

Social Presencing Theater: Stuck Exercise

Overview

This is the main technique of Social Presencing Theater. The other forms (such as 4D Mapping) are variations on this practice. It is a process by which one experiences going through the whole U journey by moving from Sculpture 1 (current reality) to Sculpture 2 (emerging future). We do not know what the movements will be or where they will stop, but we can follow the movement and then reflect on our experience. Surprising insights can arise.

Purpose

The invitation here is to notice the inclination of individual people and groups of people to move toward a saner, freer, healthier, more creative situation; to sense more deeply into the current reality, rather than trying to “fix” the situation from the same mind-set or frame of reference that created the stuck situation. Instead, we feel deeply into the situation, suspending our problem-solving habit. By paying attention to our “body-knowing” and to the social field, we discover new directions or fresh insights that were not accessible just by thinking.

Principles

- Let the body be the guide. Do not plan, act, mime, pretend, manipulate or represent. Simply BE and DO.
- Lean into the “stuck” situation. The wisdom is there already. Notice what is emerging – what in Theory U language is sometimes called the “crack”.
- Trust the moment-to-moment experience.

Uses & Outcomes

- Become more sensitive to and honest about the feeling-quality of their current situation
- Suspend concepts; build trust in body knowing.
- Feel ourselves as part of a co-creative system.
- Feel what is emerging, a future that we want to create.

An Example

This exercise can be used by individuals or teams as a practice for letting the intelligence of the body guide us in decisions and actions. Fully embodying our situations gives us direct feedback that informs our decisions. Noticing the interdependence of many factors and influences in every situation gives us a broader perspective.

Process

Set Up

People & Place

- Groups of 4-6 people, practicing together in person or via videoconference. If the latter, adjust your camera so your whole body is visible.
- Sufficient space to ensure you have enough room around you to freely move, and so that groups can work without distraction.

Time

- Step 1 is 10 minutes. Each person shares a gesture and a few minutes of reflection at the end
- Step 2 is 5 minutes. All participants practice together.
- Step 3 is 10-15 minutes per person. Each person sets up Sculpture #1, moves to Sculpture #2, and there is time for reflection after each person's "stuck".

Sequence

Show Sculpture 1

(Corresponds to the u.lab video, "Stuck Part 2": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uVeU1fTuSZc>)

1. Sit together in groups of five.
2. Reflect on a place where you feel stuck, where there is a breakdown or an area of life or work that feels stuck.
3. Let that feeling of being stuck in this particular situation come into your body as a shape or a gesture.
4. Embody your feeling of stuck. Make it concrete and visible in the space.
5. One by one share this with the others in your group. Allow space between each person.
6. Brief reflection on what you saw or felt as a witness.

Show movement from Sculpture 1 to Sculpture 2

(Corresponds to the u.lab video, "Stuck Part 4": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RcxcGrqNRfQ>)

1. In parallel each person embodies their stuck shape (sculpture 1) and then allows that shape to move. When the movement comes to an end, stop (sculpture 2).
2. After all have shared their movement, briefly reflect together on what each person experienced doing the exercise and witnessing the others.

Group Stuck

(Corresponds to the u.lab video, "Stuck Part 6": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvgVt-JBpO8>)

1. Take 2 minutes to sit with the group in silence and feel the social body of the group.
2. One person invites the others to replicate their stuck sculpture to emphasize, augment, or clarify their feeling of stuck.
3. As a collective, stay with the feeling of stuck, deepening into it.
4. Pay close attention to the collective or social body as it begins to move, shift, or change. Don't talk during this phase.
5. When the movement stops, rest in this Sculpture 2.
6. Remaining in the Sculpture 2, each person says one sentence from the "I voice"
7. Reflect as a group on what you noticed, saw, and felt.
8. Gap of silence
9. Next person does their Stuck Exercise, same as above.

Reflection

1. The reflection is built into each part of the exercise. Participants can reflect through several lenses.
2. What is the difference between the stuck shape and sculpture 2? How are they different? What was the movement from sculpture 1 to sculpture 2?
3. Where did the movement begin in the body? Where in the social body?
4. In the group stuck, each person holds or expresses a different aspect of the system, but also embodies the whole system. Reflect on what literally happened, on the quality of experience and on the feeling.
5. What insights or questions arose?