

Drama based learning has a vital role in engaging and enabling people to develop attitudes and behaviours in all walks of life. Theatre and film demonstrates the power of a story that is brought to life to engage hearts and minds. The story invites an audience to step in to the shoes of the characters and think and feel with them as they progress their fictional journey.

The power of drama based learning is in the use of various methods to explore the characters and their story. Audiences become part of the journey of every character and can become part of the solution to their challenges on the way. Interaction that blurs the line between audience and character (the real and the fictitious) is effective in engaging emotions and offering a memorable experience that can inform changing behaviours for good.

The hallmarks of great and successful drama based learning are:

Real - the fiction is based on research and written with current and real challenges in mind

Heartfelt - the story has pathos and meaning

Logical - the events in the story are logical and clear

Believable - presented as if it were real by actors and facilitators

learning led - identified learning points are embedded in the fiction.

Below are examples of methods we use

Interactive Case Study. One of Act Positive's flagship products which enables participants to become engaged in and explore various aspects behaviour and its impact on diverse situations. Drawing on material in the research phase, a short, scripted drama is performed by actors. From the safety of their seats, the audience is actively engaged in the drama - which is recognisable but not identical to their own situation. People will be able to see a version of their own reality. This reality is a hallmark of bespoke programmes built by Act Positive.

The emotional engagement is powerful in motivating and sustaining learning. The characters in the scene are trying to do a good job. They know what they should be doing but some things get in the way. The scene can be frozen in time and the audience asked to share what they think is going through the minds of the characters at that moment. Using a range of drama techniques, such as hot seating, the learners explore the situation further. Participants can question the characters about their behaviour, attitudes, life experiences and gain access to other information. Using the information gained and drawing on personal experience, the participants construct and offer advice to one or more of the

characters. By re-visiting the drama, the audience can stop and start the action and direct the characters and then watch how the advice can work in practice.

Collective Minds. An exercise which provides significant opportunity for the consolidation of skills in a safe and supportive environment. In three teams the group construct characters and situations based on their experience. The characters are brought to life by an actor. In turn, the teams manage the situation with each of the characters using effective communication and empathy. Confidence is built and creative ways to manage a variety of situations are tested out in this simulated 'role play' context.

Simulated Auction. Lots representing aspects of the learning such as Equality & Diversity, Leadership or Customer Service are available for participating groups to bid for. Given a thousand guineas each, and no credit, teams acquire the lots they feel are the most important. Groups then present the reasons for their choices. The auction challenges participants to work as a team, creating appropriate strategy to achieve what they want, it asks learners to focus on the meaning of words, concepts, skills or behaviours and to discuss value and belief in relation to the issues concerned.

Character / Incident Investigation. Spaces are set up with various aspects of one persons life. There may be an area set up as an office desk, a bag in a corner, a coat on a hook or a whole room. The character in their spaces are available for questioning. In small teams the participants investigate each area or item belonging to the character and hot seat the character. They create an assessment profile for the character and can later make recommendation to the character about what they could do differently which would make a positive difference. The character Investigation enables learners to work as a team to recognise when assumptions can be made, to develop questioning techniques and to demonstrate knowledge and skill through advice offered to the character. This model can also be used to investigate incidents effectively to identify causes of unsafe behaviour, diagnose medical malpractice or assess service provision in any context.

We can offer consultation on setting up, scripting and running in house drama based learning programmes - just get in touch to find out more.