

A Toolkit of Techniques

Aims:

To provide participants with a wider range of training techniques

To increase participants confidence in the use of various techniques

Resources required:

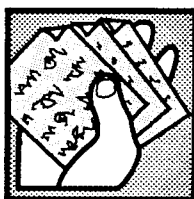
Training room; selection of cards, paper, pens, etc

3.1 'Practical techniques for trainers' handout

4.1 'Trainers Toolkit' game cards

'Learning log' sheets

1 Background notes

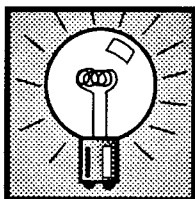


The trainer is like a performer with a suitcase. The suitcase is a bag of tools-of-the-trade which the trainer dips in to in selecting appropriate techniques for each exercise or situation she encounters. The competent trainer ideally requires two things of this suitcase. First, that it should be as large as possible, and second, that she should feel confident in using any and all of the techniques it contains.

Many trainers behave like keen collectors. They do not develop a set of techniques early on in their careers and then use only these tried and tested ones in all their training. Instead, whilst they have definite old favourites in their toolkits, they are also on the lookout for brand new techniques to borrow, adapt and try out. This spirit of experimenting in techniques keeps the trainer fresh. The process of acquiring new techniques should be an exciting one, and this section sets out to offer a wide variety of techniques to meet different situations in a challenging and fun way. There is no theory to 'techniques'; the best way is to get stuck in and practice them.

Practical training techniques come in all shapes and forms. The trick is to select the technique best suited to each training situation. No rules exist for this. The trainer must rely on her own experience and intuition in creating the match. Some of the considerations to be borne in mind are explored in Chapter 5 'Planning a Training Event'.

2 Suggestions for using these materials



1 Introduce the session and its aims.

2 Outline the idea of a trainer having a personal

'suitcase' of training techniques to draw upon (Background notes).

- 3 If appropriate, brainstorm a list of training techniques known to participants either from their own work, or from methods introduced into this training course so far.
- 4 Introduce and run the 'Trainers Toolkit Game' (4.1) or one of its variations.
- 5 If necessary, distribute copies of 'Practical techniques for trainers' handout (3.1).
- 6 Distribute 'Learning log' sheets to each participant.
- 7 Close the session by reviewing its aims.

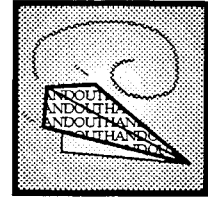
The material in this section is closely linked to Chapter 10 on planning a training exercise, and can form a useful introduction to the selection and use of actual techniques in that section.

••• Notes

CHAPTER 12 :

3.1 Handout

A Toolkit of Techniques

**Action planning**

Any exercise which invites participants to reflect on their learning during the training event so far and plan how they will use the material in their own workplace. Action planning can form the final part of many exercises: the 'Learning log' sheets in this manual are one such example. Other techniques can contribute to action planning such as logs, sharing in pairs, and triads.

Brainstorm

In response to a question or issue generated by the tutor, all participants contribute ideas and suggestions which are noted on a large flipchart as fast as they come. The idea is to take and record all ideas, no matter how apparently irrelevant, and not to stop for any discussion; ideas generated in this random way often spark other ideas. At the natural end of the brainstorm recording, the merits of different ideas can be discussed.

Demonstration

An exercise where the tutor shows participants how to do something by doing it herself. Demonstrations are useful ways of introducing skills and giving participants confidence but, like lectures, do not necessarily help participants to do it for themselves.

Dialogue books

These are a variation of sentence completion exercises and are particularly effective at the start and finish of many training events. Participants are arranged in pairs, either in two lines facing each other, or in two circles facing towards one another. Each participant is given a pre-prepared booklet. On each page of the booklet, a single sentence completion prompt is presented (e.g. "My feelings on arrival at this course were" and "Something I have learned at this event is"). Participants take it in turn to share their sentence endings with each other working through the book. Allow up to two minutes for each page. As a good icebreaker exercise, ask each participant to pair with a different person for each page (by asking the lines or circles to move round every two minutes).

Drawing and cartooning

Another non-verbal technique which allows participants to explore or explain a situation without resorting to words. Working individually or as a group, participants are invited to draw – themselves, their team, a particular situation – as they perceive it. The resulting artwork forms the basis for subsequent discussion and sharing.

Cartooning is a variation in which the history of an event is drawn in a cartoon sequence; this identifies the key moments and is a useful way of preparing for a role play with some groups. Useful trainer tip: encourage participants to regard *all* their efforts as acceptable artwork – this technique is not restricted to budding Van Gogh's!

Feedback rounds

Exercises which stop the process of the learning during the course and encourage participants to state how they are feeling or what they are learning. A selection of feedback exercises is given in Chapter 17.

Games

Games comprise a wide range of techniques, from pre-packaged training aids (used in team-building, for instance) to less competitive devices where one group's task is contrasted with another's (see the game in this section, for instance). With some training groups, techniques such as role play may best be introduced as a 'game'.

Goldfish bowl

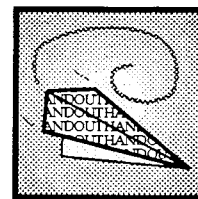
A particular technique for demonstrations. Several participants from the training group volunteer to take part in an exercise (such as a discussion, role play or game) in front of the other group members who act as observers. The action of the exercise then takes place within this central 'goldfish bowl'. At its conclusion, feedback can be taken from both the actual participants and the observers. A useful technique if the tutor wishes to retain more control of the exercise, or if some participants lack the confidence to participate.

Group discussion

Any open or structured discussion involving the whole participant group with the tutor; the topic may be limited by the tutor or left to evolve from contributions made by participants.

Handouts

Written notes containing a summary of a lecture, or instructions for a practical exercise, which are issued by the tutor to participants either as a useful reminder, or to add additional material for use in the participant's own time.

CHAPTER 12 :**3.1 Handout cont....****Icebreakers**

Any exercise designed to introduce participants to one another, or to get a training session under way. Typical icebreakers involve remembering the names of other participants, interviewing them to discover who they are, or simple physical games to encourage strangers to work together.

Lecture

A prepared verbal presentation from the trainer to the participants as a group. May be supported by slides, videos, handouts, demonstrations, etc. Is useful for conveying factual knowledge, theory and instructions to participants but may have limited retention in their memories (see Chapter 1).

Logs and diaries

Participants are asked to maintain a written log or diary of their experiences, learning or insight during (and sometimes for a specified period after) a training event. Logs assist reflection. They can be private or shared with the tutor. Occasionally, they may be used for assessment purposes.

Questionnaire

A technique for collecting information; can also be used to help self-assessment before or during a training event. A variation is to ask participants to use a questionnaire to interview other participants; used this way, it can be a good icebreaker.

Ranking on cards

Many training situations require participants to prioritise issues. Issues can be identified through brainstorming or pre-prepared and written onto cards. Participants working on their own or in small groups must then rank order the cards; individual results can then be compared. Many variations exist. Diamond ranking uses nine pre-prepared cards and small groups must order these into a diamond shape according to their degree of support for the issue or statement on the card: the diamond shape consists of one card at the top and the bottom, three cards across the middle, and two each above and below the middle. Another variation invites individuals to create a ranking; each person then joins with another and the pair must agree a joint ranking; pairs then join together and each quartet must agree a joint ranking; and so on until the whole group works together to achieve a consensus ranking.

Role play

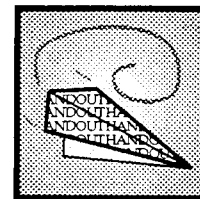
A technique for recreating or practicing real-life situations. Having identified a real-world situation and the way in which it initially developed, the tutor converts the story into a role play by asking individual participants to take on particular roles seen in the situation. It does not matter that participants were not present when the real event happened provided they have some understanding of the characters being portrayed. The participants as actors then continue the action using their insight into their particular character to determine actions and words. Role plays can be used in several ways: to develop insight into how other characters were experiencing a situation at the time; to practice alternative forms of behaviour in response to particular situations; to try different responses in awkward situations. Role plays can be 'paused' in mid-flow to enable key players to be supported by external observers offering ideas. Another variation is to support key players by providing each one with a 'tag partner' who exchanges places and takes over their role during a pause in order to attempt a change in approach to the situation. Role plays require extensive de-briefing after the action to enable participants to examine the processes involved and to leave their character and return to their 'normal' selves. Recording and replaying of role plays with a confident group using audio or video tape is a powerful way of de-briefing the exercise. It is particularly important for the trainer to ensure that all participants have successfully 'de-rolled' and returned to their ordinary behaviour and attitudes before ending the exercise.

Sculpting

A non-verbal technique which is particularly useful for understanding group dynamics. One participant is asked to 'place' other participants in the room as he mentally perceives them: actual distances between them reflect the degree (or lack) of closeness between them; their position (standing, arms outstretched, subservient, turned away, etc.) reflects their attitude; their expression (eyes averted, head down, smiling, etc.) reflects their mood. Sculpting is capable of many variations. Other participants can be asked to comment on where and how they have been placed. Other participants may re-arrange people according to their own perspectives. One participant may arrange people at each of several time periods to reflect the changing development of the group. Whichever variation is used, the technique is powerful and requires plenty of time for de-briefing.

Sentence completion

A prepared list of incomplete sentences to be completed by individual participants. The completed part acts as a

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trigger for the participant to add his own words and fill in the missing part. The technique can be used to elicit feelings, e.g. 'An aspect of being a trainer which worries me is', or to reinforce factual knowledge, e.g. 'A technique which helps people to prepare for awkward situations is'. Sentence completion exercises can be written on pre-prepared pages, or conducted verbally by the tutor announcing the sentence prompt to participants talking together in pairs.

Sharing in pairs

Participants are divided into pairs to discuss an issue set by the tutor. This technique can be used in various ways: discussing personal experiences and reactions to a situation; co-counselling on each person's difficulties; clarifying personal expectations; supporting a partner's reflection and planning.

Simulation

A large-scale reconstruction of a complex series of interlinked processes. Sometimes seen as a giant roleplay because participants take on various prepared roles acting together as teams. Depending on the simulation, some teams and individuals may cooperate, others may conflict. The simulation can proceed through various phases with the director (usually the trainer) moving it on through different time spans, or introducing random external events into the process. Requires extensive planning and de-briefing.

Situation cards

A prepared set of cards each describing a typical awkward or difficult situation which participants might be expected to encounter in their work. Each card is introduced by a participant who continues by suggesting his likely response; other participants can contribute their ideas as well.

Small group discussion

Any opportunity given to sub-groups of the whole training group to work on topics and issues through discussion together. Usually, the theme of the discussion is carefully set by the tutor to give direction, but small group discussions can also be used to encourage sharing of experiences and action planning in a more informal and supportive manner than is often possible within the large group. Small group discussions can be self-contained, or require later feedback to the whole group, depending on whether the content of each group's discussions needs to be shared.

Tick lists and assessment sheets

A form of pencil and paper exercise, or questionnaire, in which a list of pre-prepared statements or prompts have to be considered and responded to by the participant. The headings against which statements might be ticked could include: 'is-true-of-me/is-sometimes-true-of-me/is-never-true-of-me' (for a list of self-assessment statements); 'is-a-problem/is-sometimes-a-problem/is-never-a-problem' (for a problem identifying list of statements); and 'do-more-of/leave-unchanged/do-less-of' (for a list of personal behaviours).

Triads

A specific form of small group work in which three people (A, B and C) work together in a particular way. The group is given a topic to explore, or each participant is asked to identify a personal issue with regard to that topic. In the triad, person A is actively exploring the issue by conversing with person B who acts solely as a responsive listener or counsellor. Person C does not participate directly in this conversation but contributes at the end in one of several ways depending on the nature of the exercise: he can summarise the insights and decisions which A appears to have made during the conversation; he can feedback comments about B's counselling style; he can act as timekeeper for the exercise. When A has finished, the process is repeated twice with each participant taking on roles A, B and C in turn. The tutor needs to set strict time limits at the outset for the length of A's conversation with B and for C's feedback in each 'round' of the triad. A very effective technique which allows participants to explore their personal issues in a highly supportive manner.

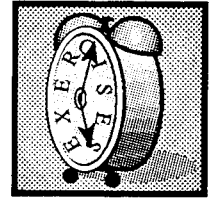
Trust games

Various games and exercises which encourage group members to participate less as individuals and more as collaborative partners. Simple trust games include: the blindfolded person in a paired team being helped around the room by his partner; one person lying prone on the floor and being lifted up horizontally by six other participants; one person standing in the middle of a close circle of others and allowing himself to repeatedly fall to one side, be supported by the circle and pushed in another direction across the circle, etc.

CHAPTER 12 :

4.1 Exercise: trainer's notes

'Trainer's Toolkit Game'

**Purpose:**

To create a repertoire of training techniques, and to consider the relevance of different techniques to various situations.

Process:

This is a game which can be played in various ways depending on the interests and current skills of the participants, and on the time available. It was created by participants on one of our courses. The original version of the game is described first, followed by several variations.

The original game:

- 1 The purpose of the game is introduced and participants divided into small groups.
- 2 A set of Technique Cards and Situation Cards are prepared by copying the suggestions from the next page onto individual cards. The tutor may wish to include a limited selection from the lists, or to include others using the blank cards provided. The cards are then placed face down.
- 3 Either the tutor or the group should prepare a list of Topics to be used in the exercise. These can be drawn from the normal work setting of the participants or specially created for this exercise. Some suggestions for the latter are provided on the Topic Cards.
- 4 Each group in turn takes one technique card and one situation card, together with one topic from the topic list or topic cards. Their task is to devise a simple exercise or presentation which uses the specified technique to address a typical example of the situation. For example, a group might pick up cards on 'Goldfish bowl', 'Learning alternative behaviours' and 'How to make a complaint'. The group's task is to devise a short exercise using the goldfish bowl technique which will enable people to learn about alternative ways of making a complaint. A suitable length of time, perhaps around ten minutes should be allowed for preparation. The object of the exercise is not for the technique to be used perfectly, but for its nature to be illustrated in a practical manner. If the technique is unfamiliar to the small group, some assistance in explaining it may be necessary from the tutor.
- 5 Each group then delivers its exercise or presentation to the other small groups using their

members as participants or audience where necessary.

- 6 A whole group can then be invited to discuss the technique, its particular strengths and weaknesses, its relevant application, and other ways of using it.
- 7 After several 'plays' the full list of techniques can be introduced and discussed by participants, and questions invited about any unfamiliar technique.

Variation 1:

The training group brainstorms a list of training techniques and these are then used to prepare technique cards for the game.

Variation 2:

With a competent and enthusiastic training group, one small group can select the two cards for another small group and introduce apparently awkward combinations to test the ingenuity of the others.

Variation 3:

With a participant group drawn from one organisation or with similar backgrounds, the situation cards can be replaced by cards identifying actual training contexts encountered in their work.

Variation 4:

Each of the situation cards are examined in turn, and a list of appropriate techniques identified for each situation.