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Helpful hints on work with youngsters

Introduction

As statistics notes youngsters are the most active citizens all over the world, however countries are different and the situations differ, too. Latvian young people are being brought up to become purposeful people, who are oriented to achievement. Competitions and contests is a widespread form of work on all levels of education. Children get used to useful time spending. Already in the kindergarten, children start attending art schools or taking part in hobby groups; at the age of basic school, a music school or a sport school starts. While the child grows, the scope of his/her interests becomes larger; new requirements appear. Youngsters want to achieve their aims, to get good education and as a result, to find a well-paid job, that is why they try to get involved in various activities.

However, the school is a formal environment with formal rules; in hobby groups, it is less formal. Unfortunately, our youngsters do not have a wide choice. Comparatively a new thing in Latvia is the informal education, where youngsters are determinant: they choose what to do and how to do it themselves, but the adult is just a consultant, an advisor and a provider of information, but not a teacher. The greatest difference is that the youngster chooses himself how much work he wants to contribute to achieve his goals and he chooses learning methods himself. Nowadays informal education methods are also entering the schools.

Work with youngsters requires much devotion and creativity. On the one part, the youngster dominates, but on the other part, he does not know what he can and must do to achieve his goals, yet. Therefore, there must be a specialist in work with youngsters and specialists in youth affairs. These people's main objective is to be together with the youngster, to help him understand his wishes, learn about his resources and interests and give possibilities to realise his dreams. Not everyone can work with youngsters. In some difficult situations the answer or the solution is already known and it would be easier to tell the youngster or to insist *You must do like this. It's better.* However, the most important thing is the way to the answer – the youngster needs experience, he must commit his own mistakes in order to learn from them.

Helpful hints on working with youngsters is a short overview of youngsters' age groups and 6 basic methods of youth work, or rather sets of methods with an important sequence. Work with a new group must start from the first step, from the first method and then you must do the other steps. If youngsters are already active, then the adult should observe and define on which step they are. The *Hints* also contain the description of various methods/activities of informal education and there is a video annex.

Though youngsters are the most energetic people in the world, they lack many skills and abilities to be active citizens. For instance, they do not know how to organise an event, how to develop a project and how to realise it.

Youngsters' age groups

Methods of work with youth depend on psychological and physiological peculiarities of age groups. In Latvia, a youngster is a person aged from 15 to 25. This period can be divided into several important stages.

15-17 years olds. At this age, youngsters want to do everything as they imagine it. They have already collected much theoretical information – how to draw, how to sing, how to dance; they

have a tendency of wishing to mix all existing styles and to invent their own way, that is why at this time they like everything new, creative and extreme things.

Being a teenager, the person establishes first relations with the opposite sex; it is a complicated and painful time. Only few youngsters would discuss this topic with parents, but the adult's opinion is important and interesting. In this age, it is important to join a peers' group, because they are trying to be "like the others", and they do wrong things to be accepted. Youngsters want to do everything themselves, they are sure that they know and able to do anything, they have dozens of ideas, dreams and wishes, but they lack independence. When working with such youngsters, you should take into account that they can fail to do something, to come, they can forget or their interests can change. Friends and parties will always be more important. It is important to accept them as they are, to respect their wishes, to remind them about the works to be done, to motivate and involve them without reproaching and lecturing.

17-20 years olds. Youngsters start to think about their place in life and about the choice of their future profession. The peers' group is still important, but they show their individuality easier. In this age, youngsters are intensively searching for themselves becoming more self-confident, they are trying to create and invent something new; they work in various fields and directions. They like speaking about life, they are philosophical, they are theorizing, searching for the sense of life. It is important for the youngster to know what he is good at and what he likes – it will help to choose a profession. If in a previous age group youngsters are willing to do anything voluntarily, at this time they think what advantages they will get doing something, they are trying to benefit from their actions.

20-25 years olds. Youngsters are aware of what they want and they know how to achieve it or where to find a person to ask how to do it. It is the time of studies and serious relations, the beginning of the independent life. It is a good time for starting up a business. In this age, youngsters face the real life, bills and getting food. It is important to get a salary or at least foresee this perspective. In this age, youngsters usually take part in events in pairs, a peers' company is not so important any more.

When working with youngsters, it is important to find out what they want at a particular moment and give them possibilities to act. Parents often fail to stay calm when seeing their children's mistakes and first failures. It is perfect, if there is a neutral adult, who does not assess, fine or scold, but he is just here and the youngster knows that he may speak to him or ask for advice. Sense of humour and joking are essential. Youngsters, especially young youngsters, react painfully to their peers' assessments, criticism and various reprimands; their self-esteem is fragile and depends on the people around them. When they laugh together, when they do stupid and funny things, youngsters do understand that the most important is the world inside you, what you think of yourself, that not always people laugh at you personally. If youngsters learn to make a joke of a situation, and what is more important – of them, they become stronger, freer and more creative.

Involvement of youngsters

Forming a group

It is necessary to inform youngsters that there is a possibility to work in an informal group or in a non-governmental youth organisation. The best method is "youngster-to-youngster". The active youngsters speak to their friends and peers and inform them about

possibilities. However, it is necessary to organise regular informative campaigns. The adult leader must choose a source of information that would be the most appropriate for youngsters. It is better to use youngsters' favourite social internet sites, common meetings or street actions. In any case, information must be given in an interesting and creative way, "not as usual". The information must be clear and brief – what, where, at what time, what are the benefits, etc. The visual image is also important: bright colours, youngsters' popular mixtures of colours, the most important text must be highlighted (another colour, bold fonts, etc. to attract youngsters' attention). You may use some youth slang words, thus showing that the organisers know and respect youngsters.

First impression

When youngsters come to see the adult leader for the first time, the most significant is to create the correct first impression.

- Clothes – tidy, but not too official, not too "youth style", telling the youngsters that common work will be serious, but in a funny informal atmosphere.
- First words – not banal, but grateful, expressing pleasure that they have come, creative and encouraging, with a view to possible achievements. It is necessary to say what the rules are, but these rules must sound as if they were offered for discussion and agreement. If the youngsters do not agree with some rules, you should not insist, but come back to this rule in future.
- First activity – a simple, cheerful acquaintance game, because it is possible that youngsters do not know each other. The game will also help the adult to remember the youngsters' names.

Raising interest

- Second activity is oriented to getting aware of youngsters' wishes, skills, abilities and needs in a creative manner. Each youngster can show his interest in his own way – they can draw, speak, sing, etc. Without emphasising his role and significance, the adult must listen to what the youngsters say and try to remember and/or also speak about his interests.
- Third activity is drafting plans for future. The rules are remaining the same – the approach must be as creative as possible. It is necessary to ask a simple question: *'What do you want to do/know/organise?'* It is possible to draft a plan of events in the nearest future including all the suggestions. The leader must keep in mind that, on the one hand, there must be some time for explanation and training, but on the other hand, youngsters work better "in the last moment". The adult also must assess his own possibility to be together with them, when they want it.
- Do not promise the things that you cannot do; do not belittle the initiative, but hold on real possibilities. At the first meeting, you must encourage the youngsters – tell them that they are able to realise their plans, but noting that people always need time and much work for it.
- There must be some work to be done for the next meeting – not too big, but important for achieving the goal.
- Final funny activity/game.

Common tea drinking

Eating is one of basic human instincts. Youngsters are often hungry, because they come to a meeting at once after studies at school, so tea drinking becomes one of the most important parts of communication for them. In the beginning, the leader treats the youngsters, but later they also bring tea, biscuits, etc. or collect money for it. Common tea drinking is not anything new – it helps to loosen up, takes tension and fatigue away. While drinking tea, you can discuss some events, know more about your youngsters, ask them something, pay attention. It is also important to allow the youngsters to understand themselves, to allow them to speak about events in their lives, to joke. It is desirable not to discuss important issues, not to plan. It is necessary to remember their birthdays and other important dates, to celebrate Christmas, Easter, etc. together. It is not important what you have on table: biscuits, sweets or a cake – the process is the most important. Youngsters learn this rule very quickly and they plan holidays themselves. However, do not exaggerate with eating, because youngsters can have an impression that they are being bribed.

Usually youngsters start the conversation themselves, they speak about their schools and the leader may make some comments. The main thing is to listen to them, hear them – youngsters see and feel it very well, and highly evaluate it.

Informal environment

The society consists of different social groups: professional groups, groups of interests, age groups, etc. Youngsters have their own social groups, their own role in the society, they are pupils and children. Usually the society requires from them to hold on these basic social roles and behave correspondingly – they should be obedient, fulfil orders and respect adults. In every culture, norms of youngsters' behaviour differ, but you can hear everywhere: *'You're too young... you don't have any experience. Listen to your parents – they are cleverer'*. These standards have existed for centuries and they have their significance to make the process of educating simpler, to decrease youngsters' crises.

Every social institution has its objectives in children and youngsters' bringing up. The family has its goals, so does the school; you cannot acquire all different social roles and qualities in one place.

Abraham Maslow in his work "Creativity and its cultivation" writes: "I have got a feeling that the concept of creativity (creative skills) and the concept of healthy, self-actualising, completely humane personalities are approaching each other, and it is possible that it will turn out that they mean the same thing. I came also to one more conclusion – the goal of art education, or better to say the goal of educating with help of art is creation of better people, not as much making artists and art works... I am speaking about the action aimed at creation of the people who do not need a motionless and steady, "frozen" world, who do not feel the necessity to live like their fathers and grandfathers used to live. Such people will look into the future confidently without knowing what the future may hold, but they will rely upon their ability to improvise in an unexpected situation. It means the emergence of people of new type... the society may survive, if it brings up such people. Creativity is a powerful factor for personality's cultivation, which defines

its readiness for changes, the ability to renounce stereotypes”. However, the most important thing that urges us to be creative – is the changing world.

Thousand-year educating traditions attempt to put youngsters into the frames of norms and standards. It is right. However, the frames influence thinking abilities. Scientists discovered that when becoming an adult the person loses the creativity skill. It is facilitated by the standards, fears of the unknown, the life habits and life rhythm.

Youngsters possess great creative potential, it is necessary to release it and control a little. We must decrease the frames, fears and provide possibilities. This process is yet complicated, since you must not go beyond the border between creativity and permissiveness. That is why we need social institutions, such as interest/hobby/initiative centres or non-governmental organisations. The aim of such organisations is related to development of creativity, facilitating flexible thinking and acquisition of new skills and abilities. Usually there are creative adults in these centres, who “give wings to youngsters and teach them to fly”.

Consequently, when working with youth and teaching them to be active and creative society members it would be advisable to keep the following requirements in mind:

- **Gathering place must be informal.** As far as possible, you should allow the youngsters to arrange the place of meetings, to choose the colour of furniture and to paint something on the walls. At the same time there must be limits, for instance, they must not draw anything indecent or choose the colour that will make it uncomfortable to be in the room and to work there.
- **Decrease differences in age and social status.** Allow youngsters to communicate with an adult person, to ask any, even provocative questions, to address the adult as simple as possible, even by a nickname. It is necessary to decrease differences in knowledge and experience. Even if the adult leader knows the answer, he should ask the youngsters what they think of it and what they would do. Youngsters are often more creative and find a more interesting solution. The leader must agree with the youngsters upon the decisions and he must create the feeling that it is THEIR decision. He must be able to argue and explain the necessity of a decision in the language that the youngsters would understand and show them the benefits that they would obtain of it. Children’s educating is based on setting the example – first, the adult demonstrates how it must be done, and then he may require such behaviour from the children. The same approach concerns youngsters. First, the adult leader demonstrates how to be active, then he may require from the youngsters to be active. Differences in social status can be decreased by the sense of humour and the ability to make fun of oneself. People’s fear to look stupid or to do something stupid creates a hurdle and tension; youngsters are afraid of looking stupid in their peers’ eyes, as well as they see their leader’s fears. Therefore, the best method is to do something funny or to look foolish or unserious. Common laughing at oneself, at a situation or anything else brings adults and youngsters closer; furthermore, it looks as if the adult diminished the “volume” of his social status.
- **Mistakes in people’s life are inevitable and useful.** All people make mistakes; the most important is to learn from your mistakes. The adult leader does not know everything; if he is

able to acknowledge that he has made a mistake, he shows his humanity and decreases youngsters' internal tension and fear of mistakes.

Team building

You need a team for purposeful active work. A group of people becomes a team only in common work and development. There are 10 basic principles to be observed.

- 1. Principle of regularity and purposefulness.** The group must meet regularly, it is better if it happens at the same time and day of the week. If you change the time of meetings, the group formation dynamics is broken, the members do not feel freely and lose the feeling of unity; change of time is acceptable as an exception. Every time when you meet, you must put forward reachable goals and tasks.
- 2. Principle of realisation of team's tasks or principle of useful teamwork.** Every team member must receive tasks, which can be done according to his or her interests, wishes and abilities. Youngsters usually choose from the task list themselves what they can do; however, there are always things that nobody wants to undertake. By arguing and justifying the necessity of doing such tasks, you must motivate somebody to do it. One more option is that the entire group do it, dividing the duties into small steps. After the activities, there must be a report or formal acceptance of the performed work. The youth worker's task is to do it as informal as possible in order to make everyone feel his/her contribution and pleasure in the performed work.
- 3. Principle of keeping team's functions or principle of the team spirit.** The spirit of the team must be preserved permanently. Friendly, supporting atmosphere, humour and informal environment help youngsters distract their minds from problems and feel safe. In such conditions, it is easier to accept people such as they are. Common tea drinking, celebrations, excursions and other informal activities are as significant for youngsters as common work. Age group and belonging to a group of youngsters plays a significant role. Especially the youngsters experiencing problems in integration in their class or any other youngsters' group understand quickly the advantage of such activities. Members of a good team become friends, these relations may continue all the life long.
- 4. Team management principle.** Despite the informal environment and accepting youngsters' wishes, existence of the team leader/manager is vitally needed. It is good, if you have a young leader, who is able to collect and organise a group. However, he also needs adult's advice and support. If there is no such a youngster, it would be better if the adult would undertake the group managing, since it is impossible to impose this role. The youngster, who is chosen artificially to be the leader, feels unsafe and is not able to organise team's work. In its turn, the adult's management must be very cautious and unobtrusive. Asking questions is the best method in such a case: "What did we have to do today? What did we decide to do tomorrow? Remind me your responsibilities", etc.

5. Principle of cooperation development or team development. You must watch over that the team members are developing evenly. The tasks must correspond to their abilities, the achievements must be noted; it is possible that it will be necessary to work with some team members individually. It is important that all the members would be aware that common efforts are the guarantee of success. In the very beginning, the team can agree upon behaviour style in order to achieve correct relations. Cooperation or collaboration is a style of behaviour characterised by mutual trust and frankness. Both parts, which are involved in cooperation, are commonly trying to find a solution, which would correspond to both sides' interests. Often it requires a new, creative approach to the problem. Cooperation is common work or action, voluntary involvement in common work to achieve the common goal. Cooperation is a type of collaboration characterised by the division of responsibilities and mutual help. Cooperation is the basis of team building and working.

6. Principle of unity and amicability. The team must be developed as a whole, which is internally strong; its members must be sure of each other, ready to protect each other. The members should not satisfy their desire for competition within the team, but outside of it. In such a way, the growth of the team is ensured.

The spirit of the team is cooperation, mutual help and the ability to adapt oneself, manners, politeness, sense of tact, patience and the ability to sympathise. The principle of unity foresees the integrated members' responsibility, observation of ethical norms and rules of mutual respect. Everyone undertakes responsibility, follows the process, supports the others, substitutes each other, if necessary. Team members observe the norms of ethics and do not spread personal information about the others outside the team. In the united team, there is less misunderstanding, intrigues, conflicts or communication problems. In order to achieve unity and solidarity of the team it is important that members' individual goals and the common team's goal would be in harmony. Each member of the team feels the common spirit of the team and aims. He/she is ready to devote the personal energy for strengthening the team and supporting the others. When working outside the group its members do not lose the feeling of the team, their belonging to it and do not forget who they represent. The team must cultivate constructive atmosphere, where anyone can feel free, frank, and be ready to undertake a risk.

7. Principle of competence integration. The principle actualises the possibility for mutual enrichment. The members share knowledge, information, skills and develop their own competence in common work. The adult leader must listen to and hear what youngsters say, teach them to listen to their partners. Youngsters like to criticise and neglect everything. In its turn, the team must be formed in such a way that youngsters would minimally criticise each other and would support each other's ideas and opinions.

8. Principle of flexibility and creative approach. The team creates new ideas, realises innovations, listens to and supports proposals, the team is supported in realisation of ideas. The principle includes undertaking a risk and learning from one's mistakes. It opens the door for the members stimulating them to search for new solutions and ensures activity to find ways for overcoming difficulties, discovering unconventional solutions and resources. Flexibility and

creative approach in team work show that the team is not only a group of people functioning within some definite norms, but the team is brainstorming ideas, innovative solutions, braver aims, more successful results in mutually supportive and inspiring environment. Conflict management is also one of the features of team flexibility. The developed team comes back to a previous development step, if it is necessary due to a conflict or there is a new member in the team. In fact, any change in teamwork may evoke the necessity to return to the previous development stage activating the leader's role. After that, the systematic development continues.

- 9. Principle of transparency.** It is useful for any team to develop the system of recording of its work history. The members may work out a template of the minutes for meetings and regularly fill it in. It is possible to make it virtually, in the internet, in a specially created homepage. The homepage can contain: team work history (minutes of meetings, members' tasks, information about the coming meeting, etc.), important information about the team's work, possibility for chatting with team members, the system of keeping the information, links to necessary internet resources, information about the team's presentation and other significant information. Team's members can create the homepage together inviting a specialist and acquiring homepage development skills. Such a homepage can become an important tool for strengthening the cooperation within the team. For information transparency, the following usage conditions should be applied: the information can be accessed quickly and comfortably, it cannot be placed in a complicated system.

Frankness is one of primary conditions for successful work of a team. Well-grounded decisions, teamwork in decision-making, access to all information, exchange of opinions and trust. The principle actualises that the team should demonstrate its achievement to the higher management level and other colleagues related to the team. For keeping the team, it is important to prevent all misunderstanding, seek after equal understanding of all members, the working plan and means for achievement the goal, as well as each individual's tasks, etc. It can be achieved by planning the team's work, regular visual and accessible.

- 10. Principle of attracting resources.** Team members can successfully continue education. Common learning is related to cooperative studying, its main advantages. Youngsters use their experience, intellectual and emotional resources in cooperative learning; they enrich each other, teach and learn. The cooperative learning includes two aims: academic and social. It helps to develop a versatile personality, enriches the cognitive, emotional and willing sphere, develops "Me" concept, needs, motives, interests, the wish to undertake the responsibility, to cooperate and self-actualise. The team uses efficient performance methods: it develops, looks for and uses the most efficient tools to solve problems together. The team searches for cooperation possibilities in order to contribute to its development.

Respecting opinion

A

ll ideas are good! This work principle demonstrates significance of youngsters and they feel that their opinion is important. However, it is a long way from an idea to an action or a project. There must be time for discussing, detailing ideas and discovering

weak and strong points. This stage in youth work is the most complicated, because there is no active action. It the time of talking – sometimes several meetings will take place with simple discussing and speaking. Nevertheless, youngsters are active and they become bored very quickly. Therefore, this process must be organised as interesting as possible. You can use various techniques. For example, the youngsters are divided into groups and each group draft a stage of realisation of the idea, its advantages and disadvantages, then write it in a large paper and each group present their work. Other groups comment and express their ideas; everything is being recorded. At the end, all the conclusions are summarised and discussed. In such a way, you can teach youngsters to analyse ideas, to think forward, foresee risks and plan necessary resources.

It often happens that new ideas appear and the work starts all over again. Youngsters often deviate from the topic, and the leader must facilitate associative thinking without returning directly to the previous topic. Therefore, there must be time for conversations “about nothing” and about everything, what emerges during the discussion. You must seek for youngsters not to forget the goal, they should remember the performed work and the feeling of success and pleasure of a well-organised event or implemented project. When the idea becomes a plan, it must be implemented as soon as possible, because youngsters get bored with waiting and they start thinking about other ideas.

Providing possibilities

In Latvia youngsters have many possibilities to learn to become active. The role of the adult leader is to provide information, to help to see possibilities in offered activities and help to realise them. Events are regular, calls for project proposals are regularly announced, seminars and trainings are organised every week. There is so much information that youngsters need help in choosing activities that would correspond to their wishes. Youngsters are different, wishes, interests of youngsters’ groups vary, and the adult must know them in order to provide the information to the correct group that can and wish to get involved. Youth work demands time: the leader must constantly keep contacts with the youngsters, be informed about their interests and wishes. Generations change, so do interests, wishes and possibilities; the youth work is an eternal research process: you must always know what is happening in the region, in the country in the world. Youngsters themselves will tell you much, but there must be cooperation with schools, youth centres, informal groups and other institutions.

Methods of informal education

Games for getting acquainted

Name – feature – what do you like?

Goal: to remember the participants' names.

Duration: 15 minutes.

No equipment is needed.

Course: the participants are standing or sitting in a circle. The first one tells his name, his/her most characteristic feature and anything that he/she likes and which starts with the same letter as the name. The next participant repeats everything that was said by the previous person and tells about himself/herself. If the group is large, it can be decided that the participants repeat the things said by five previous people.

Three true things and one lie

Goal: to get acquainted.

Duration: 20-30 minutes.

Equipment needed: paper and pens, it is possible to use stick papers and papers with clips.

Course: each participant writes three true things and one false thing about himself and fastens it to the back. They walk around and guess what 3 things written on the back are true and which one is false about the person. They mark the lie. When it is finished, they sit down in a circle and discuss the results.

Acquaint with oneself in one's language

Goal: acquaintance between participants of different nationalities.

Duration: number of participants x 5 minutes

No equipment is needed

Course: each participant, when acquainting with himself/herself, uses his/her state language, which he/she speaks every day. For example: "*Labdien! Es esmu Ieva no Latvijas, un man ir...*" (Latv. for *Hello! I'm Ieva from Latvia, and I've got...*). Each participant has 5 minutes. Then all participants tell the others what they have understood – maybe they heard familiar words. The largest achievement is usage of nonverbal communication, the possibility to use other skills and abilities, which are not related to language knowledge.

Ice breaking activities

Stone metaphor

Goal: encourage/introduce the participants

Duration: 15-30 minutes

Equipment needed: similar small stones or other small things (according to the number of the participants)

Course: give a stone to each participant. They examine it carefully and try to remember. Then collect all the stones and put them together. The participants must find their stone and tell how it is

different from the others, why it is special and what it has in common with the other stones. Then you may compare the stones with people and ask the participants how different they are from other people.

Alphabetic chairs

Goal: ice-breaking between the participants.

Duration: 15-30 minutes

Equipment needed: chairs (for each participant),

Course: the participants are standing on the chairs in a row. They must range in the alphabetical order (or order of birthdays, etc.), but without touching the floor!!!

If there is a group of disabled people, it is possible to use a rope. In this case, they must range in the alphabetical order without releasing the rope.

Magic box

Goal: to get to know each other/ice breaking.

Duration: number of participants x 1.5 minutes

Equipment needed: a box with a mirror inside.

Course: the participants do not know that there is a mirror inside the box. The organiser says that in the box there is a picture of a person that everybody knows. Opening the box, the participants must tell one good thing about this person.

Taste other languages

Goal: increase the interest in other countries, cultures and languages.

Number of participants: 3-10.

Duration: 15 minutes.

No equipment needed

Course: the participants learn to count from 1 to 9 in each participant's language (or folk/ children songs; it is possible to prepare texts).

Dividing into teams

Shoe size

Goal: divide the participants into smaller groups using an unusual criterion.

Duration: 5 minutes

Equipment needed: each participant must be wearing shoes

Course: they are divided into smaller groups according to shoe size. Other possible criteria: colours, material, etc.

Atoms

Goal: divide the participants into smaller groups.

Number of participants: min. 10 people

Duration: 5-10 minutes.

Equipment needed: a CD player and a music disk.

Course: Music is playing. When music is suddenly switched off, the participants must make groups or join hands forming “atoms”. In the beginning, they form atoms of 3 people. Then you can give the task to form atoms consisting of 4 people. You continue playing the game until you have the necessary number of teams.

Brainstorms

101 ways of attracting financing

Goal: think out various ways of attracting financing for the project.

Number of participants: teams of 5-8 people

Duration: at least 30 minutes

Equipment needed: stick papers, empty wall

Course: each group must invent 101 ways of attracting sponsors for a new project. Before the activity, the organisers explain basic principles of brainstorms:

- the participants must generate as many ideas as possible;
- the ideas must not be changed before the end of the activity;
- the participants create new ideas by uniting the present ideas.

The groups are putting the sticking papers on the wall and are trying to invent more ideas. When the group reaches a deadlock and is not able to invent anything else, the organiser can provide a new direction for ideas, saying for example, that there are also illegal ways of finding financing, foundations, collecting donations. After half an hour the results are evaluated according to various criteria, e.g. whether it is possible to attract financing in such a way, large or small amount of financing is attractable.

Brainstorming about project ideas

Goal: develop project ideas with youngsters’ help in order to create a general overview about the situation from different points of view.

Duration: 60 minutes

Equipment needed: a white board, markers and sticking papers.

Course: the participants are divided into teams. You must provide creative environment. Its conditions:

- all ideas are right;
- it is forbidden to say “No” automatically;
- everything is worth recording;
- participants must have positive attitude to every idea.

The youngsters are thinking about the youth problems/situation/ possibilities in the modern society. They use the unique experience of each group and record everything on the board. Then they work on the next issue – May international youth work be a strategy for combating youngsters’ problems? If yes, how can it be done?

Basic principles

Goal: create basic conditions for successful teamwork.

Number of participants: 10-30 people.

Duration: 20-30 minutes.

Equipment needed: a board and markers.

Course: on the board, there is the word "CONDITIONS". The participants think about the words, which associate with the word 'conditions'. They continue associating until it seems that the basic conditions are found.

Activities for uniting the team

Numbers

Goal: uniting.

Duration: 10-15 minutes.

No equipment is needed.

Course: everyone is standing in a circle. The participants are counting to 25 without naming the numbers that contain cipher 3 or can be divided by 3. Instead of saying these numbers, they clap their hands. If somebody makes a mistake, the process starts from the beginning. You go on until the group counts to 25 without any mistake.

Line up (according to height, age or birthday date)

Goal: unite the team.

Duration: 10-15 minutes

No equipment is needed.

Course: the participant must find their place in a row according to the chosen criterion, but without speaking and with closed eyes.

Turn the sheet upside down

Goal: uniting the group.

Duration: 15 minutes.

Equipment: a sheet.

Course: the sheet is put on the floor/on the ground. The participants take their shoes off and stand on the sheet. The group must turn the sheet on another side, without coming down from it. It is more complicated and interesting to do it, if the group is large, but the sheet is small.

Ploughing

Goal: encourage the participants to trust each other.

Number of participants: 6-20 people (even number)

Duration: 30 minutes

Equipment needed: bandages for eyes for a half of the participants. An obstacle course is made, preferably in the open air.

Course: all the participants are taken to the start and are divided into pairs. One of them will have a bandage on the eyes; the second one is the leader. The participants are given some time for inventing the way of communication as speaking is forbidden. When one participant has the bandage on the eyes, the second receives the plan of obstacles. When the task is performed, they exchange the roles and act according a new plan.

Encouraging activities or energisers

Formula 1

Goal: regain energy

Duration: 3 minutes.

Equipment: you can use a chronometer for stimulation.

Course: the participants are standing in a circle, close to each other, behind each other. The first starts the game turning the head left and uttering the sound of Formula 1 (BZZZZZZZ). Each participant continues the sound, making a “sound wave”. The chronometer can help to record the fastest circle of the sound. Later you can add a movement – raise a hand, make a step, etc.

Touch the colour

Goal: encourage and brighten the group

Duration: 10 minutes

The leader names various colours. The participants must find an object of this colour and touch it. Then you may change the rules, for example, the participants must find the colour in other participants' clothes.

Europeans' salads

Goal: encourage and get acquainted

Number of participants: 10-30 people

Duration: 15-30 minutes

Equipment needed: chairs in a circle (the number of chairs is smaller by one than the number of participants)

Course: one participant is standing in the middle of the circle and names a feature. All the participants who possess this feature must take a seat. The person who is in the middle of the circle is trying to take a free seat. When he manages to find a free chair, the person who failed to take a seat goes into the centre of the circle and asks the next question. If he/she fails to ask a question, he/she says “Europeans' salads” and everyone must change a seat.

Simulations

Soccer with glasses

Goal: to make the participants understand eyesight disorders, to show their consequences.

Duration: 30-45 minutes

Equipment needed: 2 plastic glasses for each participant, ropes, scissors, soccer ball, a small plot of land with grass.

Course: each participant gets 2 glasses and a rope; the participants cut the bottom part of the glasses, make two holes in the upper part and thread a rope into the holes to make sides of the spectacles.

The group is divided into 2 teams. They play soccer according to the ordinary rules wearing the spectacles.

Questions after the activity: How limited was your view? How did you feel about it? Did you react in a different way? Was other people's attitude different? Why? What can we learn from this activity? What did we learn about disabled youngsters?

Yellow press

Goal: motivate the participants to listen to each other without interrupting.

Duration: 2-4 hours (if making a magazine ~1 day).

Equipment: writing materials, papers, camera (if making a magazine – a computer, a printer).

Course: the participants divide the roles – journalists and VIP (Very Important People). The journalists receive paper, writing materials, a camera.

The second group put themselves into VIP place: they receive information that they will have a possibility to give an interview to the most popular magazines in Latvia or in the world. There will be photographers. First, they must go through a film test.

In order to do it each participant writes 5 achievements in his life, what he is proud of, and 5 things that he wants to achieve. Then he chooses the best thing from the list. The VIP give an interview starting with words: *"I am the only one to possess... or I'm the only one who ..."*. Then the participants can exchange the roles with the journalists.

While giving an interview, the participants stand on a higher place. If there is a possibility, you can make a VIP magazine.

Discussion after the activity: What were VIP's and journalist's roles? How did the participant feel? Was it difficult to listen to the others? Did all the participants feel the same as you, when they were speaking about their achievements?

It is necessary to ensure that the participants support each other and do not interrupt! Before the activity, you can use an ice-breaking activity. If anyone refuses to speak standing in a higher place, offer him to stand up and just speaks about his achievements.

The speaking place must be stable.

Container (Egg exercise)

Goal: give a possibility to know more about dynamics of the group

Number of participants: 15-40 people.

Duration: 30-60 minutes

Equipment: an egg, 5 papers (A4), 1 pack of chewing gum, 12 toothpicks, 12 paper clips, 4 balloons, 1 marker, 4 round pieces of rubber, 5 straws and a rope.

Course: the participants are divided into teams (4-6 people). Their task is to make a container that would protect an egg from 5 metre high falling. It is not obligatory to use all the materials, but it is forbidden to use anything additional and they must not tie anything to the egg. When the containers are ready, each team presents their variant – they tell the name of their container, its characteristic features, about its quality and advantages, as well as about the labour strategy for promotion of the container in the marker. After the presentations all containers are tested – if they really protect the egg: they are thrown and the result is evaluated. Discussion after the activity: How were duties divided within the team? How did the team make decisions? Were everyone involved in work?

Presentations

While a match is burning

Goal: to give the most important information about the organisation and make the presentations short and funny.

Number of participants: 15-30 people

Duration: number of participants x 1.5 minutes

Equipment: matches, a fire extinguisher and an ashtray.

Course: the participants must tell the most important things about their organisation, but they can speak only as long as a match is burning. The level of complicity can be increased: the leader may take a burning match from a speaking participant and give it forward to the next participant. It is also possible to make the time of presentations longer, giving longer matches or providing 2 matches to each participant.

It is desirable to have a person who is ready and able to use the fire extinguisher in case of emergency. The used matches must be put in the ashtray.

Mystery detective

Goal: get acquainted and create links, increase curiosity about each other.

Number of participants: 4-40 people

Duration: 1 day

Equipment: photos with participants' names.

Course: the participants write their names on the photos, and then all the photos are put in a basket. The participants are asked to take out a photo. The chosen person becomes the object of shadowing. Everyone gets a person to shadow during a day. Without letting themselves be noticed, the participants are collecting interesting information about their chosen person. Next day the discovered information is published. The activity helps the group members to know more about each other in a short period of time, to create links and ensures creative atmosphere.

TV quiz

Goal: present the most important information about the EU programme "Youth in Action".

Number of participants: 10-30 people

Duration: 90 minutes

Equipment: MS PowerPoint or any other presentation and materials to make an advertisement for the television.

Course: first, a presentation about the programme "Youth in Action" is given. The presentation is shown in a form of a quiz, when the participants (divided into 4 teams) must answer the questions about the programme. The presentation lasts 40 minutes. Then the participants prepare a short TV ad about the programme "Youth in Action", which would encourage youngsters to get involved in this programme. The ad must be short and attractive. The participants are given 20 minutes for preparation and 10 minutes for presentation. They are provided with all information about the programme (15 minutes). On the wall, there is a large piece of paper for each subaction of the programme, where the participants can write questions and answers.

Farewell activities

Friendship network

Goal: give a possibility to thank, to strengthen friendship links Number of participants: 8-20 people

Duration: 30 minutes

Equipment: a ball of yarn

Course: the participants are sitting in a circle. The first participant takes the ball of yarn, ties the thread around a finger and throws the ball to any other participant thanking him/her for anything. The next participant does the same expressing his/her gratitude for anything.

Tree of the mood

Goal: to remember and evaluate impressions.

Duration: 15-20 minutes.

Equipment needed: a drawing of a tree with many branches with people climbing or sitting on the branches. The people have different face expressions.

Course: each participant is given a small piece of paper. He/she finds a person on the tree with the mood that corresponds to his mood during the activity to be evaluated and marks this person sticking the paper by it.

Post

Goal: to thank, strengthen friendship, remember events.

Number of participants: 6-20 people

Duration: 30-50 minutes

Equipment needed: papers and envelopes with participants' names.

Course: everyone takes an envelope and writes a letter to the person whose name is inside the envelope.

It is asked to write only positive things in the letter. The envelopes are opened at home.

Pouring water

Goal: thank the others; evaluate work/seminar/ programme, colleagues.

Duration: 30-45 minutes

Equipment needed: 3 bowls and liquid of light and dark colour.

Course: In 2 bowls, there is equal amount of liquid (in one bowl, it is dark, in the other, it is light), but the third bowl is empty.

The light colour symbolises positive energy, feeling of victory. The dark colour is a symbol of negative, painful, sorrow things. Every participant takes a tablespoonful of any liquid (according to his evaluation of the events) and pours it into the empty bowl. It is allowed to pour several times, if the person has many things to say.

Sun of wishes

Goal: positive memories about the project.

Duration: 20-30 minutes.

Equipment needed: paper for each participant, writing materials.

Course: each participant tears out (does not cut!) a sun and writes his name on it. Then the sun is given to all the participants and they write a wish on it. Finally, each participant has a sun full with wishes.

Conclusion

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outh motivation is work that requires great contribution of internal resources. The adult leader must be creative, supportive, intelligent, self-confident and with good sense of humour. Working with youth you must be constantly “present” – “be here” all the time, you must not deviate, think or do other things.

Modern researchers in the sphere of humanities say that person’s personal qualities are more important than professional knowledge. The only way how to gain the high level of personal quality is to improve oneself, to learn more about one’s bad qualities, to study and develop.

And the most important method in youth work is to allow them to act!

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