

## Open Academy Workshop: “Lovely neighbours, aren’t they?”

Date, Time: Thursday, 25.03.2010, 10:30 - 12:30

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### Workshop content/theme

#### Issues addressed:

- Our analysis of conflict and the way we deal with it differs depending on the social and cultural background of the people involved.
- Our own interests can distort our perception of the problem and make it bigger than it is.
- Conflicts between people from different cultures can be solved in a positive way.

This role-play deals with people from different cultures and of different ages living in the same building and a situation that can take place in anyone’s daily life. You have a chance to put yourself into somebody else’s shoes and try to discover if our own interests can distort our perception of the problem and make it bigger than it is.

And the story goes like this:

You are living in an apartment block. One of the apartments is rented to a group of foreign students who often have visitors from home and who also frequently organise parties. Some neighbours, especially those living in the apartments closest to the students, are annoyed and complain that the students and their friends make a lot of noise, don’t let them sleep and don’t take care of the building. The neighbours have called a meeting to try to solve this problem....

### Aims

- to analyse our attitudes towards people from different cultural or social groups
- to explore problem solving strategies
- to reflect upon the limits of tolerance
- to reflect upon the relationship between discrimination and conflicts of interest

### Method(s)/Approach

#### 1. Role-play

- volunteers playing the roles of the neighbours (min. 6 - max. 9)  get role cards
- observers  get observers’ notes

Aim: coming up with a solution to the problem

- Stage 1: Discussion (10 minutes)
- Optional: Handing out a copy of the Clues for finding a solution
- Stage 2: Discussion (10 minutes)

#### 2. Debriefing and evaluation

##### Role-play

- a. What did the observers record and what were their impressions of what happened during the role-play?
- b. How did the actors feel about it? Was it difficult to get into the role they were given? What did they find hardest and what easiest?
- c. Did the participants perceive any difference between the first and the second stage i.e. after the actors had been given the Clues for finding a solution?
- d. What kinds of arguments were put forward and were they based on fact, reason or emotion?

- e. Was it easier to find arguments *for* or *against* the students?
- f. Was the problem resolved and was everyone happy with the outcome?
- g. Which alternative solutions could there have been?

**The situation in real life**

- a. Did the role-play reflect any reality in daily life? What were the similarities/differences? Did anything seem to be exaggerated?
- b. Which of the characters most faithfully reflected attitudes common in our society?
- c. When we face a conflict involving people from different cultural backgrounds, do we look for a solution that may satisfy everybody, or do we rather try to impose our point of view and neglect those who think or feel differently from ourselves?
- d. To what extent is the conflict actually related to differences in culture rather than to other things such as personal or economic interests?
- e. Has anyone ever experienced this kind of conflict? What were the circumstances?

**3. Follow up**

Which practical steps can the participants take to improve the relations between different groups who live in the local community?

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

In case the participants are really interested in the topic and discussion, the clues for finding a solution are not necessary at all. They themselves will come up with the solution without any help.

**Impressions, Outcomes of the workshop**

The participants in two groups reached the solution by themselves without the help of the Clues for finding the solution, whereas in the third group, they needed the Clues.

Suggestion: Since this is a role-play, I would suggest it to those teachers and students who are keen on acting and whose English is good enough to express their opinions, since the active participation of all the participants is needed.