



PART THREE

Stuff You Can Try

Activities for Social Action

For those of you interested in introducing Social Action to the young people with whom you work, this section provides suggested exercises you can use with the Social Action process.

As we hope this volume has demonstrated, Social Action is not simply a collection of techniques and activities; it is a clear process of addressing problems and issues as a community. Within that process, Social Action principles guide all that the teacher-facilitator does. However, there are certain exercises and activities that Social Action workers have found particularly useful over time, and many of these were shared during the cross-national events that were part of the NWP-CSA collaboration. In addition, as they developed their roles as teacher-facilitators, the project participants developed new exercises and adapted exercises they had already used in their classrooms to fit the principles and process of Social Action. This section provides a window into the concrete activities that they used as they worked with young people.

The suggested activities, of course, are just that—suggestions. You should not feel restricted to using these activities, nor should you feel you must use them exactly as they are. A key to facilitating Social Action work is to get to know your group and understand what they want to achieve; then you can adopt, adapt, develop, or create exercises that will help them meet their goals. The central principle behind these activities is that Social Action workers are not leaders but facilitators. In Social Action activities the content comes from the group. As a teacher-facilitator, you are trying to create a process that enables a group to identify the issues and concerns that they face, understand why these exist, explore how

they can take action to change things, take that action, and reflect on what has happened, all in a cyclical process. All the activities in this section are designed to enable the young people you work with to provide the content of Social Action, to facilitate their discussion of the things that are important in their lives, to help them analyze why things are as they are, and to help them consider how they can take action to change things.

Finally, remember that Social Action is a process with an interlocking set of principles, so it is crucial that all activities be in keeping with the principles of Social Action. Promoting social justice and challenging inequality and oppression are central to Social Action. Social Action is derived from a recognition that all young people have skills, experience, and understanding and are experts in their own lives; that all people have rights, including the right to be heard, the right to define the issues facing them, and the right to take action on their own behalf; that injustice and oppression are complex issues rooted in social policy, the environment, and the economy; and that people working collectively can be powerful and their collective action should be encouraged. If we keep these principles in mind, many group activities can be seen as useful and as advancing Social Action.

What follows is a typical Social Action sequence of activities, designed to create a community that can identify, analyze, and take action to address the problems it faces or other matters that are important to the group. This process could happen over a three-day event or a summer school, or it could form the basis of a term's project with young people on a community activity or in the classroom. An activity can take a couple of hours or many weeks to complete. Yet the activities should not be used in an ad hoc manner; they should be part of a purposeful plan that is linked to the what, why, how, action, and reflection stages of the Social Action process and designed for the specific group of people you are working with, so that each activity builds on and takes further the content created by the young people in the previous activity and discussions. Finally, while these are activities that the teacher-facilitators in this collaboration found useful in the classroom, they can also be used in community settings and with adults as well as young people. They are flexible and adaptable activities, and because they are designed to enable the participants to provide the content, they can be used in a wide range of settings with a wide variety of people.

Each activity is described in the following pages. We have not been prescriptive about how or at what exact stage in the process they should be used because many of the exercises can be adapted and used at different stages. However, in the fol-

lowing list, we have grouped the activities into sections (Activities for Creating Community, Activities for Defining and Analyzing Problems, Activities for Planning Action, and Activities for Reflection) and indicated the stage of community building or the stage of the Social Action process at which they might be particularly useful and appropriate to use. But do not feel bound by these suggestions. Experiment!

Activities for Creating Community

These activities allow group members to get to know each other and develop a common identity.

| Activity | Stage |
|-------------------------|--------------|
| Metro Map | Identity |
| Naming the Group | Identity |
| Community Vocabulary | Method |
| Devising the Vision | Purpose |
| How We Behave in Groups | Method |

Activities for Defining and Analyzing Problems

The Social Action facilitator uses these activities to encourage group members to express what is happening in their lives: What are their issues, problems, and concerns? What makes them angry, frightened, frustrated, and happy? Some of these activities allow community members to engage in analysis and to present their understanding of the problems facing them. It also helps them to discover the most effective point of intervention, the place at which it is possible to make changes that will affect the final outcomes.

| Activity | Stage |
|--------------------|--------------|
| Movie Poster | What |
| Four Faces | Why* |
| But Why? | Why |
| Codes | Why |
| Changing Your Mind | Why or How |
| Sculpts | Why or How |

*This activity could be used at various stages, depending on the statements used.

Activities for Planning Action

The group members decide on an action that they want to take to address the issues they have identified.

| Activity | Stage |
|----------------------|---------------|
| The Three C's | How |
| SWOT | How |
| Ideal Specimen | How |
| Force Field Analysis | How or Action |
| Worst Nightmare | How or Action |
| Now/Soon/Later | Action |

Activities for Reflection

These activities provide opportunities for critical reflection that enables students to learn from their experiences and to plan future actions for change.

| Activity | Stage |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| The Swimming Pool | Reflection |
| Messages | How or Reflection |

At the end of a group session, series of sessions, or project it is a good idea to return to the vision and community vocabulary that were created at the start. This allows the group to see how well they have worked toward their vision and what they have achieved, as well as whether they have worked together in the way suggested in the community vocabulary.