

“Triangular exercise” between social worker / observer / moderator
& Role-playing methodology
Family development program in Antananarivo – Madagascar
Inter Aide - KOLOAINA

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Objectives of the exercise

Confronted with complex domestic situations, social workers can feel shut out, diminished, or powerless. Non-judgmental exchanges with colleagues can provide measures for reflection, opportunities to find new working methods, possible resolutions for situations or simply a forum for sharing mutual difficulties.

This exercise requires at least three participants (it can also be undertaken with other observers) and promotes exchange and reflection with the goal of being non-judgmental.

This activity also helps social workers to develop a sense of synthesis and the capacity to distinguish essential elements, to formulate hypotheses, and to be attentive to all « non-verbal » interactive exchanges over the course of the home visit (HV).

Procedure for the exercise:

The exercise involves four phases.

Phase	Constraints/remarks	Duration
Summary of the family's situation	The social worker presents the family's situation, the goals of the home-based follow-up defined with them, and also the HV (home visit) objectives of the day, to the observer and moderator as well as potential observers. The latter may ask questions regarding the presentation.	Maximum 30 minutes
Home visit of the family	social worker + observer	Maximum one hour
Debriefing of the HV	This requires the mandatory presence of a moderator, in addition to the social worker and the observer. Other people may also attend the meeting, but should not under any circumstance participate in the discussion, unless it was clearly defined otherwise at the beginning and that rules for intervention are scrupulously respected.	Maximum one hour
Conclusion	Either the debriefing allows all parties to agree on what to do with the family for the next HV; Or, there is no consensus and hence a new meeting is required to pursue further discussion and reach a satisfactory conclusion.	

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Phase 1: structure for presenting the family situation

During the summary, the social worker in charge of the follow up of the family should make sure the following information is provided to the colleagues:

- Date of the start of the follow-up
- How did s/he come into contact with the family? (mapping, social center, the family contacted the social worker themselves when s/he was in the area, for what particular situation did the social worker become involved with this family?).
- The actual structure of the family: the social worker must try to synthesise all information about the family at his/her disposal that s/he collected step by step during the different HVs that have already been undertaken, and not simply reading from a report document. If possible the social worker should present a genogram.
- What are the objectives defined by the family?
- What are the objectives the social worker proposed?
- What are the objectives already achieved?
- What are the potential obstacles and
- What is the objective for the HV on the day?

Distribution of roles during the HV:

The social worker will act out his methods as usual and according to the objectives that he has set out for this HV with the family. He must also remember to present his colleague to the family and ensure that his presence during the visit is accepted by the family.

The observer will make no direct intervention during the visit. However s/he is not expected to be passive. He will diligently observe what is happening, both from the social worker's perspective as well as that of the family.

Structure / procedure for the debriefing:

- 1) The social worker gives an account of the HV that took place with the family
 - Who was present in the home?
 - With whom was the visit undertaken?
 - What was discussed with the family?
 - What information was obtained?
 - What progress was made regarding the family's objectives?
 - What was the atmosphere or feeling of the home visit?
 - How did s/he feel during and after the visit?
- 2) The observer
 - Describes what he saw during the HV, in regards to the family members (discussion, non-verbal attitudes on the parts of the family and the social worker...
 - Then the observer can give his/her feeling about the general atmosphere during the visit
 - Asks questions regarding points that seem unclear



- Shows his own perspective of the family situation, what he understands, and proposes some points for reflection ...: there, s/he can give ideas and opinions (and still: no judgements!)

This should be done in a non-judgmental fashion: certain things should not be part of the presentation, for example: «the HV *should* have occurred in this manner...». «You performed *poorly* in this area...», but simply to state the facts (ex: «When you posed this question, the mother reacted in this way»).

You cannot observe things that didn't take place (eg: “you didn't mention this or that”), you can only observe things that took place!

If someone says “I think this and that” it is not an observation, but an opinion.

3) The moderator

- Explains the rules of the discussion (including the principle of non-judgment)
- Checks the time
- Verifies that the presentation is clear and understood by all.
- Makes sure there are no new questions.
- Verifies the social worker and the observer worked according to their defined roles (for example, asking one if how the other performed his/her role: again, observations only, no judgement!).
- Allows for all parties to reflect on the experience by giving the floor to all participants
- If a decision is taken, or a result is defined, he reformulates key points until all parties are in agreement.
- If after the debriefing no conclusion is reached, s/he sets a new meeting with the team so that the team can work together for a common decision.
- If at the end of a new meeting, the team continues to fail to reach consensus on a decision regarding the next step of the follow up of the family, the moderator can contact the program manager or the training officer in charge of the technical support.
- In all cases, when a decision is not made about the course of action to adopt, no future HV with the family can be planned.

Role-playing

1- Possible uses:

- Can involve a group of adults or children
- Conflict resolution (teamwork, family situation...)
- Case study
- Preparing for how to deal with new situations, changes
- During training for the appropriation of a concept



2- Objectives:

- Encouraging discussion, expression of feelings, experiences, or resentment.
- To help with psychological preparation for new situations and new events.
- Developing empathy (imagining the other persons' situation and how to improve it)
- Developing respect for others (avoiding judgmental behaviour).
- Learning how to manage emotions and fear during the relationship
- Building trust and helping develop self-confidence.
- Encouraging exchanges between individuals.
- Encouraging listening.
- Building self-esteem (ex: a child is a scapegoat in a group. The social worker a role-play to demonstrate what this child can feel in a given situation).
- Recognition within a group (recognising what the others go through, defining roles within a group.)
- How to overcome obstacles, targeting obstacles, issues of discomfort as well as imagining solutions.
- Restoring communication.
- Identifying hypotheses and work objectives.
- Working on situational strategies.
- Stimulation of the imagination.
- Creating a group dynamic in a short space of time.
- Facilitating the appropriation of a concept.

3- Structure:

- A group of individuals
- One social worker (one social worker for six people)
- An enclosed space, calm and contained
- The participants will face the audience.

4- Procedure:

- Presentation of the tool (why and how)
- Instructions, rules and framework.
- Choice of situation.
- Description of the context, and what has taken place before the scene is presented.
- Description of characters, setting and reason for the encounter.
- Briefing of the actors on their character. Then they begin playing that part.
- Instructions given to audience (the quality of listening, observation of verbal and non-verbal communication, emotions...)
- Role-play steps.
- Expression of feelings ;
 - o Actors
 - o Observers
 - o The social worker can express his thoughts, but only at the end.



- Analysis of the meeting;
 - o Attitudes which facilitated or undermined the role-play
 - o Whether behaviour was co-operative or not: if not, how?
 - o Alliances or global responsibility

5- Rules/framework:

- Non-judgmental, non-interpretative.
- Each must take turns speaking and listening to each other (no private discussions, no interruptions...)
- No interruptions or annoying crosstalk effects, turn off electronic devices.
- Role-play can be interrupted if it's obvious a scene will not evolve toward further progress. If the role-play is interrupted, it's to assist in the role-play or replace a participant experiencing difficulty.
- The actors will, over the course of the role-play as in the debriefing, be addressed by the name of their character and not their actual name.
- Corrections can be made to ensure a satisfying conclusion.
- Decide whether to replay or not.
- Synthesis of the role-play.
- "De-role" the people who took part in the role-play ("you're not longer the husband of Mrs X, you are Ted, social worker"...)
- Evaluation of the tool.

6- Role of the facilitator:

- Ensure all announced rules are respected.
- Neutrality, non-judgment, non-interpretation. Facilitate the expression of emotions.
- Ensure all participants are given equal time for expression.
- Ensure respect is given for the feelings and physical well-being of the participants.

Expect the possibility of intervening in the session if the rules, framework or respect for personal space are not observed.

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We would like to stress here that these technical notes are not prescriptive. Their purpose is not to "say what should be done" but to present experiences that have given positive results in the context in which they were carried out.

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¹ Virginie Toussaint was at that time the programme manager of the Family Development Programme implemented in partnership with Koloaïna in Antananarivo, Madagascar.

