Title:

Social Presencing Theater Teaching & Learning Activity

Abstract:

Workshop participants engage in individual mindfulness and in practices that increase awareness of the “social body.” By heightening their sense of inter-personal connection, participants are better able to access creativity, facilitate groups, and provide effective and compassionate leadership. The use of non-verbal techniques to inquire into “stuck” situations in one’s professional and organizational life lead to surprising insights and possibilities. Social Presencing Theater heightens sensitivity to current experience, brings attention to shifts in social justice or a contextual field, and is a method for prototyping seeds of the future.

Key Words:

“Me” to “We”

**Introduction**

The Social Presencing Theater is an innovative social art form developed by the Presencing Institute that draws upon a body-based, intuitive knowledge of oneself and others.

This teaching and learning experience provides the participants with an opportunity to understand significant leadership principles regarding driving forces launching an individual and team from the “me” to the “we” or the “ego” to the “eco.” This activity will provide educators with an interactive method(s) to address 21st century leadership and change.

This exercise is designed to address late undergraduate, graduate, homogeneous and heterogeneous populations.

**Theoretical Foundation/ Teaching Implications**

My experience as a professor, a leader, and a social justice advocate has provided me with an opportunity to understand the significance of individual development and working together as a team. Peter Senge (2012) in speaking about schools that learn addresses the matter of systems thinking in relationship to involving each team member in a collaborative approach to effective interaction. Providing people with experience that enables them to recognize their independence and interdependence on the team provides for the sustainability factor in effective performance (Senge, 2012)

Otto Scharmer (2016) provides a dynamic teaching and learning reflection based on countless interviews and research. His ideas regarding leadership and the significance of addressing our blind spots play a major role in our contributions to personal and work experience. Scharmer says, “While management is about ‘getting things done,’ leadership is about creating and cultivating the larger context – the fertile common ground and soil – in which things can happen” (Scharmer, 2016, p. 72).

Leading by Convening (Cashman, et. all, 2014) is a process where educational leaders look to have authentic engagement. This authentic engagement has three prongs of (a) ensuring relevant participation from all stakeholder groups, (b) coalescing around issues, and (c) collaborating to solve problems (Cashman, et. all, 2014).

The teaching implications include the development of a person’s knowledge base regarding facilitation techniques, an “outright” application of lessons learned, and modeling effective teaching and learning interaction.

**Learning Objectives**

* To learn and understand several leadership principles;
* To participate in the application of leadership principles through Social Presencing Theater;
* To learn how to act in the world and not on the world;
* To interact and collaborate within a team;
* To experience empathic listening; and
* To learn a classroom facilitation technique.

**Exercise Overview**

90 Minutes

Comment: Each of the participants will receive a handout of the entire activity. However, due to space and complying with MOBTS Guidelines, I have provided the key components of the Social Presencing Theater Teaching and learning activity.

Directions Feeling Tone:

* Direct your attention to “what does it feel like in my body and what does the group body feel like?” Attention is 100% on being present in the feeling - doing body. Do not become distracted by thoughts such as “I don’t get it, what do I look like, or what will others think?”
* There is no room for thinking about it. No room for talking about it. Just do it.
* No need to pretend, to act, to mime, or to mug. It is about genuinely embodying, doing, manifesting, and making more visible what is in the field.
* Be it!
* Take your time. No need to rush. Follow the facilitator’s directions.

Step One:

1. Sit together in groups of five
2. Reflect on a place where you feel stuck, where there is a breakdown or an area of life that feels stuck
3. Let the feeling of being stuck in this particular situation come into your body as a shape or gesture
4. Each team member does this stuck at the same time
5. Then each person does their stuck for the entire team with a brief moment between each person’s stuck
6. Each team member reflects briefly on what they saw or felt as a witness and as a participant

Step Two:

1. In parallel (everyone by themselves but everyone doing it at the same time) practice the method. Each person embodies her stuck shape (sculpture 1) stays with the shape until it begins to move and then move without thinking, paying attention to what the body feels like doing. At the end of the movement and when you stop, you have reached sculpture 2. When you move from sculpture 1 to sculpture 2, sculpture 1 should always be the same but sculpture 2 may change.
2. Back in he team, each person shows his stuck, sculpture 1, and movement to sculpture 2.
3. After all team members have shared, each person reflects on what they experienced and what they witnessed.

Step 3:

1. Take a few minutes to sit as a team in silence and feel the social space.
2. One person places the other team members in her stuck from sculpture 1 to emphasize, augment, or clarify their feeling of stuck. This is not role-playing. People embody forces in the system that are keeping this situation stuck. The stuck person does not need to tell the team members what those forces are.
3. All team members pay close attention to the feeling of this stuck scenario. Sensing the feeling is significant. Feel yourself as a part of a collective or social body that is stuck. Intensify this feeling to make it stronger. Do not talk during this phase.
4. Hold that intensified shape in silence, letting go of any planning or manipulating. Remain in this space of “not knowing” and collective presencing.
5. Pay close attention to the collective body until it begins, almost imperceptibly at first, to move, to shift, to change, to open. The stuck person is not necessarily the initiator of the change. Follow where the movement leads, without thinking until it comes to rest, sculpture 2. (Pause there)
6. Remaining in sculpture 2, each person can say one sentence from the “I” voice regarding something they experienced. (Be specific)
7. Reflect as a team on what you noticed, observed, did or felt.
8. Experience a brief gap of team silence.
9. The next person does her team stuck exercise and continues utilizing the same protocol as above.
10. A general team debriefing

Step 4:

A coming together of the entire set of teams to provide a debriefing discussion

**Session Description**

Teaching & Learning Activity Responsible Time

Overview of the leadership components Facilitator 20 Minutes

Establishing foundational information

Social Presencing Theater Activity All Participants in Teams 60

Debriefing All Participants 10

References

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