

# Developing independent skills

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## **Purpose**

When starting a new course or training programme, participants may feel both excited and apprehensive. This exercise always helps people meet and talk to each other, and it builds confidence. It encourages participation and learning.

## **Description**

A 'hopes, fears and resolution' workshop for groups of up to 24 encourages participants to explore their feelings about being on a training programme, enables interaction and promotes group building. By using drawing, discussion and music, students with different learning styles have the opportunity to develop supportive networks and build their confidence. It takes about 90 minutes. It is better to leave more time than to rush the session. Materials required are flip chart paper, blue tack, felt tips and quiet music.

## **Process**

I have identified five steps for the strategy:

- 1 *Introduction and rules:* As part of the exercise, group boundaries need to be agreed. Examples are: participants should listen and respect each others' views, and keep all information confidential.
- 2 *Initial meeting and group building, with quiet music:*

Participants select a partner who they don't know. One is 'A' and one is 'B'. They tell each other three light-hearted things about themselves: this may be about their hobbies, family or a recent holiday. They each introduce their new partner to another pair, the 'A's introduce the 'B's' and vice versa. This group of four then divides a flip chart sheet into three, possibly using the template of a shield or heart, and labels the sections 'hopes', 'fears' and 'resolutions'. They write or draw their thoughts and feelings about the course.

- 3 *More group developments:* The groups of four join another group of four, introduce each other and discuss what they have included on their flip charts. Discussion topics could be about similarities and differences between the groups, how they could meet their hopes for the course, and how their fears could be resolved.
- 4 *Review and evaluation:* The flip charts are stuck to the wall and the leader draws out the themes, taking care to give information and support to the students. Towards the end of the session, the leader asks participants to say what has gone well in the session and what has not gone well.
- 5 *Reflection and endings:* Each member of the group privately records their observations about the workshop and what they have noticed about themselves. The leader should give positive feedback to the group and thank them for their participation.

## **Pitfalls**

Be prepared for the 'fears' and have information at hand to resolve these as much as is possible.