



NEWSLETTER 010 · AUGUST 2010

ACT OUT NEWS



A big welcome to EVE KERMACK who has joined Act Out as part-time projects manager and co-facilitator! Eve is an actor with 10 years' experience in theatre and film and brings not only her expertise but also her motivation and strong commitment to working with young people.

PLAYING UP! ACTING OUT!

5-day Youth Forum Theatre Workshop

DATE: Wed 29 Sept – 3 Oct

TIME: 9:30 – 5:00

VENUE: PCYC Hall, Paget Street, Hilton

COST: \$250 per person (there are 5 scholarships available subject to application process)

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Working with those who hurt others

Boal theatre techniques have conventionally been used to work with people that are struggling with certain obstacles, blocked or disenfranchised in some way. This may be through an external influence or by an internalised belief that limits action.

The aim is to bring the participants into a space where they can explore, identify and rehearse alternative ways to deal with the issue. This is done not solely through cognitive learning but through a learning that encompasses a **range of intelligences including kinaesthetic, emotional, sensory and intuitive**.

With all these involved in the process the individual has the opportunity to reach into his or her highest creative potential to find directions and possibilities.



Women from Mowanjumb Community in the NW of Australia

With this premise in mind, there are a few practitioners who ask, if this is true for people who are experiencing injustice or exclusion, could it not be true for the wrong-doers; the offenders; the 'oppressors'?

Act Out's work at **Communicare's Breathing Space** with men who have been violent to their partners and families exemplifies the important complementary role these techniques can have in bringing awareness of

their behaviour to perpetrators of domestic violence. For some of the men, seeing and acting out the scenarios suggested by the other men, raised some awareness:

'There were a few times when ... somebody's acted something and you sat there and watched and thought well, I used to do the same thing, so it opens your eyes up to actually sit there and think...some of the boys say that half the shit they've never done, you know what I mean? But if you sit down and watch the looks on their face when it gets acted out and you can see that somewhere along the line they've done it and they just don't want to admit to it...'

Another participant explained:

'I never saw it as abuse that sort of stuff, even like the way I talk and that, when I sit back and watch everyone else do it, I say f---, it's like...I never thought of that as abuse'

While there are many layers to the issue of DV of which behaviour is only one, **engaging** the men in an **honest introspection** and allowing them to **rehearse** non-violent actions which **they have identified**, creates a strong platform for transformation.

Similarly, when working for the **Department for Corrective Services** with young offenders in juvenile detention and remand centres, engagement constitutes a large part of the Act Out process.

Some young detainees have been excluded so much in their lives that they don't really feel they have anything to contribute. Boal and other techniques engage them in a creative space that separates them from their behaviour and allows them to express themselves without being judged.

They are then able to explore the painful AND the positive in their lives; the dynamics and the influences that have got them into trouble and the potential for non-offending behaviour. They are able to access their deeper knowledge of **ALL** they are capable of being.

INVOLVE THE WHOLE PERSON – GET WHOLE RESULTS

Would you ever send out half a football team or half a baseball team in a competition? Would you ever choose to play a game of chess using only the knights and the pawns? Would you ever dream of sending out a resume with only half your experience and qualifications?

Of course not!!

And yet most of us are quite happy to rely mainly on our cognitive intelligence and leave our emotional, intuitive and kinaesthetic intelligences on the sidelines when we manoeuvre through our days, facing challenges and solving problems. Why is that?

We are then disappointed when we are trying to change certain behaviours or be more creative and we fail again and again.



Likewise, organisations trying to implement change fail again and again. At present even the most unlikely of organisations are investing heavily on ways to generate more creativity and innovation from their employees. Some are having great success; however many have great starts but cannot sustain the momentum.

Why not?

As Peter Senge explains in *Dance of Change*, ‘...it is not enough to change strategies, structures and systems, unless the thinking that produced those strategies, structures and systems also changes.’

So how do we change the thinking?

INVOLVE ALL THE PEOPLE

‘The fantasy that somehow organisations can change without personal change, and especially without change on the part of the people in leadership, underlies many change efforts from the start...’ says Pamela Meyer, author of *From Workspace to Playspace*.

Everyone must have stakes in the changes wanted – feel accountable and engaged.

INVOLVE THE WHOLE PERSON

This means, for starters, the whole brain. We know that creativity requires engaging both the left AND right sides of the brain. A great metaphor was used in the Newsweek article below when it described creativity requiring ‘...blender pulses of both divergent and convergent thinking...’ Left brain AND right brain.

<http://www.newsweek.com/2010/07/10/the-creativity-crisis.html>

Most of us are quite practised at **convergent thinking** – analysing, sequencing, gauging, categorising, generating criteria, selecting the logical solution. It’s what our education prepares us to do.

However, when it comes to **divergent thinking** – imaginative, associative, metaphoric, out-of-the-box, original, outrageous and unhindered by judgment – most adults need help. Children don’t, we do.

That’s one area where play comes in.

PLAY

The importance of play in giving people access to deeper, innate knowledge and creativity cannot be stressed enough.

Activities that allow people to take on different roles; to imagine, improvise in unusual situations, use their whole bodies and step out of comfort zones, have a lasting, transformative impact.

Not only on the individual, but on the way they relate to their families, their jobs, their colleagues; to the meaning they give their lives, therefore the meaning they give their work.

If the whole of the person is not involved then, as Meyer points out, ‘knowledge is reduced to data and people are reduced to data processors.’

And we know data processors are not what we need in organisations to make them more dynamic and creative!!



Act Out – Theatre for Transformation

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