PLANNING TOOLS

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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.). 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*.[1] This document, published by *Cirque du Soleil*, could be a valuable tool for your planning process.

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[1] Social Circus Department, *Basic Techniques in Circus Arts*, Social Circus Training (Montreal: Cirque du Soleil, 2011).

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 *Circus lessons*	SOCIAL GOALS *Life lessons*
1 2 3 4	**BLOCK 1 – INTRODUCING CIRCUS TECHNIQUES** **4 weeks** *Introduce circus techniques as they relate to the goal to form a group.* • Evaluate the physical abilities of participants. • Use increasingly challenging activities, all the while being sensitive to aspects that require physical contact.	**BLOCK 1 – FORMING A GROUP** **4 weeks** • 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.
5 6 7 8 9 10	**BLOCK 2 – GAINING A GREATER COMMAND OF CIRCUS TECHNIQUES** **6 weeks** *Teach participants a greater command of circus techniques, while fostering group cohesion.* • 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.	**BLOCK 2 – ESTABLISHING GROUP COHESION** **6 weeks** *Continue with exercises that foster cohesion and togetherness in the group.* • 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.
11 12 13	**BLOCK 3 – CONCENTRATING ON ONE CIRCUS TECHNIQUE** **3 weeks** • Create numbers for the performance. • Rehearse and run through numbers.	**BLOCK 3 – INTENSIFYING THE GROUP PROCESS** **3 weeks** • Encourage the development of skills that contribute to the completion of the group project: manage decision making and stress management for the performance.
14	**BLOCK 4 – FINAL RUN-THROUGH AND PERFORMANCE**	
15	**BLOCK 5 – REVIEWING WHAT'S BEEN LEARNED** **1 workshop** • Review the performance (e.g. watching a video recording). • Evaluate the techniques learned.	**BLOCK 5 – REVIEWING THE GROUP'S EXPERIENCE** **1 workshop** • 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 *Circus lessons*	SOCIAL GOALS *Life lessons*
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
13		
14		
15		

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*	SOCIAL GOALS FOR THE WORKSHOP *Life lessons*
• Establish a warm-up ritual. • Explore some of the circus arts: pyramid building, hand-to-hand, juggling.	• Create links and encourage new relationships (group and trust games). • Motivate the group, have fun and foster success.

SCHEDULE

APPROX. LENGTH	ACTIVITIES *(list all activities, including the greeting, breaks and the review/closing)*	ACTIVITY LEADER(S) *(first names)*	WHAT'S NEEDED FOR THE ACTIVITY *(materials, safety, warm-up, creating teams, discussion of themes, etc.)*	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 *BTCA*, 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 *BTCA*, Juggling) and hand-to-hand (see *BTCA*, 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 *BTCA*, 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 *BTCA*, 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.

PLANNING A SOCIAL CIRCUS WORKSHOP

WORKSHOP:	LENGTH:	ATTENDANCE:
INSTRUCTOR(S):	COMMUNITY WORKER(S):	OTHERS:

GENERAL OBJECTIVE OF THE SESSION:

TECHNICAL GOALS FOR THE WORKSHOP *Circus lessons*	SOCIAL GOALS FOR THE WORKSHOP *Life lessons*

SCHEDULE

APPROX. LENGTH	ACTIVITIES *(list all activities, including the greeting, breaks and the review/closing)*	ACTIVITY LEADER(S) *(first names)*	WHAT'S NEEDED FOR THE ACTIVITY *(materials, safety, warm-up, creating teams, discussion of themes, etc.)*	ACTIVITY COMPLETED?	
				YES	NO

FOLLOW-UP

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

OBJECTIVES FOR THE NEXT WORKSHOP: