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Introducing the toolkit: establishing a safe group and finding out what the issues are

This session examines how to establish a functioning group and the ground rules which the group will operate under whilst also gaining the students' perspective on any current areas of concern. It also introduces the concept of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to students.

The deliberate structuring and forming of the group and the establishment of negotiated ground rules will ensure that the students feel safe and involved and will therefore be able to communicate openly about the behaviours they or others are concerned about.



Worksheet 1.1: Introducing the group (40 minutes)

Negotiating the ground rules (30 minutes)

Mr Maslow's Triangle: practical task (45 minutes)

Worksheet 1.2: What's happening now, what do I want and what do I need? (25 minutes)

Worksheet 1.3: The Circuit of Change (10 minutes)

Timings are a guide for discussions and the completion of a the relevant worksheet.

Resources required: photocopies of Worksheets 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3; flip-chart paper; newspapers; magazines; paper; glue; pens; pencils; rulers

Recommended further reading

Maslow, A.H. (1987) *Motivation and Personality*, Hong Kong: Longman Asia Ltd. This can provide more information on the work of Abraham Maslow.

Teacher's notes

Worksheet 1.1: Introducing the group (40minutes)

This worksheet activity formally establishes the group.

It is done to establish a working relationship between group members and staff and also helps to develop rapport between all involved. It allows everyone to learn something about others in the group in a safe environment; this in turn allows the students to feel valued and the group to be formed.

Each student interviews their partners using the questions on the worksheet and notes down the answers.

The students introduce each other by reading out the answers they have written down to the questions; namely, 'This is xxxx, he is 13 years old, his birthday is in March, his favourite food is pizza, his favourite lesson PE and his favourite band xxxx.' Students will then swap over. At the end of each section the students will need to change partners and repeat the process.

Top tips and common pitfalls

Invest time in this worksheet activity and be involved in it. This is important for creating a non-judgemental atmosphere and will pay dividends in establishing rapport and a relationship with the students. Ultimately this means that they will trust you and therefore engage fully in the tasks and you will be able to influence them in the change process they start.

Make sure when partners are changed that all the students are involved.

This can be quite a fun activity, especially if members of staff take part and are honest about their choice of music, for example, which – as it will probably be different from that of the students – will start a bit of friendly banter!

Case study

Students meeting together as a group for the first time will usually begin this activity being very wary of one another – the atmosphere will be like that of a dentist's waiting room. They will know something is going to happen but they won't know whether they will like it. After this task the tension will start to evaporate and friendship and trust will begin to appear.

Worksheet 1.1

'INTRODUCING ...'



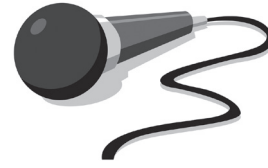
Name	
Age	
Birthday	
Favourite food	
Favourite lesson	
Favourite band	

'INTRODUCING ...'



Name	
Brothers? Sisters?	
Pets' names?	
Favourite football team?	
Favourite sandwich filling?	
Favourite film?	

Worksheet 1.1(Cont'd)



'INTRODUCING ...'

Name	
What sort of job would you like to do?	
Have you met anyone famous? Or been on the TV? Or radio?	
What would you like to do if anything were possible? Swimming with dolphin?	
What would be your best present if money were no object?	



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Teacher's notes

Negotiating the ground rules (30 minutes)

This is a discussion task to establish the ground rules for the group.

As it is done in a negotiated manner everyone involved will develop a sense of ownership and belonging. This will also ensure that they begin to develop a group identity.

These ground rules will be written using the 4MAT which was developed by Bernice McCarthy in the late 1970s (www.aboutlearning.com) from the learning cycle put forward by David Kolb (1984). The 4MAT is based on the assumption that as human beings we will have unconscious questions that will need answering so that we can engage, learn and understand. The four questions are 'What?', 'Why?', 'How?' and 'What if?/What next?' Individuals with a 'What' preference will like facts, information and to know what the experts think. Those with a 'Why' preference will need to have personal meaning created for them, namely, 'What is in it for me (WIIFM) for learning or engaging?' Those with a 'How' preference will enjoy applying their learning and those with a 'What if?/What next?' preference will be thinking how they can use and adapt the learning in the future. Education tends to be mainly 'What?' and 'How?' – the passing on of facts and information and how these will be needed in an examination. Young people who have attended our programme have had a mainly 'Why' preference, namely, 'What is in it for me for behaving in this lesson, attending school, learning algebra!'

Using four separate pieces of flip-chart paper note down 'What?' on the first one, 'Why?' on the second, 'How?' on the third, and 'What next?' on the final piece. The 'What' becomes the actual rule stated in the positive, namely, 'All mobile phones on silent whilst the group is working.' The 'Why' is the reason for having the rule, namely 'Because if a phone rings it will disturb the group and it is disrespectful.' The 'How' translates into 'How will we know if this rule has been broken? What will we see and hear?', for example 'it ringing or beeping', and the 'What next?' indicates the consequences the group decides for the behaviour, namely 'one warning and then it gets confiscated until the end of the session.'

The ground rules are then displayed and referred to throughout the programme.

Top tips and common pitfalls

Have an idea of the ground rules you want and guide students here. I have been pleasantly surprised when completing this and most groups will come up with similar rules.

Focusing on 'why' each of the ground rules is needed allows students to be more accepting of them.

You may be surprised at how harsh the consequences they want to impose will be! Use a voting system if there are disagreements here.

Once these two tasks have been completed there will usually be a distinct change of atmosphere, especially if the students do not know each other at the start of the session.

Case study

I have found that the few young people who have broken the ground rules have immediately taken the consequences without fuss, even Simon (aged 14) who was on his way to being permanently excluded. Tidying up after the session was the consequence of interrupting others whilst they spoke. The look on the face of a member of staff who visited us to see Simon doing this without a fuss was one of amazement; this member of staff had only ever seen him running around school shouting and swearing at people!

Teacher's notes

Mr Maslow's Triangle: practical activity (45 minutes)

This is a practical task to develop an understanding of Maslow's hierarchy of needs. (Maslow, 1954). Maslow's theory helps us understand how as human beings we are motivated to 'be all we can be' and to self-actualise. The hierarchy suggests that we are motivated to fulfil the needs in order, starting at the base before moving up. As we satisfy the needs in the lower level of the diagram we can then move on to satisfy the needs related to personal development. Maslow believed that the needs were linked to instincts and played a major role in motivating our behaviour. This model allows the students to understand what they need first as individuals in order to survive, feel safe and belong before they can then feel positive about themselves and achieve. It can be also used as a personal 'self-checking' list for when they are feeling less resourceful.

Draw Mr Maslow's Triangle on to a piece of flip-chart paper and ask the students to contribute examples for each section. Students can then create their own triangles on a large piece of paper and cut out examples from newspapers and magazines to fill each of the sections. The finished pieces of work can be displayed afterward.

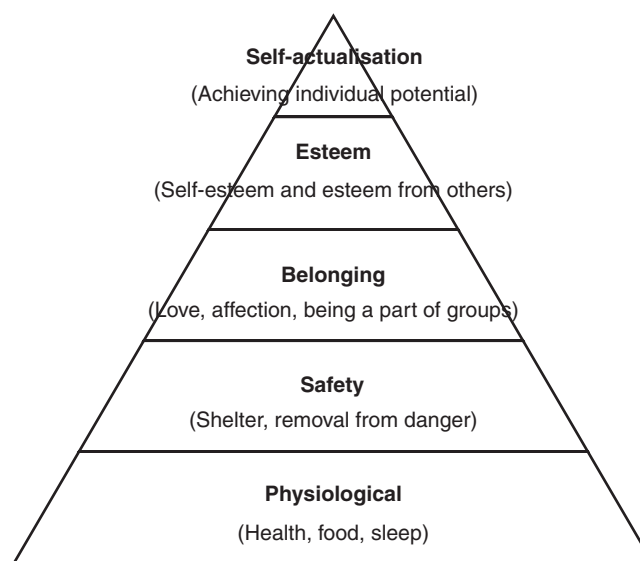


Figure 1.1 From Maslow, A.H., (1987) *Motivation and Personality*. Hong Kong: Longman Asia Ltd.

Top tips and common pitfalls

Whilst the group is working, observe how they are interacting to spot any patterns.

Relate their experience in the group in this first session back to Mr. Maslow's Triangle. For example, one of the basic needs, shelter, has been met by the fact that the group are warm and inside in a room; ground rules have been established thereby meeting the need for security and order; and an activity which introduced everyone met the need for a sense of belonging. The work over the coming weeks will therefore look at the top two sections of Mr. Maslow's Triangle. This review of their experience will help to reinforce their understanding of the work covered in this task.

Teacher's notes

Worksheet 1.2: What's happening now, what do I want and what do I need? (25 minutes)

This series of worksheets aims to discover what the current areas of concern are from each student's perspective and how they would prefer things to be if a magic wand could be waved.

It enables the students and staff to recognise and gain an insight into the issues that exist and how these are impacting. It also allows students to begin to set out what they ultimately want to achieve and establish what resources they already have and already use that could be transferred to their current situation.

The students need to complete the three worksheets in turn, discussing their answers with the group after each one is completed.

Staff can note these down for their records if necessary and they can be referred to over the course of the programme.

Top tips and common pitfalls

When completing these worksheets keep the students focused by not giving them long to complete each one, as otherwise it can become a competition to see whose first worksheet is the worst and they will all begin to associate with and relive the situations.

As they complete the third worksheet guide them into thinking of situations they have behaved and coped well with. For example, do they control their temper when on a sports field? If so, then they already have the resources they need to stay calm. They only need to transfer these to other situations.

Be prepared for their honesty when completing these sheets and do not make judgements.

These tasks can be done in isolation or at the start of a session. It is useful to complete these worksheets at any first meeting with a group or individual as it is a non-judgemental way of gaining insights on students' perspective of their behaviours or situations.

Worksheet 1.2

What's happening now, what do I want, and what do I need?



Sometimes other people make comments about our behaviour and sometimes how we behave disappoints us. To change this we need information on three things.

Number 1: what's happening now?

What is happening now for you? What are the problems/issues? When do these problems **not happen** or when do they **happen less**? Think about your behaviours in school and at home that are causing you or others concern and list them below:

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-
-
-
-

Number 2: What do I want?



Thinking about your Number 1 list write down how you would want things to be. Think '*if I had a magic wand how would I change things for the better?*' Remember this is about **you** and **your behaviours** and not about changing other people.

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-
-
-
-
-
-



Number 3: What do I need?

Resources: So now you know what the issues are and what you would rather have, for this final part you must think about the things you will need to help you get what you want. Think about all the skills you already have that you could use now to help you, and think about people who may be able to help you or who you need to talk to. Then write these below

-
-
-
-
-
-

Now what is the first thing **you** are going to do to make things change?



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Case study

Isaac (13) completed these sheets with honesty, telling of the situations he found himself in at school and at home. When it came to completing the second sheet, he wrote simply, 'What do I want? I just want to be normal and like everyone else.'

Teacher's notes

Worksheet 1.3: The circuit of change (15 minutes)

The circuit of change is an overview of a process of change and shows how it can be achieved and the route we will usually need to follow when we want to change behaviours.

This worksheet allows the students to see that change is a process that we all go through as human beings. It establishes that it is possible and can be achieved and even if we have a day when we slip back then all is not lost and we can get back on track.

Introduce the worksheet using a story to illustrate how the process works. The students can follow a specimen story on their own worksheets.

The students must mark the current day's date next to the position they think they are at on the circuit of change.

This sheet can be referred to over the course of the programme as required, with the students updating their positions as they make progress.

Top tips and common pitfalls

When giving a specimen story to illustrate the process of change use one the students can relate to e.g., someone giving up smoking or losing weight.

Ensure that they are aware that it is normal to end up in the middle of the circuit at some point and that doesn't mean they won't ultimately achieve their goal.

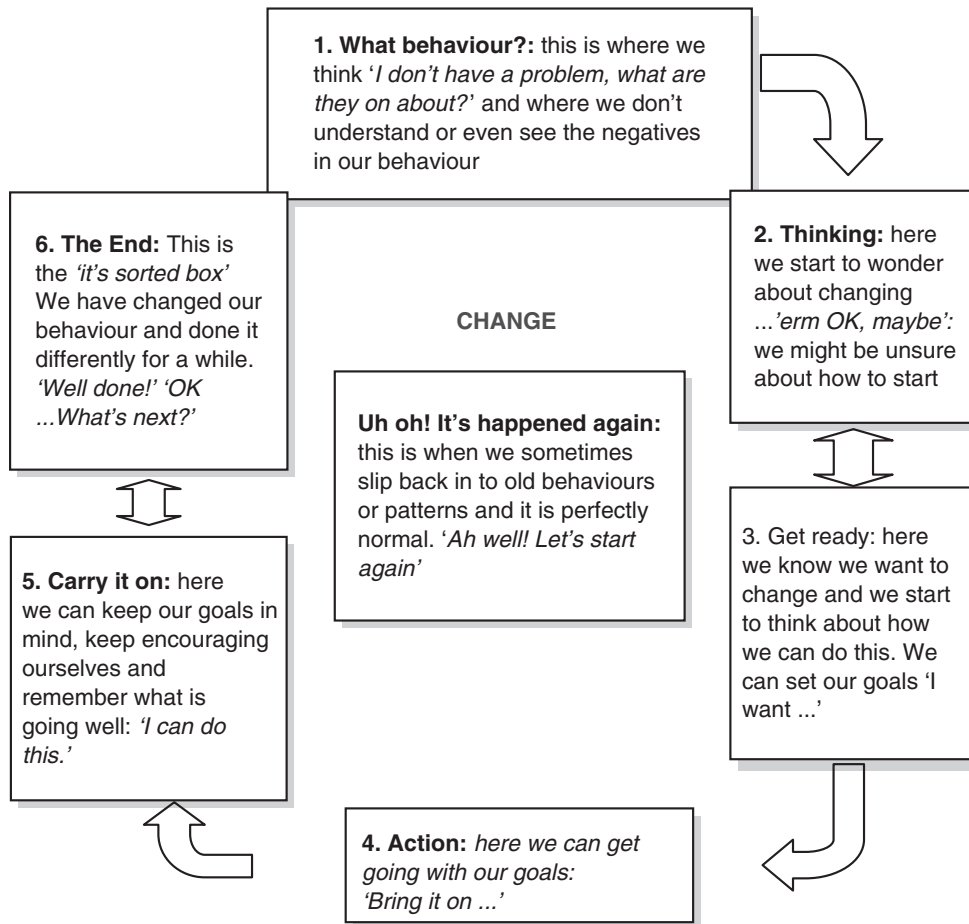
○ All photocopiable pages can be found on the CD-ROM accompanying this book

Worksheet 1.3



The Circuit of Change

When we change our behaviour we go around the Circuit of Change. It helps us move away from the problems we had and move towards what we want. Follow the numbers around and decide where you are already. Notice that the box in the middle does not have a number because sometime we slip into this box and that is fine. We just have to hop back out and carry on ...



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