LOVE AND HAT

Anonymous Peer Problem Solving Exercise

Stop being offensive.

FACILITATOR'S NOTES

Time required: 40 Minutes

Objectives: Explores group's own knowledge/strengths/peer support

Description: A peer problem solving group discussion or 'conch' discussion

Resources required: A 'conch' which could be anything to hand – a wig, a wand, a puppet, a hat, a scarf etc. You will need pieces of paper or post-it notes for people to write their problem on. A hat or receptacle to post the letters in.

The term 'conch' comes from the book 'Lord of The Flies' by William Golding and represents a powerful symbol of democracy. The person holding the 'conch' can speak uninterrupted.

1. Invent a fictitious Agony Aunt. You might want to explain what an Agony Aunt actually does – someone you write to anonymously who gives advice on a particular problem. Examples of Agony Aunts are Coleen Nolan who works for the Daily Record, and Mariella Frostrup who works for The Guardian. An example of an Agony Uncle is Graham Norton who works for The Telegraph. Anyone can be an Agony Aunt/Uncle – even you! In fact, this is your chance to prove what sensible advice you can give. The Agony Aunt will be whoever has the 'conch.'

2. Explain that only the person with the 'conch' can talk at any one time. This will prevent people from all talking at once and give the discussion a sense of order. This method works well with talkative/lively groups, encouraging less confident group members to speak with the aid of the 'conch.'

3. Allow the group time to write their problems out on the pieces of paper. The problems are anonymous or could be signed using an alias (i.e. Depressed of Dundee, Irritated of Inverness, Glum from Glasgow etc.)

4. A volunteer reads out the first problem and then selects a group member to be The Agony Aunt/Uncle.

5. The Agony Aunt/Uncle will be whoever has the 'conch.' They give advice on the problem that has been read out and can nominate further contributors by passing the 'conch' to them.

6. People who have opinions can request the 'conch' in order to express them.

7. Once the reader of the problem is satisfied that they have enough good advice, then whoever is left with the 'conch' reads the next problem out and picks a new Agony Aunt/Uncle.

8. Repeat this process until all the problems have been resolved.

TOP TIP **You might want to plant a couple of fun/controversial/relevant problems**