay or reported information, then assumptions can easily become harmful.

In short, assumptions can be both useful and dangerous: useful if they help us to avoid making the same observations repeatedly and if they permit us to intervene quickly, but dangerous if they prevent us from coming into contact with real people, rarely confused with generalizations. It's important to learn how to use assumptions as guides that in no way hide individual realities. In the context of intercultural communication, assumptions may replace an individual's reality or the reality of another (unknown or little known) cultural group with sweeping generalizations concocted after only a few experiences. They are therefore obstacles to intercultural communication because they prevent messages from being sent and received.

Assumptions may even impact perception: we may only see and remember whatever confirms our assumptions. Everything else is classified as an "exception."

Ethnocentrism

Globally speaking, ethnocentrism, or the tendency to interpret observed reality according to our own cultural criteria, can create a serious obstacle to intercultural communication and act as a screen that keeps us from discovering other worldviews:

Ethnocentrism is both a universally widespread cultural trait and a psychological phenomenon of a projective and discriminatory nature that causes perceptions to be made through an "interpretive lens" unconsciously formed by what is familiar to us and our personal values; this lens selects and then translates what is different from our usual language by reinterpreting this otherness as "same" or rejecting it outright.⁷

In the ethnocentric framework, others are often seen as an incomplete picture: we say that they do not possess such and such element of our culture, our points of reference, rather than presenting them in a positive light (they are like *this* or like *that*).

Obstacles

[Intercultural communication could also be impacted by factors other than these filters. There are additional and very real obstacles that could negatively impact human relations. Here are other factors that could lead to major consequences and events.]

• Harassment

Committed by an individual or group, harassment is an unjust, systematic and repetitive attack on another individual or group.

⁷ Edmond Marc Lipiansky, "Communication, codes culturels et attitudes face à l'altérité," *Intercultures* 7 (1989), p. 35.



• **Discrimination**

Discrimination, committed by an individual or group, is the systematic and repetitive rejection of an individual or group with the goal of denying the victim(s) rights.

• **Racism**

There are two definitions we can give for racism – one broad and one more specific:

1. All behaviours and discriminatory mechanisms mostly targeting minority groups defined in racial or ethnic terms
2. The theory that cultural groups have distinctive social and cultural characteristics arising from biological hereditary factors that define the notion of race

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION SKILLS⁸

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.

⁸ Sources: Renée Bourque, *Les relations interculturelles dans les services sociaux: Guide d’animation* (Quebec: Comité des relations interculturelles dans les services sociaux, Ministère des Communautés culturelles et de l’Immigration, 1989); Ghislaine Roy, *Pratiques interculturelles sous l’angle de la modernité* (Montreal: Centre de services sociaux du Montréal métropolitain, 1991); Jean-Paul Breton, Jean Daoust, Jean-Didier Dufour and Michel Leclerc, *Cours de formation sur les relations interculturelles et interraciales – Programme élaboré pour la Sûreté du Québec et l’Institut de police du Québec* (Quebec City: Garneau-Intertational, 1992); Larry Samovar and Richard Porter, *Intercultural Communication: A Reader* (California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., 1988), cited in F. Ouellet, “Éducation, compréhension et communication interculturelle: Essai de clarification des concepts,” *Éducation permanente* 75 (1984), pp. 47-65; Joyce Newman-Giger and Elaine Davidhisar, *Soins infirmiers interculturels* (Montreal: Éditions Gaëtan Morin, 1991).



Me no comprendo!

When workshops involve multicultural and multilingual groups, some participants will develop affinities with members of their same cultural or linguistic community. This occurrence could lead to the forming of subgroups or even cliques, which might interfere with the group's functioning. In such a context, dealing with this situation must be a priority for instructors and community workers. For example, they might plan activities that encourage closer intercultural ties. Learning the language of the host community could also be useful. In fact, social circus workshops are ideally suited to learning basic vocabulary (for example: greetings, parts of the body, direction of movement, etc.).

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 an individual.



MODULE 14 | ACTIVITY 1

ANTHROPOLOGISTS

OBJECTIVE

To identify the obstacles and skills related to intercultural communication.



EXPERIENCE

The trainer informs group members that they'll be participating in a simulation featuring anthropologists who will interview members of an unknown cultural group. The trainer selects five or six participants, both women and men, to act as the anthropologists. If the group is mostly comprised of the same gender, the trainer should select individuals with markedly different characteristics (e.g. hair colour, age, height, etc.). The others are part of the "cultural group."

The trainer asks the anthropologists to step out of the room while the cultural group receives its instructions.

1. You can only answer questions with a "yes" or "no." If the anthropologist smiles while asking a question, you must answer "yes." If the anthropologist does not smile, you must answer "no."
2. Men can only speak with other men and women can only speak with other women. The only exception? You may speak to members of the opposite sex if they extend their hand. Regardless, you are never actually allowed to shake or touch their hand.

The trainer then speaks to the anthropologists, instructing them to create a portrait of this unknown people by interviewing its members and observing their behaviours:

1. You have 10 minutes to ask a series of questions to the greatest possible number of people. They can only respond with a "yes" or "no." You'll find the list of questions on the data collection sheet I will now distribute. To this list, you may add two questions of your own. Answers to the questions and your observations can be noted on the sheet.
2. You must then compile the answers you've collected to create a portrait of the people in question. You will be presenting this portrait to the group.

If the anthropologists ask if they can speak to one another, the trainer indicates that the choice is theirs.

Length of activity
40-60 minutes

Materials
A data collection sheet and
a pen or pencil for each
anthropologist

Number of participants
20-25





OBSERVATION

The trainer addresses the cultural group first:

- What behaviours or attitudes did you observe the anthropologists displaying?
- Was it easy or difficult to make yourself understood?
- How did you feel while you were being interviewed?

The trainer then questions the anthropologists:

- How did the data collection process go?
- Did you experience any difficulties? What were they?
- How did you react?
- What made your interactions easier?



INTEGRATION

- Were you surprised by the conclusions that the anthropologists reached about your culture?

For the next two questions, the trainer notes answers on a large sheet of paper divided into two columns:

- What are the obstacles to intercultural communication?
- What personal skills make intercultural communication easier?



APPLICATION

- As social circus instructors and community workers, how can you make sure that the instructions you give to people from a different culture will be understood?
- What can you do to improve intercultural communication?



DATA COLLECTION SHEET

1. Do you all belong to the same culture?

YES																			
NO																			

2. Do you all speak the same language?

YES																			
NO																			

3. Are you welcoming to people from outside your culture?

YES																			
NO																			

4. Do you all practise the same religion?

YES																			
NO																			

5. Do all members of your culture prepare the same kinds of meals?

YES																			
NO																			

6. Do all members of your culture live with their extended families?

YES																			
NO																			

7. Are the children from your culture educated in public schools?

YES																			
NO																			

8. Do most of the members of your culture live in cities?

YES																			
NO																			

9. Personal question:

YES																			
NO																			

10. Personal question:

YES																			
NO																			

Behavioural observations:



MODULE 14 | ACTIVITY 2

SIGNATURE

OBJECTIVE

To introduce the concept of culture shock.



EXPERIENCE

The trainer distributes a sheet of paper and a pencil to each participant. The trainer then asks participants to sign their name five times with their dominant hand (right hand for righties, left hand for lefties) and then five times with their non-dominant hand.



OBSERVATION

The trainer asks participants to show their sheets to other members of the group:

- What differences did you note in the signatures?
- Compare how your body felt during these two experiences.
- Use one word to describe the experience of writing with your dominant hand. And with your non-dominant hand.

The trainer notes answers on the large sheet, which is divided into two columns – one for the dominant hand and one for the non-dominant hand. Examples of words include the following:

- Dominant hand: confident, easy, comfortable, identity, flexible, relaxed, automatic, normal, agile, simple, quick
- Non-dominant hand: uncomfortable, unable, uncontrollable, surprising, frustrating, challenging, powerless, weird, bizarre, requiring concentration, abnormal, slow



INTEGRATION

- What happens when we step out of our comfort zone to face the unknown? What emotions come up? What do we think about? How do we react?

The trainer takes a few moments to introduce the notion of culture shock and then continues with the following questions:

- How can this activity be compared to culture shock?
- Can we experience culture shock within our own community?

Length of activity
30 minutes

Materials
One sheet of paper and pencil per person, a large sheet of paper, felt-tip pen

Number of participants
20-25





APPLICATION

- What behaviours should we adopt in a culture shock situation?
- What can we do to learn the cultural codes of an unknown culture?
- What are the cultural codes within the circus world that may trigger unease in those who don't know about circus?
- What codes can we teach – and share – with at-risk individuals that can help them improve their situation?

IMPORTANT INFORMATION FOR TRAINERS

Instructors and community workers working in another country or with a cultural group different from their own are bound to encounter culture shock. The following is a definition of culture shock:

A condition of disorientation, frustration or rejection, or feelings of revolt and anxiety arising from an emotional or intellectual experience manifested in persons who, by their profession or happenstance, find themselves out of their usual socio-cultural context and are called upon to interact with strangers; this shock provides an important opportunity to become aware of one's own social identity in that it is scrutinized and analyzed.⁹

The Signature activity is a good analogy for culture shock: people find themselves confronted with a familiar task but feel frustrated upon realizing that they cannot fulfill the task with the usual confidence, ease and speed. In other words, individuals are confronted with a situation in which they cannot rely on their usual skills and points of reference. These individuals thus need to acquire means of access that will enable them to adjust to this new environment.

Culture shock is inevitable for most people working in an unfamiliar environment, even if it's within their own cultural group. At-risk persons do not generally have access to the codes that will permit them to operate more freely in their communities. Instructors and community workers must thus help them to overcome this obstacle by guiding them in the acquisition of codes that will make sense to them and that can be used outside the context of social circus workshops.

NOTES

⁹Margalit Cohen-Émerique, "Éléments de base pour une formation à l'approche des migrants et plus généralement à l'approche interculturelle," *Annales de Vaucluse* 17 (1980), p. 128.



MODULE 14 | KEY MESSAGES

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.



In 2000, *Cirque du Soleil*[™] created a social circus training program for circus instructors and community workers. These individuals, who work with thousands of young people, use the circus arts to help youth regain their self-confidence, transform their lives and grow both personally and socially.

Since the beginning of the program, these training courses have enabled hundreds of instructors and community workers to familiarize themselves with the social circus approach. Faced with such widespread interest, *Cirque du Soleil* decided to provide trainers, community workers and instructors with suitable training material.

This guide is part of a series of educational tools designed to enable the numerous organizations interested in social circus to benefit from the expertise developed by *Cirque du Soleil* and its partners since 1995.

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 of *Cirque du Soleil*.

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