

Title Learning Activity: Take a step forward
Short description
We are all equal, but some are more equal than others. In this exercise, participants discover what it means to be someone else in their society. The following topics will be discussed: • Exclusion and discrimination often start with social inequality. • The opportunities and limits of empathy. Experience what it is like to belong to a minority group that has fewer opportunities and/or limited health literacy. How might this affect your relationship with a physiotherapist? Understand who people with limited health literacy might be. To what extent can you empathize with them? Which attitude does a physiotherapist need?
Duration: 50 minutes
Learning goals
• To encourage an empathetic attitude towards people who are different from you. • To become aware of the unequal distribution of opportunities in this society. • To understand the consequences for a person of belonging to a particular social or cultural minority. • To become aware of the own attitude towards using health literacy communication skills and/or teaching strategies (part c in assessment tool: health literacy consultation skills)
Materials
• Role description sheets (make one sided copies yourself) • A large space where you can create a line up with the students (a large room without obstacles, a corridor or outside)
Instructions
1. Make sure the room is quiet. You can ask the participants to be quiet or put on soft music. 2. Distribute the roles randomly so that each participant has one role or, if necessary, provide one role description per two students. Later, one person from each pair will be an observer. Ask participants to keep this to themselves and not show it to others. 3. Invite everyone to sit down and read their role. 4. The idea is now that everyone will empathize with his/her role. You can read out some of the questions below as a support. They are also added to each role description.

Give enough time for reflection after each question to give the participants a clearer idea of their character.

- o What was your childhood like? What did the house you grew up in look like? What games did you play? What kind of work did your parents do?
 - o What does your daily life consist of now? Where, when, and how do you interact with people? What do you do in the morning, afternoon, and evening?
 - o How would you describe your lifestyle? Where do you live? How much money do you earn per month? What do you do during your free time? What do you do when you are on holiday?
 - o What do you find exciting and what scares you?
5. Ask the participants to stand up and line up in absolute silence. Observers remain seated at the edge.
 6. Tell the participants that you are going to read out several situations or events. Each time they can answer "yes" to the statement in their role, they must take a step forward. If the answer is "no," they simply stay where they are.
 7. Read out the situations one by one. Give the participants enough time to take a step forward or not after the statement. Look carefully at the positions they take in relation to each other. Observers note whether they would also have taken that step, or whether they lack the empathy/ knowledge to determine whether they could take a step.
 8. At the end, ask everyone to look at and remember their final position. Then give the group a few minutes to step out of their roles, after which you can proceed to the group evaluation.

Situations

1. I have never had financial problems
2. I have a good house with internet where I can look up everything
3. I have the feeling that I am respected in society
4. I know how the human body works (what muscles & nerves are, where the heart is, etc.)
5. I know where to turn when I really need help
6. I have the possibility to give my health priority over other things
7. I am assured of social and medical services
8. My opinion counts! I am listened to.
9. I can deal with an on-line exercise program
10. I have a mobile phone and know I can call 112 in case of an emergency
11. I can understand what the physiotherapist says

12. I can make clear to another person what is wrong with me physically
13. I dare to ask questions when someone tells me something I do not understand
14. I have no trouble giving a clear answer to questions about what medication I am taking.

Other options:

- I know where to go for medical help
- I know where to get information about health care in my country.
- I understand the information I receive.
- I do not care whether the physiotherapist is male or female.
- I can answer questions from the physiotherapist.
- I can attend therapy several times a week if necessary.
- I understand the importance of therapy.
- I consider my health important and do everything necessary for it.
- I can easily make myself available for therapy.
- I find it important to be treated by the same therapist every session.
- I can give my health priority over other things.

Reflection

At the end of the questions, the students stay in the where they are.

The following questions are for both participants and observers.

- How did it feel to be allowed to step forward?
- How did it feel not to be able to step forward?
- Distances differ. Who are you curious about? Reveal your role (one by one).
- What questions could you not answer for the person in your role? What is the base of your knowledge (own experience, media, hearsay)?
- How difficult was it to empathize? What questions were difficult to answer?
- What do you think is important to know in the context of your future profession? Why?
- People in the front row (line) are potential physiotherapists (they played their own role). What does it mean for the patient-physiotherapist relationship that there is such a distance between them and the people behind them?
- How could you say that there is such a distance? (Role descriptions with social background are different from those of the physiotherapist)
- Who is responsible for reducing the distance?
- How could this be done?
- What is the importance of this exercise for future physiotherapists?

Thank you all for participating!

Tips for supervisors

If you are going to do this activity outside, make sure that all participants can hear you, especially if the group is large!

During the empathy phase at the beginning of the exercise, participants may raise the point that they know little about the life of the person they are playing. Tell them that this is not a problem, and that it is enough to use their imagination the best they can.

The impact of this activity is in showing how the distance between the participants visibly increases, especially at the end when there is a significant distance between the various positions.

During the discussion afterwards, it is important to consider what the participants knew about the role they had to play. Did they know this from personal experience or from other sources of information (news, books, jokes, ...)? Are they sure that the information and ideas they have about the roles are reliable? Here it is appropriate to tell something about how stereotypes and prejudices work.

References



Role descriptions

1. You are a 24-year-old woman in an arranged marriage. You lived in a village until you were 18. You went to primary school and then stayed at home to help your mother take care of your five younger brothers and sisters. When you were 18, your parents arranged your marriage to the son of a man from your village. The son was living abroad in (name of your country) since he was 14. Your husband works in a warehouse. You now live in a flat in a low social economic standard neighborhood in the city. You are 3 months pregnant with your third child. Your son is almost 4 and your daughter 2.5 years old. You did a language course 4 years ago, when you first arrived in the new country, together with your mother-in-law. You do not speak the local language very well and it is hard to understand. Your husband usually has the conversations, and you have no contact with local people. You mainly have contact with your husband's family. Except for shopping, which you do together with your husband or with your in-laws, you hardly ever leave the house.

Think about your role in pairs:

- What does your daily life look like now?
- Who do you have contact with and about what mainly?
- How do you see young people aged 18-24?
- What is your image of social workers? What is your image of health care providers/doctors?
- What was your childhood like? What kind of family do you come from? How has this contributed to who you have become?
- What do you still enjoy? What are you afraid of?



2. You are 20 years old, unemployed and have been homeless for 6 months. You have been in a children's home since you were 12 years old, when you were placed out of the home because of an abusive stepfather. You went to secondary school and continued intermediate vocational training in gardening. Your mother chose to stay with your stepfather. You have a sister who is three years older than you and who you see sometimes. She ran away from home because of the abusive stepfather when she was fourteen. She went to Italy with a friend and now works on camping sites. When you were 18, you had to leave the children's home. You spent a year living with friends. You feel terrible about your present situation, but you do not know a way out and you do not want to have to deal with the social services again. You wander the streets all day, trying to avoid contact with homeless people who are addicts or mentally ill.

Think about your role in pairs:

- What does your daily life look like now?
- Who do you have contact with and what about?
- How do you see young people aged 18-24?
- What is your perception of caregivers? What is your image of health care providers/doctors?
- What was your childhood like? What kind of family do you come from? How has this contributed to who you have become?
- What do you still enjoy? What are you afraid of?



3. You are 85 years old, live in a nursing home and a year ago you were diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. You can still eat and drink independently, but you need help with washing and dressing, and you have difficulty walking. Your long-term memory still works fine, but you have already forgotten what happened 10 minutes ago. As a result, you have become rather passive, a lot of what happens around you escapes you and you mainly sleep.

Think about your role in pairs:

- What does your daily life look like now?
- Who do you have contact with and what about?
- How do you see young people aged 18-24?
- What is your image of social workers? What is your image of health care providers/doctors?
- What was your childhood like? What kind of family do you come from? How has this contributed to who you have become?
- What do you still enjoy? What are you afraid of?



4. You are a married man of 53 with an alcohol problem. You have three children, one of whom still lives at home. You have been drinking since you were 15 and for the last 5 years 12 to 15 glasses a day. If you do not drink, you suffer from sweating, trembling, feelings of anxiety and sometimes panic attacks. You sleep restlessly and repeatedly call in sick at work (caretaker at a primary school). Fear causes you to avoid crowded places such as shops, markets, and restaurants. In fact, you have had these fears since primary school and secondary school, which you did not finish.

Think about your role in pairs:

- What does your daily life look like now?
- Who do you have contact with and what about?
- How do you see young people aged 18-24?
- What is your perception of caregivers? What is your image of health care providers/doctors?
- What was your childhood like? What kind of family do you come from? How has this contributed to who you have become?
- What do you still enjoy? What are you afraid of?



5. You are 20 years old, you left school at 15 because of your aggressive, rebellious behavior and now work in your father's demolition company, which is not always easy because you are quite overweight. Your mother mainly cooks with the deep fryer. You are not well off at home, but your family is everything to you; your (dominant) grandmother still lives at home, you have a sister who is unemployed and a brother who is in prison for violent robbery. You come from a family where they are straightforward, even rude, but for you that is a normal way of communicating. You are a hardcore fan of the local football club, and you love a decent fight every now and then, just like your father does. You have been arrested several times for this but have always been released.

Think about your role in pairs:

- What does your daily life look like now?
- Who do you have contact with and what about?
- How do you see young people between 18-24 years old?
- What is your image of social workers? What is your image of health care providers/doctors?
- What was your childhood like? What kind of family do you come from? How has this contributed to who you have become?
- What do you still enjoy? What are you afraid of?



6. You are 40 years old. You have lived in (fill in the name of your country) since you were 10 years old. Your father worked in a poultry slaughterhouse and your mother was a cleaner. You are the oldest child at home, and you have two sisters and a brother who have all finished secondary school. Your youngest sister is a pharmacy assistant, your brother works at an insurance office and your other sister is a teacher and active in local politics. You have had low level technical education because you had difficulties with language, worked in a canning factory and have worked yourself up to supervisor in the same factory, where many people with a migrant background work. You are married, have a 15-year-old son who is dyslexic and a 13-year-old daughter who are both studying at high school (intermediate level). You met your wife/husband at work, and he/she now works as an administrative assistant at a bank.

Think about your role in pairs:

- What does your daily life look like now?
- Who do you have contact with and what about?
- How do you see young people aged 18-24?
- What is your image of social workers? What is your image of health care providers/doctors?
- What was your childhood like? What kind of family do you come from? How has this contributed to who you have become?
- What do you still enjoy? What are you afraid of?



7. You are yourself

Think about your role in pairs:

- What does your daily life look like now?
- Who do you have contact with and what about?
- How do you see young people aged 18-24?
- What is your perception of caregivers? What is your image of health care providers/doctors?
- What was your childhood like? What kind of family do you come from? How has this contributed to who you have become?
- What do you still enjoy? What are you afraid of?



8. You are a man/woman of 24, started at low level vocational education, changed schools a few times and do not have a diploma. You work as an assistant at a removal company/ nail studio of a friend, and you still live at home with your mother. Your parents divorced when you were 4 and you have two older brothers, one of whom is a sailor on an inland waterway vessel and the other is married and works as a forklift driver. You do not see your father anymore. You have difficulty reading and writing, and you try to hide this as much as possible. You would like to live on your own, because your mother does not work anymore because she has been declared partially disabled due to mental problems. She sits at home all day smoking and watching TV and is often depressed. You are crazy about your dog Doeshka a Shepherd, and you also do dog training and dog shows with her / him.

Think about your role in pairs:

- What does your daily life look like now?
- Who do you have contact with and what about?
- How do you see young people between 18-24 years old?
- What is your image of social workers? What is your image of health care providers/doctors?
- What was your childhood like? What kind of family do you come from? How has this contributed to who you have become?
- What do you still enjoy? What are you afraid of?



9. You are a 63-year-old woman, you were the eldest in a family of seven children. When your mother died after 3 years of illness, you staid at home at the age of 15 and you only had finished primary school. At 21, you married your husband who is a plumber. You have four children, one of whom still lives at home. Your family still all lives in the same place and you are the support and anchor for everyone for babysitting, caring for a person who is ill, and you are always ready to help with cooking and cleaning. You also do this because of your Christian beliefs. You go to church every week and you sing in the church choir. You cannot really read the songs (only your husband knows this), but after all these years you know them by heart. Rehearsing a new song is often difficult, but you listen carefully to the others and eventually you succeed.

Think about your role in pairs:

- What is your daily life like now?
- Who do you have contact with and what about?
- How do you see young people aged 18-24?
- What is your image of social workers? What is your image of health care providers/doctors?
- What was your childhood like? What kind of family do you come from? How has this contributed to who you have become?
- What do you still enjoy? What are you afraid of?



10. You are a 24-year-old person with a refugee background from Syria living in (fill in the name of your country) for one month. You stay with a 20-year-old cousin who is taking the transition class for higher vocational education. You have a degree in Business Administration of the university of applied sciences and speak a little English. You are waiting to start the integration course for (the new country) and are trying to learn the local language on the computer. Your grandparents, your mother, and your sister of 14 still live in Syria. Your father is in prison there, but you have not heard anything from him for six years. Your mother thought you should go to family in Europe because that would give you more opportunities for the future, but she does not want to leave Syria if her husband is still there. You feel very homesick, you worry about your family, and you do not sleep well, but you have not seen a doctor yet and you do not think you can afford one. You do not share your concerns with your cousin.

Think about your role in pairs:

- What is your daily life like now?
- Who do you have contact with and what about?
- How do you feel about young people aged 18-24?
- What is your image of social workers? What is your image of health care providers/doctors?
- What was your childhood like? What kind of family do you come from? How has this contributed to who you have become?
- What do you still enjoy? What are you afraid of?

Other One step forward roles

I am a divorced man with two children. I have 3 years of basic secondary education. I work part-time in a warehouse as an order picker to have enough time for the children. That is why I do not have a lot of money. The children come first!

I am a person with a refugee background from Iran, one month in this country. I have a master's degree in communication sciences and speak English.

I am a businessperson from China who has been working as an expat in the capital for one year. My wife and child also live here.

I am an unemployed, single woman with my four children. I have difficulty making ends meet. I do not like to tell this to others. I once started a hairdressing course but did not finish it because of the eczema symptoms I developed. I was married at an early age and divorced from my husband who was an alcoholic.

I am a poorly educated, single man and cannot read or write very well. I have no computer and no smartphone.

I am a deaf person, and I am fluent in sign language, I have difficulty in expressing myself verbally.

I am a 30-year-old woman with Down's syndrome.

I am a 15-year-old boy from Iraq. I came here alone 4 years ago and went straight to school, the transition class and am now on a school for vocational education. I speak English very well and I am reasonably proficient in the local language. I have many friends and a good contact with the student support worker at school.

I am an 85-year-old man. My wife has died, and I have no children. Working with the computer? I do not want to do that anymore! I cannot drive a car anymore either.

I am a 13-year-old girl. My parents are divorced and for one week I live with my mum in (name of city), the other week with my dad in (name of city). I go to school, right in the middle. I have a good relationship with both my parents.