

Learning activity

Walking into the Future

TIME: 30–40 mins

LEARNING AIMS:

- Generate an inspiring and guiding vision for oneself and one's group, which can serve as a reference for generating aims, objectives, actions and next steps
- Support a clear sense of personal and group potential
- Support a sense of the gradual and incremental nature of many change processes
- Placing our action in a longer time-frame.

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: Unspecified

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS: A space that is large enough for the group to walk in a circle around a central point.

FRAMING:

This functions as an imaginative activity to support us to vision our potential as we consider the future, taking steps forward, and, potentially, putting into practice the learning and insights we have gained during a training. It can help to provide a point of reference for strategising in making changes, directing our action and determining next steps.

This is a good activity to support people to contact a sense of where they want to go, before getting into the more specific and pragmatic work of considering what they must do to get there. It supports them to engage imaginative faculties that can support planning and strategising.

The activity works well as a set up for a Critical Pathways' activity.

FACILITATION:

Step 1. setting up the activity (5 mins)

Explain intention of the activity and place an object (e.g. a candle, something aesthetic, something from nature etc.) in the middle of the room, along with a pile of A4 paper (at least one sheet per participant) and a variety of coloured pens.

Ask participants to choose a point in the future towards which they will walk. Five years is ideal for project visioning (not so far that we can't imagine it at all, far enough that we can

imagine significant change having occurred), but individuals will need to decide whether this makes sense to them. In some cases, two or three years can work well, but it can also be used for longer timeframes (bearing in mind that this can give rise to specific challenges related to hope and hopelessness experienced when in relation to some of the deep crises we are currently facing).

Step 2. meditative walking into the future (30 mins)

a. Meditative walking - getting into the body and becoming present (10)

With the group, begin to move clockwise around the room at a relatively slow pace with a soft gaze. Guide a walking meditation helping people to bring clear awareness to:

- The experience of walking,
- The physical sensations of different parts of the body and breath (it can help to guide people through beginning by bringing awareness to the sensations in the feet and gradually bringing attention up through the whole body)
- Feelings, mental states, energy etc.
- Use this to support a gathering of attention into the present.

b. Imaginatively walking into the future, through a mist of beneficial conditions (10)

Continue walking clockwise, guiding a reflection of walking forwards into the future towards a time 5 years (or timeframe as specified) from now. Begin with more detail - walking through the coming day and days, onward journeys from here in the coming weeks, things that might happen, encounters they might have, how they might feel etc. Gradually, as you move further from the present, allow the detail to lessen until there is only a sense of the turning of the seasons year by year.

The walking forwards takes place through an imaginary mist. The mist represents the permeating influence of the positive and skilful forces in one's environment and life. The mist represents the transformative influence of the collective actions that they might contribute to and take part in, if they are able to bring to bear all the skill, talent and learning that they and their groups/movements can harness. It is as if the mist - landing on the clothes and bodies and seeping its way in - is the nourishment and supportive influence of skilful action and relationships which enable a gradual and deep transformation and realisation of our potential.

c. Arriving at the future point (5)

Stop. We are five years into the future. Standing still with eyes closed, everyone is encouraged to try to get a sense of themselves and their environment, transformed by the supportive influence of the mist of skilful actions and learning. Ask them:

- How does the body feel?
- How is the mind?
- What quality of awareness?
- How is the heart?
- What is the quality of relationships and communication around you?
- What kind of social relationships do you see? How are the human and non-human world?
- Is there an image?
- Are there words that name these qualities?
- Etc...

Repeat such a questions a few times allowing around 3 minutes for this silent reflection with eyes closed.

d. Capturing the image (5)

Ask everyone to take a sheet of A4 paper (piled up in the centre previously) and write the words or draw the images and symbols that help them to get a sense of or capture the vision of this time in the future. They do not need to capture everything, just enough to recollect the image or feeling of this future self/circumstance.

Everyone places their piece of paper in the middle of the room. They can fold them and write their name on them. They will not be shared.

e. Returning to the present

Now we all take 5 giant steps or leaps anticlockwise back around the room to return to the starting point 5 years earlier - i.e. today! Or one step for each year they went forwards. Treat this 'time travel' playfully.

The pieces of paper in the centre of the room represent a potential future, where we could be if we took the right steps or put the necessary conditions in place. The outside edge of the room represents today. Now we can use various activities or tools to explore how we might move from the edge of the room to the centre (for example: Critical Pathways).

Conclusion and take aways

This future image is not designed to be some kind of 'target' that we must achieve or else feel guilty about it - like some kind of unhelpful new year's resolution. It is offered as a potentially useful mechanism for staying in touch with a sense of where we would like to be going, a guide of some kind, a connection with the bigger trajectory of our lives and values. It can act as something inspiring and energising and offer us the helpful perspective that it is easy to lose sight of when we are preoccupied with what is right in front of us and pressing.

SOURCE: Ulex Project