



## Using action methods in a non-therapeutic setting.

Noelle Branagan & Sue Orton

In 2011 we facilitated a start up session for a multidisciplinary group of professionals looking to provide holistic support for families through divorce. In autumn 2017 the co-founders contacted us for help, as the now developing network was experiencing some tensions in its functioning.

The processes of joining, collaborating and choosing co-workers across disciplines was unclear and was creating tensions around inclusion and exclusion. Their intention to collaborate effectively in the service of their clients was strong, however they had limited support or supervision for themselves.

Our contract was to support them in creating healthy and authentic communications, allowing individuals to contribute, feel valued and heard, and working together more effectively. We agreed to facilitate two 1/2 day sessions with the network. The first (A) to explore and discover the state of the network and their development needs and the second (B) to begin the development.

Attention to warm up is at the heart of action methods, in order to be able to work spontaneously and creatively.

Paying attention to our warm up allowed us to pay attention to the group warm up. We knew that this group would have its own dynamics and be new to Action Methods. These factors along with our contract, helped us listen to the questions for the group warm up such as 'how do we invite them in?' and 'what role are we warming them up to?'. This first session (A) would be a warm up to the second (B).

We will illustrate our use of three action methods in this non-therapeutic setting: the use of a continuum (A), the use of an object to assist in concretisation of ideas or situations (A) and mapping to illustrate situations and relationships (B). We offer a rationale, context and outcome for each.

### Continuum in A

**Rationale:** After our warm up exercises we invited the group to build a continuum of when they first joined the network. This was to make evident the timeline of development of this group now and to explore their experience of joining it.

**Context:** Given the apparent struggles in relationships and the tensions around inclusion and exclusion, we focused on their first experience of the network. By bending the

continuum line into a horseshoe everyone was witnessed by everyone as each spoke of their experience.

**Outcome:** This brought a real interest in listening to and being listened to. They heard things they hadn't heard before and that was important in terms of building an authentic environment for the work to come.

### Offer and Invitation to take an object (or more) in A:

**Rationale:** They were invited to pick an object(s) to represent the network for them at this moment. Then to share their choices in pairs and then in fours. This was to broaden their awareness of their own and others experience of how the network is for them now.

**Context:** Having listened to and heard about each other's excitement when first joining the network in the continuum, the action of choosing objects and then sharing those choices with others was developing upon their genuine desire for this network to function more healthily. The use of objects created a space and focus outside themselves, to express what they found, was and wasn't working so well.

**Outcome:** This brought about a means for speaking about things hitherto unspoken. A real desire to become more able to be comfortable with being uncomfortable. It lead to the creation of a truly authentic sculpt of the network from the objects chosen.

### Mapping out client process in B:

**Rationale:** We asked them to map out how initial client contact was managed in the network and the processes involved. As this was a known successful process we knew it would provide a 'safe' platform from which everyone would have the opportunity to witness and contribute as they felt fit.

**Context:** From the first session the group stated their need and desire to communicate more openly and effectively so we chose to do the mapping as a whole group reflecting in pairs as needed. This afforded explicit exposure of how layered and complex collaborative working can be.

**Outcome:** By mapping out the process they could all see, and tried to untangle, the complexities and look for solutions in a collaborative and authentic manner. More voices were heard that went on to brave namings of other more personal processes later in the session.

Ref: Blatner, A. (2019) Action Explorations: Using Psychodramatic Methods in Non-Therapeutic Settings, Section 4, Chapter 4, Page 183. Available from: <http://actionexplorations.com>