

## **Problem Solving Activity (Workshop): “Blind Sheep”**

**Date, Time:** Tuesday, 28.09.2010, 11:00 - 13:00 and 14:30 - 18:00

**Trainer:** Martina Čujová, Slovakia

### **Workshop content/theme**

Cooperation and problem solving

### **Aims**

- Breaking down barriers between individuals or teams at work
- Encouraging trust
- Strengthening communication and cooperation
- Working towards a common goal

### **Method(s)/Approach**

Introduction of the activity to participants: “For the next hour you are going to become a flock of sheep. A bad wolf has scared you and you have run far away from your sheep flock in panic. Now you have no idea where you are in a dangerous environment and you can’t see anything, because you are blind. The good news is that you can be sure that your shepherd will lead you back “home” safely. You just have to trust him/her and follow signals he/she gives you...”

Give 5 minutes to the participants (10 if the communication language is a foreign language) to prepare their own strategy and to specify the flow of the activity and the following conditions:

You will be blindfolded and placed in unknown surroundings one by one by the trainers. When everybody is in his/her place the facilitator (trainer) will assign the shepherd and announce the start of the game.

The shepherd can see (the facilitator takes his/her scarf off) but can’t move from the place, and his/her aim is to lead sheep to the flock (could be the place where he/she is or another marked place).

From the moment you become blindfolded you can’t speak. Nobody is allowed to speak during the whole game and can communicate only by using different sounds (claps, whistles, noises...) and making noises. The sheep must not hold on to each other during the game. When the sheep come to the marked place, they can take off the scarf and observe the game (still in a silence).

Note: The shepherd has to stay in a place where he/she can see all sheep. You can put a time limit to get the sheep to the flock (20 min. or 30 minutes, depends on the group). Stress the importance of safety and responsibility for the “sheep” during the whole game to the group. The best place for the activity is outdoors, or in a big room (space) if there is no possibility to do it outdoors.

### **Further tips, sources, resource material or links**

Some web pages with activities used in non-formal learning:

<http://wilderdom.com/games/>

<http://www.salto-youth.net>

<http://www.blindfoldgames.co.uk/>

## Other activities we used:

### Activity to know each other and ice-breakers:

#### “The ball”

The participants are sitting in a circle. First they throw the ball to somebody and say their own name.

Second round: The person who is holding the ball says the name of the person to who he/she is going to throw the ball.

Third round: The person who is going to throw the ball says the name of the person who he/she would like to receive the ball afterwards. (For example: I throw the ball to Peter, but I don't say his name; I say the name Barbara. So Peter will throw the ball to Barbara and at the same time he'll say the name of the participant whom Barbara will throw the ball to, etc.)

#### “Who are your neighbours?”

The participants are sitting in a circle; one person is in the middle (at the beginning - a facilitator). The facilitator asks one of them: “Who are your neighbours?” He/she will say their names. Another question is: “Do you like them?” And here are two possibilities. She/he can say: “Yes, I do.” In that case you have to continue to ask somebody else. Or say: “Yes, I like them, but... ***I prefer people who... (e.g. have more than two brothers, like chocolate, are abroad for the first time, don't wear jeans...etc.)***”

### Activity to make our project group visible:

#### “Our shout”

The project groups met and in 2 minutes they had to prepare their common “shout” or “greeting”. After each group presented their identification “shout”, they greeted the others.

## Questions for workshop reflection

### Suggestions for debriefing:

What happened?

How did you feel?

What was the process? What did you do? What did others do?

Did you see any similarity to reality in your project?

How can transfer your experience to your everyday life?

## Impressions, Outcomes of the workshop

According to participants' evaluations and direct feedback, people liked and enjoyed this activity. They also saw quite many similarities to their everyday “project life” (at the beginning a bit chaotic, feeling alone, necessity to trust our partners, etc.). One of the students was also chosen as the shepherd so at the end we were discussing this role as well, focussing on the importance of responsibility and trust between students and teachers as well as between project partners.

## Case studies

The participants really liked this practical activity and the time they could spend together. After presenting the case studies we had a brainstorming about other possible problems and their possible solutions. We didn't have so much time to discuss all solutions, but anyway, the message of the session which one of participants coined was: **“DON'T GIVE UP!”**

Mentioned problems and solutions:

- Problems with setting of deadlines because of different “school year calendars” (exams, holiday, etc.)
  - Solution: making compromises
- Accomodation during school visits (kind, level of accommodation) and money
  - Solution: find chaeaper accommodation, search for sponsors, students in hosting families
- Motivation and participation
- Disagreement about number of participants in “mobilities”
- External factors (weather, strikes at airport, etc.)
- Parents’ motivation (to help, to let their children to go abroad, participate, etc.)
- “Instability” of planned parts

