

Methodology

Mixed Groups

YOU Mix it

Created by the Partnership

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Applicant

Caprifolen Voltigeklubb - Sweden

Partners

Calypso - Italy

Asociación Juvenil Teatral On&Off - Spain

Crooked House Theatre Company - Ireland

What is KASAM?

The KASAM model was first introduced by Antonovsky in 1987 in an attempt to answer how certain people could navigate through life's adversities without experiencing a decline in their health while others could not. To do this Antonovsky came up with his model of Salutogenesis or Sense of Coherence (Swedish: Känslan av Samanhang: KASAM) believing that individuals can grow and develop further from the crises that they undergo.

KASAM posits that no person is entirely in good or bad health, rather everyone can be found somewhere on a spectrum between these two poles. To determine where on this spectrum an individual is found, the KASAM model relies on three criteria, these are:

- Comprehensibility, i.e. the feeling that what happens in the world, both inside and outside the individual, is comprehensible, structured and can be predicted.
- Manageability, which here means that the resources that the events taking place in the environment require are available.
- Meaningfulness in life, which you experience if you feel that the challenges you face are worth getting involved in.

This framework provides a comprehensive perspective on an individual's well-being, emphasizing the interconnectedness of comprehensibility, manageability, and meaningfulness in life within the context of health and adversity.

How did we use KASAM?

KASAM was used as the basis for all the planning, implementation, and evaluation activities carried out for this project. From the inception of the YOUmixit project the ideas and values described in the KASAM model were held as important core tenets of all the partner's approaches. From the initial stages of planning the concepts of Comprehensibility, Manageability, and Meaningfulness were held as the aim for all the different steps of the project. The workshops were planned in such a way as to make sure that all the participants would feel included, understood, and heard. Following the conclusion of the project these principles were then used to grasp how each workshop impacted the participant.

Building upon the foundation of the KASAM theory, Caprifolen, as the lead partner of the project, proposed the inclusion of a fourth core tenet for the project's objectives - predictability. This new element allows for the establishment of patterns, fostering a sense of familiarity and providing an added layer of safety for the participants. Moreover, this final component encourages participants feel welcome and have an urge to return, knowing that their boundaries are respected.

Finally, the theory behind KASAM is used as a benchmark to evaluate how each activity is perceived by the participating members. This is done by asking whether or not each activity is able to be meet the three pillars that make-up the foundation of KASAM, namely comprehensibility, manageability, meaningfulness, and predictability. In doing so, it is possible to find shortcomings in the activities that can then be improved upon for the future.

Mixed groups

In mixed groups, different types of skills, tastes and personalities are encouraged, which makes the experiences much more enriching. Different interests, different sexes, different races, different abilities... Different is the word that defines success when we talk about mixed groups. And here, yes, it is the diversity of the people who participate that will make the experience unique and stimulating.

Mixed groups have to be a learning stimulus for all participants, for this it will be essential to value “the difference”, understanding it not as an obstacle, but as an opportunity to appreciate and love it.

In mixed groups, the observation of personal limits opens up from a new naturality, free of pressure to maintain an appearance or a social image. By sharing spaces where disability is present and evidenced, named, accepted and welcomed; the liberation of the clumsiness of any human being occurs.

In the case of theater, as a pedagogical tool, the form of expression of each participant is pure richness. In the case of art, different approaches to artistic techniques coming with different abilities, educations, sensibilities and perspectives are enhancing creativity by overcoming limits and given paths.

Discuss

In this discussion process, we have examined in detail the execution steps of each activity, providing participants with all the explanations they have requested, looking for simple words accessible to their understanding. We have also provided them with emotional vocabulary, relying on the book “EMOTIONARY” which has beautiful pictograms and a definition of emotions that are easy to understand, analyze in oneself and identify.

Instructor

In order for mixed group training to work, the instructor must believe in the concept that it is a personal growth experience for all participants (people with and without disabilities). If the instructor truly believes that each participant with their circumstances has the capacity to create beauty, contribute other qualities of movements, other sounds, other ways of being and doing, they will transmit that belief to the team in each instruction, in their paraverbal language and in the words you use.

The instructor:

- Will guarantee that everyone's voice is heard equally, will give the time that each person needs, with patience, with respect, without completing the ends of the sentences, without fear of silence and perhaps, accompanying with appropriate questions.
- Will create a climate of safety in which all people feel safe to express themselves in the way that is most liberating for them, without fear of ridicule, impatience, or bad consequences of any kind.
- Will remain attentive to the voices of the participants, listening to their opinions, adapting to needs that he could not observe in advance, implementing improvements with flexibility.

Creating a safe space

For any activity that uses art to encourage emotional expression, creating safe environments is essential. Here we share some tips to achieve this:

- *Emotional and physical safety*

To ensure their comfort, establish a set of rules or gestures for the group, for example:



Crossing their arms: I don't feel comfortable participating in this activity.



Turning their back: I need a moment to be alone.



Index finger on lips: I prefer not to speak.

This will encourage participants to communicate their needs and their boundaries.

Review with them from time to time the security measures you have put in place and evaluate whether any of them need to be enhanced/modified/eliminated.

- *Flexibility*

Remember that there will be participants with different needs and/or capacities. Be prepared to adapt the activities to them and avoid situations in which they could feel excluded. Plan activities and workshops that are enriching for all the participants.

- *Participants' relationships*

Carry out team building activities for the group, so that they can bond and create meaningful relationships. Offer spaces for them to explore and celebrate their differences.

Establish good dynamics within the group: promote respect, kindness and inclusion. Provide conflict resolution skills and prepare a plan of action in case of bullying, exclusion or any other conflict among the participants.

Supporting Tools

Supporting tools play a vital role when working with people with disabilities. It is important to take into consideration the different ways in which people perceive information and the ways in which they are most comfortable communicating with others. For this reason, it was central for all the participating organizations to create a variety of methods by which communication could be dispatched. These methods include visual aids, such as images of movements/activities, prerecorded demonstrations of the dances that may be a part of the project, and the implementation of sign language. Beyond giving a concrete example of what the outcome of the movements may look like, these tools also align with the use of KASAM and the importance of predictability. The inclusion of sign language further expands the ways in which communication can reach the participants of the project, ensuring a more inclusive and accessible approach.

Tools

Why drama?

Theatre has a number of advantages as a tool in youth work: principally that it is a collaborative activity and it is very successful in achieving personal and social transformation.

Collaboration and creativity

All people have the right to be creative and to practice their creativity together. The drama based workshops focus on participants being engaged collaboratively, working actively to create meaning together in mixed groups.

Being social - moving towards community

Drama encourages participants to work in groups or in pairs, and to focus their attention onto the social more so than onto the personal. By bringing mixed groups together through drama we hope to take a step towards inclusion in activities that people with disabilities would not often have equal access to.

Open access, Free, Available to all

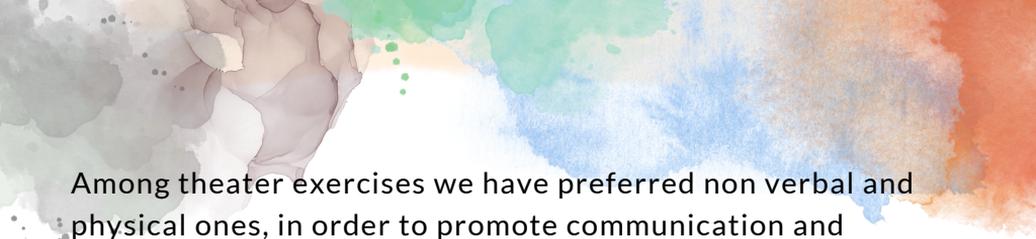
The materials in this project make access to theater-making easier and as accessible as possible. And therefore, they are free and readily available.



“Theatre is the best tool to bring out the potential that the human being carries within, because it can provide self-confidence, commitment to the group, shared work, expression at all levels (bodily, gestural, oral), fun and creativity, that is at least”

Mascaró, 2001.

Theater is a good method to encourage the participants to continue developing their creativity, a fundamental aspect that makes them unique and that will help them, in the future, to adapt or lead the changes that our society needs. Aspects such as body and oral expression remain awake and developing, while learning is done in a playful and natural way, making the learning process effective and meaningful. Theater as a pedagogical instrument is a powerful means to record information about a certain topic in people's memories. Through the dramatization of situations that generate an emotional impact, they are led to pay attention to certain aspects of what is represented so that they reflect on reality, the environment, behaviors and value systems, and above all so that they have the opportunity to know and respect oneself, as an essential step to know and respect others. Theater is one of the artistic disciplines that, in recent years, has served the purpose of social inclusion of different groups the most. The practice of this activity favors the development of essential aspects such as concentration, memory, the ability to improvise and expression. Theater is communication, it tells a story to the public, it represents emotions, lives, it represents the human being in all its forms.



Among theater exercises we have preferred non verbal and physical ones, in order to promote communication and cooperation in the group. Theater techniques always involve body activation, at different levels and this dimension can be useful for mixed groups, to promote cooperation, communication and mutual understanding of each other's needs and abilities.

On the other hand, we proposed some puppet and visual theater techniques, such as shadows and theater with objects, because they can be easily accessible and funny for everyone, and they give the possibility to work more with symbols and metaphors.



Why art?



Through the project 'YouMixIt', we have explored the possibilities that art offers to promote processes of inclusion and social transformation, promoting dialogue between people and organizations from the artistic field. The participation of people in the workshops for mixed groups has made it possible for the participants to get to know each other or deepen their mutual knowledge, exchange criteria and good practices and strengthen their relationship later.

Expression constitutes a dimension and a fundamental right of people and artistic expression is a privileged way for all people and, in particular, those who face situations of exclusion and vulnerability, to develop that dimension and exercise that right, individually and collectively. Art constitutes a space for expression and personal development, encounter, social participation, work... A space that allows people to transcend barriers and difficulties of very different types (physical, relational, communicative...) and communicate situations socially, effectively. unfair, alternatives...

We proposed some activities inspired by art therapy ateliers because we like the idea of exploring collaboration and expressing emotions in a non verbal dimension. Art exercises offer the possibility to have both freedom and a framework: materials and techniques create the structure, while creativity and personal expressions give everybody the chance to explore with no expected results.



For this reason, art can be a powerful tool to express feelings and emotions without the need of an interpretation, and is a great tool for cooperation because it implies listening and respecting other people's rhythm and needs. Moreover, art is naturally inclusive, from the moment there are more ways to explore and create and everyone can find his/her own.

Why circus?

Circus is a powerful tool to enhance the experience of people with and without disabilities. When used in an open environment it can foster a sense of exploration and enjoyment for all people. As a non competitive form of acrobatics it opens the door to people who may otherwise feel unwilling or unable to express themselves physically. This in turn allows for the people taking part circus related activities to develop their gross and fine motor skills, core strengths, flexibility, and proprioception. This broad set of benefits in turn increases participants' self-confidence in their physical and mental ability and stimulates a new drive to tackle future challenges with a new sense of openness.



Why movement?

Movement is expression. People find in movement the possibility of exercising their body and expressing their feelings and emotions. Through the project 'YouMixIt', we have used movement in theater, circus, vaulting and even in plastic arts workshops, bringing together people with diverse abilities, creating a common space where movement is used as a form of integration.

Movement makes the differences between people's bodies of incalculable value, and it helps us to enhance and develop the sensory and emotional side of people, in addition to also working on the physical part.

Movement provides comprehensive benefits to all participants: it helps to be aware of one's own body, to develop bodily intelligence and to improve many psychic functions, muscle tone, resistance and lung capacity.

Furthermore, in the case of theater and dance, it adds the learning of small movements, steps and choreographies that serve to exercise and improve memory.

Some of the movement exercises are inspired by Dance Movement Therapy of , a methodology that enhances self awareness and communication through authentic movement and dance. For these activities a safe and non judgemental environment is fundamental so that participants are encouraged to explore their own way of moving with specific quality and intensity of their own movement. Applying the KASAM model, the predictability can be guaranteed from rhythmical structures and repetition of sequences of movements. Meaningfulness can be improved by adding specific questions or topics to start the movement (e.g. about emotions or feelings) or by working in pairs.

