

Visualizing future goals: back to the future

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Purpose

Promoting lifelong learning and encouraging the ability to transfer skills are now part of many organizational and university programmes. The 'what next?' question must be dealt with. Supported by fellow participants and the coaching process, the following activity uses drama to help to articulate dreams, and make plans to achieve these.

Description

The session facilitates the exploration of life and work goals. The activity is recommended for groups of about 12 who have worked together over a period of time. It is advisable to only use the techniques on courses where drama and movement have been integral, or where there is a commitment to using creative methods, for example, on play work, youth and community work, counselling, mental health nursing and social work courses. Themes on the human and, hence, student condition, such as futures, choice, change and hope, can be dramatically explored by using traditional story telling structures, as outlined by Gersie and King (1990).

Materials required are relaxing music and some simple props.

Process

I have identified five steps for the strengths and skills strategy:

- 1 **Warm up:** The session uses warm-up techniques, which will give participants the language of the session, for example, a physical activity, where they meet and greet each other. Rules of engagement and confidentiality are also agreed. The session uses techniques drawn from neuro-linguistic programming and drama.
- 2 **Visualization:** After the warm-up, students are asked to sit and, if this feels comfortable, to close their eyes. Relaxing music can help the process. They should consider the year(s) ahead and imagine they have reached their ideal day. The leader can put forward the following questions:
 - When they wake up where will they be?
 - What are the sounds?
 - What will they feel?
 - What will they choose to wear?
 - What will be the first thing they notice?
 - What will others notice about them?
- 3 **The journey:** At an appropriate time, the participants are asked to work with a partner. One person is the director, the other describes their dream. The director asks the dreamer to visualize an event in their ideal day, imagine a journey from the present that will take them to this event. With the director's support, the dreamer walks slowly towards the imagined place whilst describing the journey. As they arrive, the director asks the dreamer to turn and look back at the starting point of the journey and say what he, or she, sees, feels and thinks. What support and advice do they give to themselves? They should walk back to the starting place and look back at the future and be encouraged to discuss their observations, feelings and new realizations. After discussion, the roles can be reversed.
- 4 **Reflection:** It is important that time is allocated for whole group sharing and private reflection. Each member should be given the opportunity to debrief from the activity, to say what worked and did not work, and to thank their director.
- 5 **The plans:** They should then make their individual plans, sharing one step that will take them towards these. They

leave as individuals, not as group members, taking their individual thoughts and plans with them.

Pitfalls

This is a powerful group exercise. The group leader needs to be experienced in the use of drama with groups and able to create, and sustain, safe working spaces. This is not recommended if people have had unsafe group experiences in the past, and/or if the group is a new group.

Bibliography

- Gersie, A. and King, N. (1990) *Storymaking in Education and Therapy*, London: Jessica Kingsley.
- Johnstone, K. (1981) *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre*, London: Methuen.
- O'Connor, J. and Lages, A. (2002) *Coaching with NLP: A Practical Guide to Getting the Best out of Yourself and Others*, London: Element, HarperCollins.