

Workshop on Story-Telling Technique

(can be used as a supplement to **BK4 and BK3**)

– Time suggested – 1 and ½ hours

Storytelling is an art with many different facets. Below are some activities that can help us to focus on those facets one by one for us to come to a deeper understanding and experience of the creative processes at work:

- **Organise the story** - type out and print out, then cut out, the story in small chunks. People then work in pairs to piece it together and put the events of the story in order. One of the skills of storytelling is to make sure you get the bits of the story in the right order!

- **'Walking Warmers'** - this activity helps us to begin to think about the creation of character. People walk around the room in their own 'world' so to speak. They find a point on a wall and walk purposefully towards it, not paying any attention to anyone else, except for the purposes of not bumping into them. When they reach that point, they turn round and find another point. They make no eye contact or speak to anyone. They pay attention to their body and try to remain in neutral, as relaxed as possible.

Then the facilitator calls to them a character that they then become, for e.g., a baby learning to walk, a king/queen, a beggar on a windy night, etc. The participants really feel like they are those characters, from the inside out. Only after they have assumed the role, they pay attention to their body and observe what has changed – their neck has become shorter? Their legs are at a different angle? Their feet are turned out or in?

After each character, the participants return to themselves (neutral) and continue to walk (they never stop walking)

'Face the Audience' – this activity helps the participants to learn the importance of eye contact when telling a story and assists them to 'get over' any shyness they might have in facing an audience.

The group sits in a semi-circle, and one by one, each participant comes up in front of the group and just stands in neutral before them with their arms by their sides, resisting the urge to cross them or to fiddle. They try to be blank when gazing at every member of the audience. If they giggle or smile, they start again. The audience must help them by also trying not to laugh or smile at them.

The facilitator can discuss the ways that we have of 'covering ourselves up' when we know we are being looked at. This involves smiling, laughing, fiddling, or crossing our arms. Once we can learn to be neutral in front of an audience, we can begin to paint on the blank canvas.

‘Emotion Circle’ - this is to explore the ways that emotions can be expressed through out body. A story is nothing if there is no emotion in it. Its whole purpose is to evoke emotion in the audience, and by connecting to that in the story, the listeners take meaning from it. Stand in a circle, and each person, beginning with the facilitator, expresses an emotion just through their face. The other members of the circle must guess what emotion they are conveying.

Then, they move on to expressing an emotion just with their body (their faces remain blank if possible, although this is in fact quite difficult). Then, each person expresses one through both their body and their face together.

To make it even more interesting, you could try expressing two different emotions, one through the face and the other through the body.

‘Gesturing’ – This activity explores the meaning that is conveyed through our gestures. All gestures have meaning and actually most of what we mean is conveyed through them.

Standing in a circle, each participant attempts to convey meaning through gesture for the following words/phrases – ‘stop!’, ‘look out!’, ‘I love you’, ‘I don’t know’. Often, the gestures and movements will be the same.

Then each participant comes up with their own gesture and the group guesses what it is.

‘Tone’ – Another way that meaning is conveyed is through out tone of voice. This is a very powerful thing which most people pick up on sub-consciously, and which few people are aware of consciously. Story-tellers, however, use this tool to great effect. This activity helps people to become conscious of their tones of voice and what they convey.

The facilitator asks the group to work in pairs. They say the words ‘I love you’ using different tones and discuss what different meanings are conveyed. Ask another participant to come up with another example which the pairs work on. Then another until the group feel they have explored the power of this tool for conveying meaning.

THEN! Practice the story – now the pairs can go back to the original story, making sure they are familiar with its details and sequence of events. They identify consciously where tools like tone, gesture, expression of emotion etc would be used to highlight certain moments for greatest emotional effect. Then they practice telling the story to each other, perhaps taking half each.

A plenary feedback could be held at the end as it would be useful to see how much people have learnt and feel they have improved in their story-telling technique.