

Gender

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Education Programme  
for Secondary Schools



# Empowerment and Communication

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MODULE 3/12

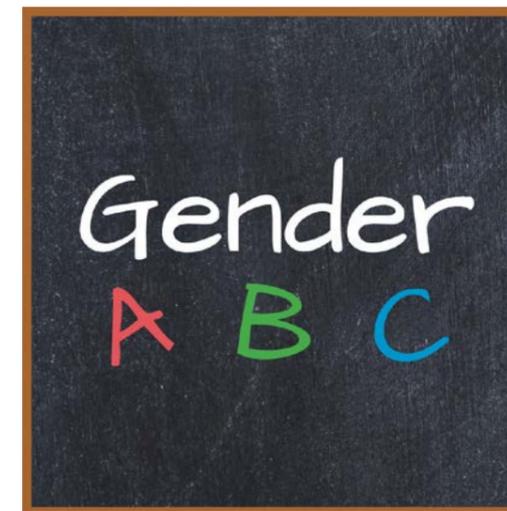
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Education Programme  
for Secondary Schools

## Empowerment and Communication

This educational module was developed by **APF – Associação para o Planeamento da Família** in the framework of the project **GenderABC**.

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# Summary

<b>Summary</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Section I - Introduction</b> .....	<b>3</b>
1. Purpose.....	3
2. Main topics.....	3
3. Keywords.....	3
4. Learning objectives.....	3
5. List of activities.....	4
<b>Section II - Activities</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Activity 1: <i>The Two Revelations</i> .....	5
• Background.....	5
• Scenario.....	6
• Brief.....	8
Activity 2: <i>The Power Walk</i> .....	9
• Background.....	9
• Scenario.....	9
• Brief.....	12
Activity 3: <i>The Empowerment Meal</i> .....	13
• Background.....	13
• Scenario.....	13
• Brief.....	15
<b>Session Plan</b> .....	<b>16</b>
<b>Modules List</b> .....	<b>17</b>

## Section I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1. Purpose

This module is based on individual empowerment and assertiveness regarding peer/group pressure. In particular, it focuses on: how to communicate difficult topics positively, how to say no, the importance of consent, the need to be assertive and not to do things unwillingly for fear of group/peer rejection.

#### 2. Main topics

- Assertive Communication
- Empathy
- Peer Pressure vs. Peer Support
- Conversation Traps
- Express Disagreement (say No)
- Express Agreement (say Yes)
- Identify Consent
- Gender Stereotypes
- Empowerment
- Power Stratification
- Privilege
- Patriarchy
- Discrimination

#### 3. Keywords

**Empowerment • Communication • Assertiveness**

#### 4. Learning objectives

Feel empowered and communicate effectively by:

- Using more conscious verbal and non-verbal messages
- Minimising communication barriers
- Expressing agreement (say YES) and disagreement (say NO) more accurately
- Fostering respectful relationships amongst each other in class
- Recognising privilege and discrimination
- Listing ways of turning disempowerment into empowerment

## 5. List of activities

	 Activity name	 Total duration	 Materials	 Importance <sup>1</sup>
1	<b>The Two Revelations</b>	45 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large space to set the scenic space</li> <li>• Tape</li> </ul>	★ ★ ★
2	<b>The Power Walk</b>	60-75 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large space</li> <li>• Instruction for the power walk</li> <li>• List of statements</li> <li>• Tape</li> </ul>	★ ★ ★
3	<b>The Empowerment Meal</b>	45-60 minutes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flipchart</li> <li>• Markers (3 colours per group)</li> <li>• Blu tack</li> <li>• Chronometer (for pitch speeches)</li> <li>• Coloured paper, recyclable material, tape, glue and scissors for creative presentations</li> </ul>	★ ★ ★

## Section II

### ACTIVITIES

#### Activity 1 The Two Revelations<sup>2</sup> ★ ★ ★



#### Total delivery time

40 minutes  
Preparation: 15  
Delivery: 20  
Follow-up: 10



#### Materials

- Large space to set the scenic space
- Tape

#### → BACKGROUND

This activity is part of the “Theatre of the Oppressed” methodology<sup>3</sup>. Originally, this exercise was called “The two revelations of Saint Teresa”, with the title relating to the place in Rio de Janeiro where it was invented (i.e. the neighbourhood of Santa Teresa). “Theatre of the Oppressed” is an interactive method that originated in Brazil and has been exported to over 70 countries on 5 continents. The format was created by Augusto Boal, who was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for his success in using theatre as a tool for social activism.

Boal emphasises the need to prevent the isolation of the audience, thus creating the term “spect-actor” in place of “spectator”. The “spectator” is also a subject, an actor on an equal plane with those accepted as actors, who in turn are also spectators. This eliminates any notion of the ruling class and the theatre solely portraying their ideals; consequently, the spectators no longer delegate power to the characters, either to think or act in their place. They free themselves; they think and act for themselves; they become “spect-actors”.

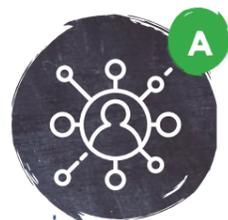
Boal’s methodology is composed of a multitude of games and exercises that **promote consciousness-raising** and **encourage a sense of empowerment among people** on the margins of the traditional decision-making processes.

<sup>1</sup> Activities are ranked from one to three stars, in increasing order of importance, i.e. three stars for “highly recommended”.

<sup>2</sup> Augusto Boal, translated by Adrian Jackson, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, London and New York: Routledge, 2nd Ed., 2002.

<sup>3</sup> For further information, check out the website of the Centre of Theatre of the Oppressed of Rio de Janeiro (CTO-Rio).

→ SCENARIO



**A** Bearing in mind that this activity deals with gender issues, the group decides what kind of inter-personal relations it wishes to investigate – parent/child, boyfriend/girlfriend, husband/wife, brother/sister, teacher/student, doctor/patient, best friends, etc. Only close, charged relationships can be selected.



**B** Then educators ask participants to create couples, in which participants decide: 1) who plays what; 2) where they usually meet; 3) their age. E.g. “We are mother and daughter, 40 and 15 years old, we meet at home in the evening, in the daughter’s bedroom”; “We are husband and wife, around 50 years old, we meet at home in the kitchen”; “We are best friends, both boys, both 14 years-old, we meet at the school café”.



**C** Each one individually – and without revealing it to the other – decides on a revelation of great importance that has the potential to change their relationship, for better or worse.



**D** Educators ask for a volunteer pair to step onto the stage (and after each performance, repeat the process according to the time at their disposal).  
The improvisation begins when the couple meets in the scenic space: they say to each other the things they think their characters would usually say and do what they believe they would usually do, including all the usual conversational clichés.



**E** After a few minutes, educators clap their hands and say, “One of you, make the first revelation”. Then, in character, one of the participants reveals to the other the “secret” information that has the potential to change their relationship. The other partner displays the most probable reaction.



**F** The educators clap their hands again and ask the second participant to make an important revelation as well, and in turn, the first one reacts accordingly.



**G** Another interval, then the educators tell one of the participants to leave: they improvise the separation, of whatever kind – a “see you tomorrow” or a “good night” or a “goodbye for ever”.

Besides addressing communication, this game is especially useful for showing the stratifications of a specific culture. First, where do husbands and wives, for instance, usually meet and talk – in the kitchen or in bed? What revelations do young girls make to their mothers – are they in love and want to leave home? Are they pregnant by a married man and want an abortion?

Comparisons of the different couples, where they meet and what they reveal, are very effective as means of exposing the power-relations and stereotypes of a given society.

→ BRIEF

Educators help participants analyse the core issues of the revelations and the quality of the communication in plenary:



- What was the main issue (for each character/couple)?
- Who was the oppressed? Who was the oppressor?
- Was it gender-based perspective?
- What went right? What went wrong?
- Can we make it better? How?

**If there is having extra time**, educators provide an input on concepts and models of communication and empowerment, such as:

- Types of communication (verbal and non-verbal)
- Common mistakes while communicating
- How to ignite/manage conversations:
  - › Active listening (effective feedback)
  - › Sandwich Model
  - › Situation-Behaviour-Impact Feedback (SBI) Model
  - › Feedforward Model
  - › Transactional Analysis Method (OK/KO)
  - › Elevator Pitch Technique

Activity 2 The Power Walk <sup>4</sup> ★★



**Total delivery time**

60-75 minutes  
Preparation: 15  
Delivery: 15  
Follow-up: 30-45



**Materials**

- Large space
- Instructions for the power walk
- List of statements
- Tape

→ BACKGROUND

“The power/privilege walk” is meant to **help participants understand the idea of privilege and make them aware of their own privilege.**

Note that this activity, when run with a group of 20 or more participants, requires a big space. Also, it requires time for everyone to get out of their role and have the chance to share their own feelings in plenary.

To avoid causing discomfort and embarrassment among the participants, it is recommended to use the role-play method and assign fake identities to participants (e.g. male lawyer, woman police officer).

→ SCENARIO



Each participant “steps into the shoes” of another person, e.g. a single mother, a blind man, etc.



Educators read the statements aloud and every time the statement applies to someone, they step forward. If not, they do not move.

<sup>4</sup>UN Women Training Centre, *Compendium of Good Practices in Training for Gender Equality* (p. 64, exercise “Patriarchy and the Power Walk”).



Participants visually see how much power, access to resources, and opportunities some individuals in society have compared to others.



Based on this, participants discuss how power and privilege depend on a person's gender, socio-economic position, ethnicity, and other crosscutting issues.

**Example of statements:**

- I have access to and can read newspapers regularly
- I eat at least two nutritious meals a day
- I would get legal representation if I am arrested
- I would be confident if I had to speak directly to a magistrate
- I am not in danger of being sexually harassed or abused
- I have a regular income or means of supporting myself
- I can speak in meetings to my extended family
- I would not be treated violently or roughly if I am arrested
- I can afford and access appropriate healthcare
- I can question spending of community funds
- I can name some of the laws in the country
- The head of state of my country is from my own gender
- Someone would immediately be told if I was arrested
- I have leftover money at the end of the week that I can spend on myself

- I can travel anywhere I like without assistance or permission
- I do not feel threatened in the workplace by any aspects of my identity
- I do not feel socially uncomfortable in most situations to voice my opinions
- I can do what I like in my home without fear
- I can walk home alone at night without fear
- I do most of my house chores

**Suggested Identities include:**

Lesbian woman	Arab male school teacher
Gay man	Female police officer
Transgender woman	Male police officer
Transgender man	Caucasian male member of parliament
Male lawyer and owner of a private firm	Black female member of parliament
Female Medical Doctor	Asian male factory worker
Unemployed single mother	Caucasian female factory worker
Grandmother taking care of orphans	Homeless male teenager
Roma young man	Homeless female teenager
Blind young man	Asylum Seeker Human Rights activist
Hijabi wearing female university student	Caucasian Human Rights activist

At the end of the activity, educators ask participants to “freeze” and mark their place on the floor with tape; after that, they state aloud which character they represented and stick their paper slip (with the description of their character) on top of their mark on the floor. When all positions are identified, educators invite participants to walk around and have a global view of how far each has gone in life.

→ BRIEF

Possible questions for debriefing:



- How did you feel?
- Does this exercise depict what happens in society? If so, what can you do about it?
- How can the disempowered characters empower themselves?
- How can the empowered characters support the disempowered ones?

Educators help participants comparing the positions of “same character – different gender” (e.g. Female/Male gay person, transgender person, police officer). They could also open a debate regarding the positions of “gender-free characters” (e.g. Human Rights Activist): did the participants imagine it to be a man or a woman? Would a character from the opposite sex achieve the same position?

- Note that this activity leads to a discussion that goes beyond gender.

If having extra time, educators pursue to listing the different types of inequity (gender, age, ethnicity, disability, education degree, social status, etc.) and the resources that could empower each disempowered character (e.g. look proactively for support, avoid isolation, having access to education, getting to know the law, learning how to speak in public, learning the host country’s language, learning self-defense techniques, joining a Human Rights NGO, campaigning for fair legislation, networking/building-up a support system, etc.)

If having more time (around 15’), educators ask participants to write down their responses to two simple questions:

- What was the most important thing you learned today?
- What question remains in your mind?

To **conclude the session**, educators ask participants to briefly present their answers. If time limitation do not allow for such presentation, ask participants to hand in their responses on their way out of the room, either anonymously or with their name on the top of the page.

Activity 3 The Empowerment Meal ★★★



**Total delivery time**

45-60 minutes  
Preparation: 10  
Delivery: 30  
Follow-up: 5-20



**Materials**

- Flipchart paper
- Markers (3 colours per group)
- Blu tack
- Chronometer (for pitch speeches)
- Coloured paper, recyclable material, tape, glue and scissors

→ BACKGROUND

This activity is meant to **make participants reflect on what is empowerment and how they can achieve it**. It is also meant to train effective communication, namely the “Elevator Pitch” technique.

→ SCENARIO



Educators split participants in groups of 3-5 and give them the following instruction:

Your team is participating in a well-known cooking TV show where teams of professional chefs present their best dishes. Today’s challenge is to create an Empowerment Meal: it can be a soup, a salad, a cake, whatever you decide. As TV time is short, you are requested to be fast and effective. You will have 20 minutes to select the ingredients and write down/draw your recipe in a flipchart paper. You will then have 2 minutes to present your recipe to the jury as a pitch, i.e. on the most effective way.



Educators ask each group to nominate a spokesperson to present the group work at the end. Note that it is up to participants to think of ingredients; nonetheless, in case participants feel blocked, educators could provide a couple of examples.

Suggested ingredients include:

Self-esteem	Emotional intelligence
Access to education	Social network
Knowledge of the law	Professional network
Positive mind-set	Family/Friends support
Positive communication	Creativity
Assertiveness	Artistic expression
Humour	Civic participation
Critical thinking	Visibility
Ability to set limits	Recognition

If having extra time, besides listing the ingredients, each group is requested to present a written definition of empowerment. Otherwise, instead of writing/drawing the recipe, participants can make a sculpture and/or collage; if participants are following that path, educators provide the needed materials.

After each group presents its work, educators display all presentations side by side on the wall, or on the floor, so that all participants can see them.

→ BRIEF

In plenary, educators analyse the core ingredients of the recipes/definitions of empowerment and discuss the quality of the communication (i.e. the elevator pitch presentations); they could ask the following questions:



- What do the recipes reveal?
- What are the main ingredients of each recipe/definition? Are they internal or external?
- What are the common ingredients (if any)?
- Can disempowered people empower themselves? If so, how?
- Can empowered people empower others? If so, how?
- How can one get hold of these ingredients? (e.g. joining a communication workshop, meditating, practising sports, volunteering for civic work, enrolling in college, filing a complaint, writing a blog)

Educators discuss the quality of the elevator pitch presentations asking the following questions:

- What went right? What went wrong?
- Can we make it better? If so, how?
- What are the core ingredients of effective communication?
- What are the core ingredients of an elevator pitch presentation?

If having extra time, educators provide an input on different models of communication – including the elevator pitch technique – and/or share good practices of empowerment.



# Gender A B C

A project by:



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