



Agony Aunt Exercise

Key message

Building the confidence and competence of young people is key to helping them develop exit strategies from radicalisation. It is important that they understand that they already have most of the skills and abilities required to support themselves and their peers out of radicalisation. This exercise with Auntie Agony allows participants the opportunity to practice their listening, communication and counselling skills; but also to take time to reflect on the common problems facing their age group today and to develop solutions to these problems.

Key words: communication skills, self-reflection, problem-solving, de-radicalisation

Summary

To provide a safe and creative means of dealing with problems and to show that everyone has something to offer towards the solution of specific problems.

Module	Group size	Group age	Duration
• Exit strategies	• small • medium	• 12 - 15 • 16 - 19 • 20 - 24	• 1 hour

Purpose

- To demonstrate the potential for group problem solving
- To highlight the level of knowledge and skills that already exists within the group
- To show participants that their opinions are heard and their contributions are valued

Participants

Suitable for use with a wide variety of groups but may be most relevant to teenagers and young adults; non-gender specific.

Description

Step 1: The facilitator explains to the group that they are going to have a visitor, Auntie Agony who will help with any problems the group members might have.

Ask each participant to take two/three pieces of paper and on each write a short letter to Auntie Agony outlining a problem that is common to their target group and that they might like her to address. Letters can be anonymous or signed with a pseudonym. Once written the letters should be folded up and placed in the box.

Step 2: When all the letters have been collected, produce the prop identifying Auntie Agony and prepare the group for her arrival. Explain that everyone in the group will adopt the role of Auntie Agony and help solve the problems identified by their peers.

Step 3: Each participant then gets a chance to become Auntie Agony and takes a letter from the box, if it's their own they should put it back and pick another. Auntie Agony then reads the letter aloud and offers constructive advice about dealing with the problem. Other group members are then encouraged to add further advice and suggest any potential actions they feel might be useful.

Step 4: When everyone has had a chance to take on the role of Auntie Agony participants are asked for their feedback on the exercise. Questions to ask include, did they gain anything from it...individually or as a group? What did it feel like to take on the responsibility of being Auntie Agony? Did any problems get resolved? Did participants share the same types of problems and issues? Is this type of group sharing a useful way of dealing with problems?

Materials needed

A suitable prop to identify Auntie Agony e.g., wig, hat, glasses (keep hidden until required), A box or similar container, Small sheets of paper, Pens

Methodology

Role play, Problem solving, Large group discussion

Advice for Trainer

Ensure confidentiality and avoid identifying specific letter writers.

Source / Literature

Original material developed for the purpose of the YCARE project



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