Instructions for Role Plays

Is that groaning we hear? Yeah, we know. Not everyone is thrilled by them. Or perhaps maybe they haven’t approached them in the right way. Don’t think of them as role plays. Think of them as mini-experiments. Ways to learn something new. Triggers for conversations about what is happening in the here and now – as opposed to an abstract situation.

In our past two workshops, there have been many opportunities for table conversations. Think about those. Most of them were about events that happened in the past – or something that might be anticipated or in the future. It’s rare that we ever get the chance to talk about something that is actually occurring as we participate in it.

These role plays are taken from situations which you have shared in different ways – in the learning groups, in conversations with colleagues and managers. They give you the chance to actually find words – to practice what you might say - when faced with some of the situations which challenge you at work. The stakes are low – you and the other members of your group are acting out suggestions described on your role play cards. It’s a great way to explore what works and what doesn’t. Don’t feel you have to find the perfect way to act – you could even choose to respond in a way that you think is completely not like you – see what happens!

Doing the Role Plays:
You are going to be in triads. Two people will be starting to do the acting – each of the actors will have a card outlining the suggested parameters of the role play. It’s more fun if you don’t share those before the action starts. The role of the third person is twofold: One is to take notes and share observations when the role play is over (Coach). The other is to step into a role, at a second’s notice - if one of the other two are stuck or don’t know where to go (Lifeliner).

Actors:
Take 10 seconds to read your part of the scenario. Try to take it seriously - offer a good counterpart to your partner. If you find yourself “off the page”, feel free to improvise. We have not written detailed scenarios.

Coaches/Lifeliners:
You will start the role play in an observing role. What do you notice working or not working well as the conversation progresses? You will be asked to give feedback to the role playing pair when it’s over. UNLESS - one of the two in the role play is stuck and really doesn't know what to say next. They can either ask you for some suggestions for them to take back into the role play. Or they can hand you the reins - you will then step in and continue.

Roles:
There are 3 roles for each session today - 3 for the morning, 3 for the afternoon. Take 10 minutes for each one. Rotate roles. You can do some debriefing in your triad before returning to the larger group.

To assist you with getting the most out of this experience and to rotate the roles, we have colour-coded them in the packages. Role 1 is green, Role 2 is yellow and Role 3 (Coach/Lifeliner) is blue. Because there are 3 scenarios for the activity, you should have the chance to take on each of these roles.

ROLE PLAY CARDINAL RULE

You get out of them what you put into them! Challenge yourself! There is no right or wrong - just a deepening understanding and, hopefully, the chance to practice some new ways of putting words together.