

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.

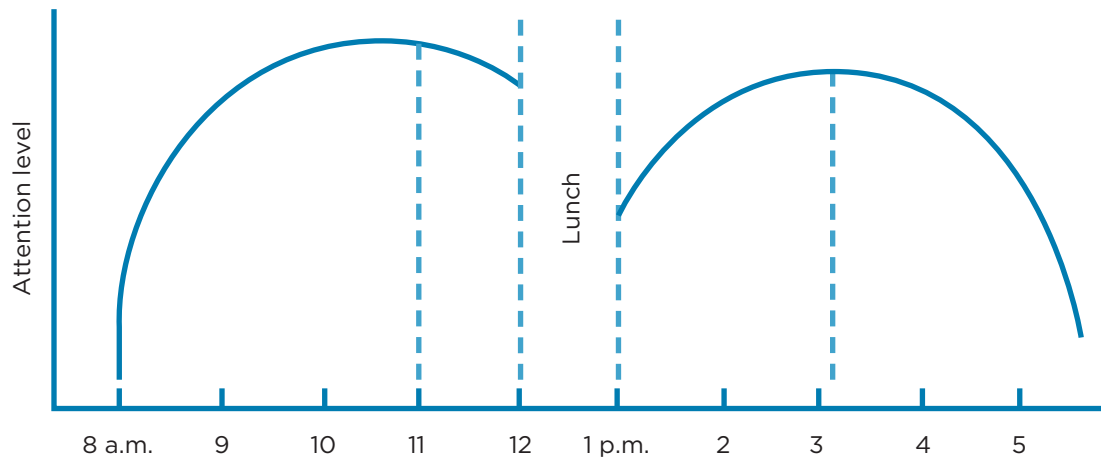
CHARACTERISTICS	TRAINING BASICS
<p>Participants already have work experience Participants already have many life and work experiences, which give them «maturity». This represents an asset to the group and they know it. Participants will relate their experiences to content presented during the session.</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?



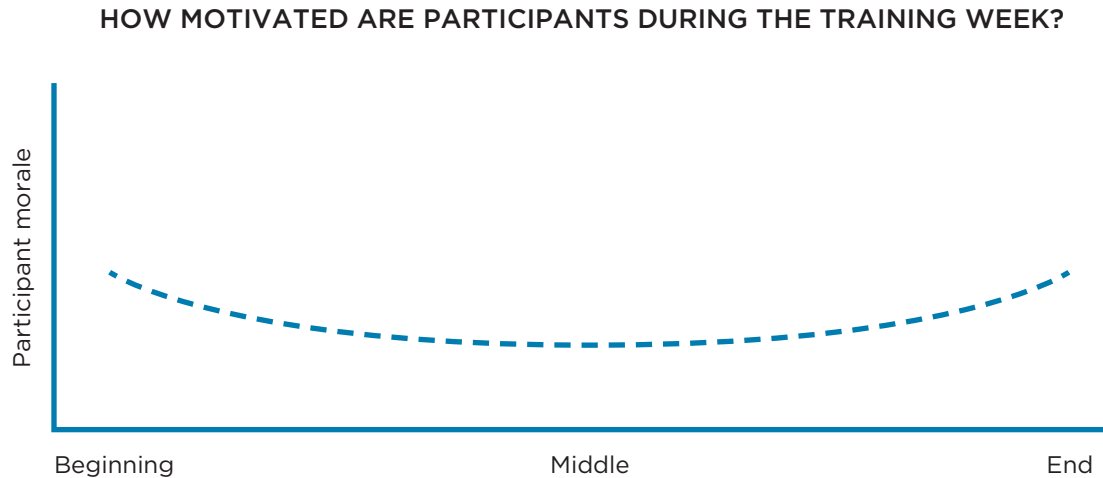
Training basics

- 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.



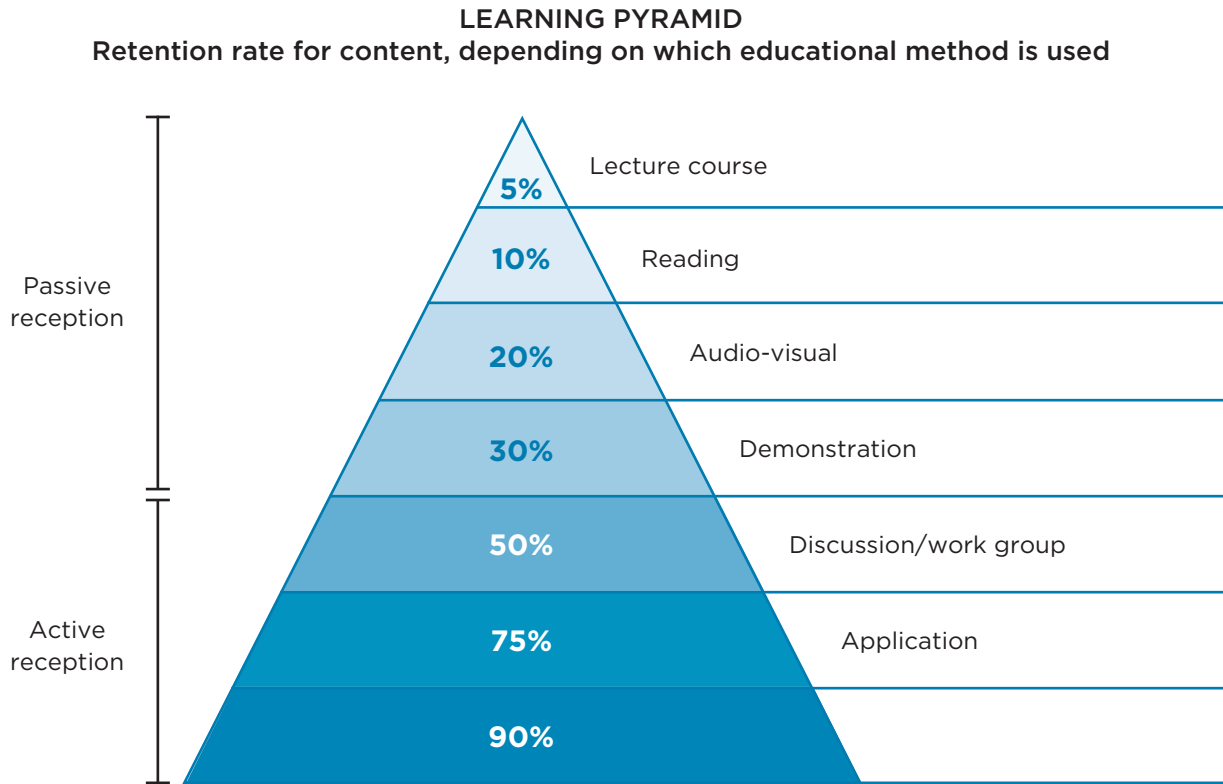
Training basics

- 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?*

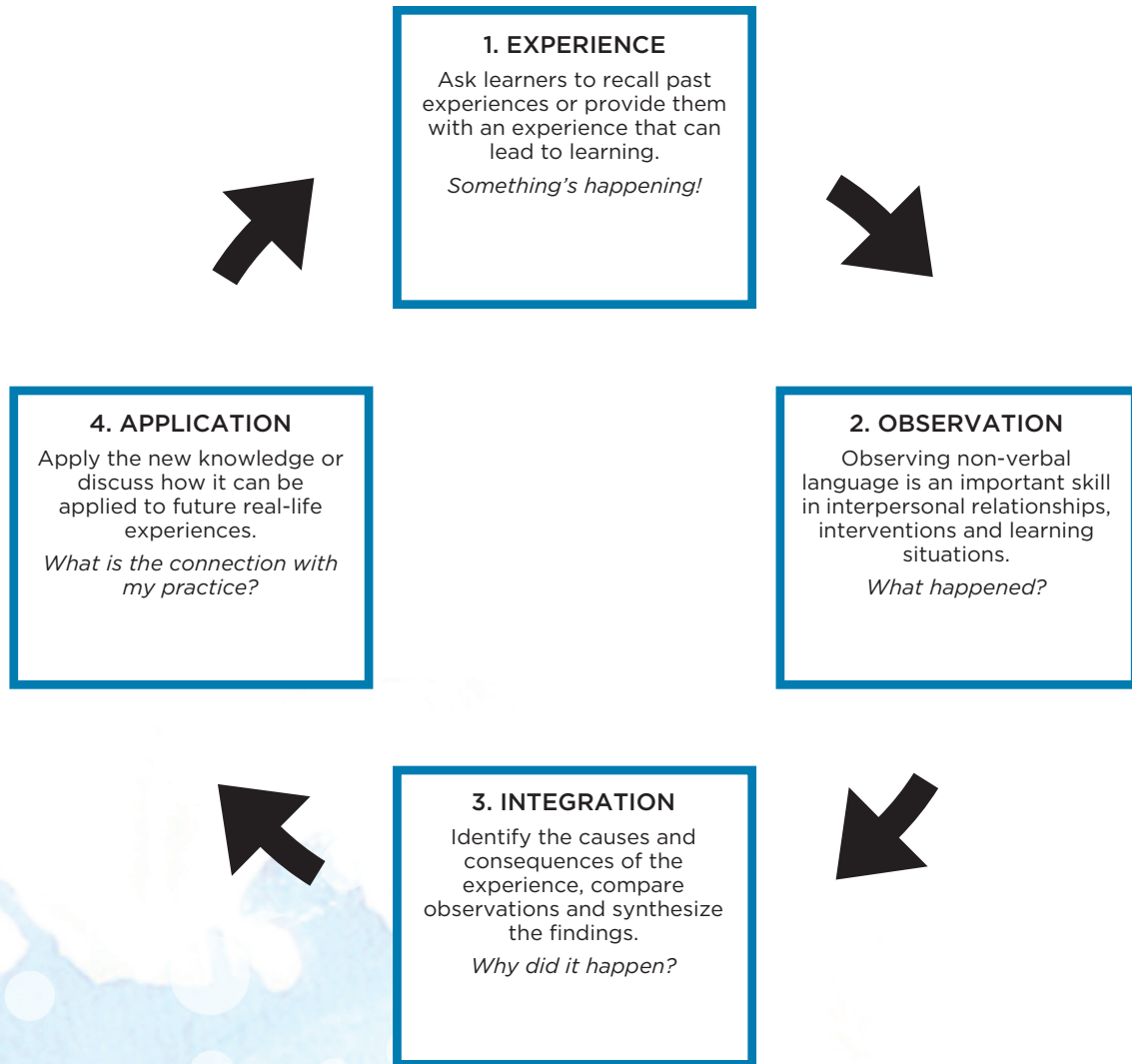
The application activity constitutes the last step in the learning cycle. Application allows learners to transfer the knowledge, skills and attitudes stemming from the group reflection to their work context or personal life. They can thus put their conclusions into practice or foresee their application 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

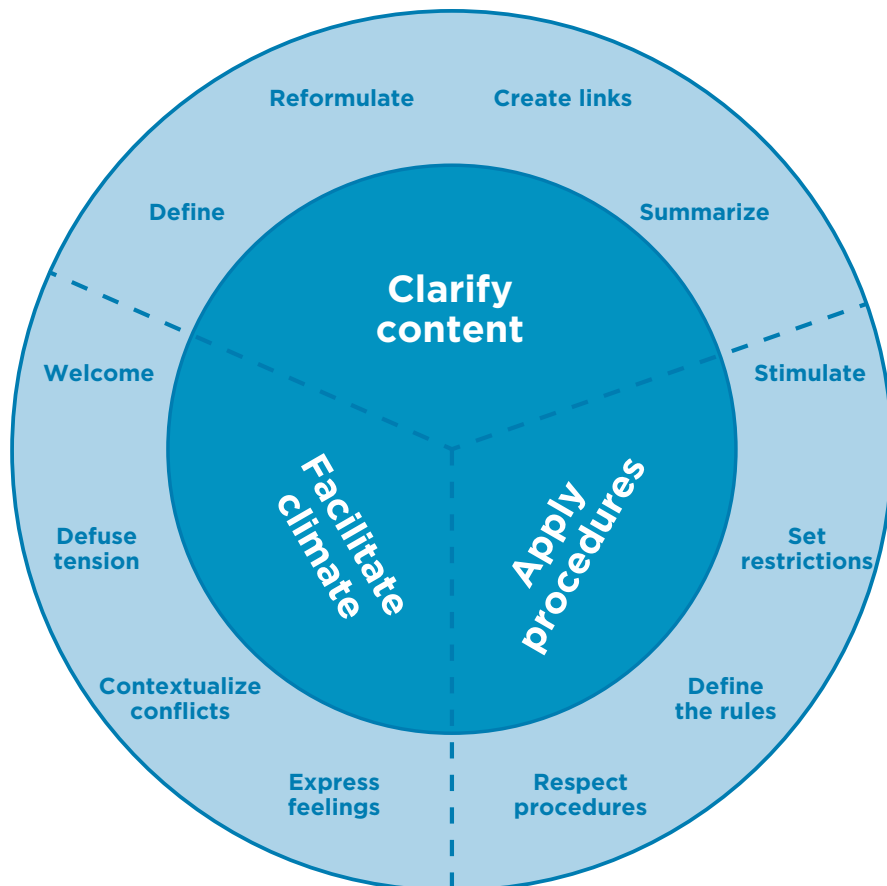
- Define concepts and vocabulary specific to the approach
- Reformulate interventions to make them more clear
- Create links between ideas and opinions being expressed
- Summarize and synthesize ideas

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 X-X of this document.
- For trainers using the experiential learning approach (experience, observation, integration and application), see page X 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**

