

Blindfolded

Don't look - listen!



Complexity



6-13 years



45+ minutes



4-28 children



Discrimination



Health



Participation

Type of activity

Simulation, discussion

Overview

Blindfolded children try to dress themselves and reflect on the experience and human rights of people with a disability.

Objectives

- To understand the specific rights and needs of children with disabilities
- To develop co-operation and different forms of communication within the group

Preparation

Organise a set of clothing items (e.g. hats, scarves) for each small group that can easily fit any child

Materials

- 1 scarf for each team of four participants, for blindfolding
- An additional five items of clothing for each group (e.g. a hat, scarf, jacket, shoes and a bag). You could use clothes belonging to children in the group but be sure you have the same number and type of items for each group.

Instructions

1. Ask the children if they know anyone with a disability. What are some disabilities that people may have? How do they know if people have a disability? Can you always see whether someone has a disability?
2. Ask the children if they have ever wondered what it would be like to be visually-impaired or blind. Explain that this activity will put them in a situation where they will experience an event without being able to use their sight.
3. Divide the children into groups of four. Give each group a set of five items of clothing.
4. Ask for one volunteer from each group who would accept being the first to be blindfolded. Tell these volunteers that they will need to put on the five pieces of clothing while blindfolded. Then tell the groups to use the scarf to blindfold the eyes of the volunteer.
5. When the volunteer has been blindfolded, ask the other children to hand him/her the pieces of clothing one by one. The child should try to dress himself/herself alone, and the rest of the group should say as little as possible. If s/he needs help, the rest of the group can give instructions.
6. To keep the momentum of the activity going, change roles after about four minutes, whether the children have succeeded in dressing themselves or not. Continue until each child has had a turn at being blindfolded.

Debriefing and Evaluation

1. Discuss the activity, asking questions such as these:
 - Was it hard to dress yourself while blindfolded? Why?
 - How did it feel not being able to see?
 - Did you receive helpful instructions from your group? How could they have helped more?
 - How did you feel about giving instructions? Were some instructions hard to explain?
 - If you were visually-impaired, what are some other tasks or activities that would be difficult for you? Would any tasks or activities be easier?
 - How could you adapt some tasks or activities to make it possible for someone who is visually-impaired to do them? Give examples.
2. Draw out stereotypes about people with a disability, asking a few questions such as these:
 - Do you know anyone who is visually-impaired or blind? Do you know anyone with any other disabilities? What things do you think children with disabilities like doing? Are they different from the things you like doing? Why or why not?
 - Do you always know if someone has a disability or not? Is it always important for you to know? Why or why not?
 - Do you think children with disabilities have friends? Are they only friends with other children with disabilities? Would anything be different in your friendship if your friend had a disability? Why or why not?
 - What do you think children with disabilities want to be when they grow up? Are they different from you? Why or why not?
 - Should children with disabilities be educated in the same school and class as yourselves? Why or why not?
 - Everyone has a right to the things they need to live a full life. What are some things that you need? Do children with disabilities need these things too?
 - Does the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) and all the rights within it also apply to children with disabilities? Do you know of anything in the convention specifically about children with disabilities?
 - What can you do to help children with disabilities have access to all the rights in the CRC? In the classroom? In the playground? In the community?

Suggestions for follow-up

Ask the children to think of an activity that they could do with everyone blindfolded. For safety reasons, select a seated activity (e.g. a guessing game, a role play). Choose a favourite group activity. How could the activity be adapted to include children who are visually-impaired or blind?

To emphasise how the need for assistance also challenges the carer or assistant, you might try a short activity such as a 'trust walk', with a blindfolded child being led around a safe place by another. Then exchange roles and debrief the activity.

Give the children the opportunity to experiment and experience other limitations, such as limited mobility (e.g. a 'sack race', experimentation with crutches, one arm in a sling) or the inability to speak, read or count. It's always important to debrief these activities to break down stereotypes, and to emphasise the human rights of people with disabilities.

Several other activities address issues relating to children with disabilities. ‘Silent Speaker’ reflects on the experience of hard of hearing or deaf children. ‘A Body of Knowledge’ considers the effects of exclusion on the development of children with disabilities.

Ideas for action

The children could carry out an assessment of their meeting or living place, school or community: could a person with disabilities live, work or play here with comfort and safety? Could anything be done to make these places more accessible?

The children could investigate where children with disabilities live and learn, and why they are or are not among other children. Focus on where children with disabilities live and go to school in the community, and whether this is the same or different to other communities?

Ask a representative of a community group or organisation for children with disabilities to come to your group and speak about their work. You could organise an exchange, or meet up with children who are part of the group or organisation.

Tips for the facilitator

This activity assumes that none of the children themselves have diagnosed disabilities. In many groups of children, at least some have disabilities, although they may not be immediately obvious (e.g. children who wear glasses could be considered visually-impaired). Be sensitive to children and their concept of themselves and their abilities and/or disabilities. Use children with disabilities in the class as resource people to help explain answers to some of the debriefing questions – but only after first privately asking if they are comfortable with this role.

Balance the discussion about the need for assistance on the part of people with disabilities with a reminder of the many things they are able to do for themselves. Emphasise that people with disabilities have the same basic needs and rights as everyone else, and that many places, activities and tasks can be adapted to make them accessible for all people, including those with disabilities. Give examples of where this might be the case (e.g. ramps, acoustic signals for pedestrians at traffic lights, closed captions on videos).

Prepare yourself by reading Article 23 of the CRC – “mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child’s active participation in the community”. You can use the CRC cards to introduce this article and discuss it with the participants. The UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities, adopted in 2006, marks a shift in the representation of people with disabilities as “objects” of charity, medical treatment and social protection towards viewing persons with disabilities as “subjects” with rights and active members of society. More information can be found in the Discrimination section in Chapter 5.

Variations

You could use paper dolls, with cut-out “clothes”, and the blindfolded children have to dress the dolls instead of themselves. If you have a small group, you could use just one or two paper dolls, asking different children to add articles of clothing.

You could run the activity with the blindfolded people completing a puzzle instead. The puzzle could be any simple 2D or 3D puzzle.