

Structuring a Workshop/Session

InnerSense workshops took place in a large studio with 3 supporting artists. Support workers were encouraged to engage alongside their clients - everybody sharing the experience and contributing in their own way....on equal terms.

Structuring sessions will certainly depend on the type of space you have and the nature of the group/individuals with whom you are working. This could be in the corner of a bedroom with a single person (like a grandchild during lockdown!) in a school classroom/hall, or a specific space dedicated to this kind of work. There are general guidelines that are helpful whatever the circumstances.

The following ideas aim to provide a loose structure for sessions within which adaptations can be made to suit your particular situation. Careful planning and consideration of individual needs should precede every session. This will affect the layout and content (i.e. props/instruments) that are included or hidden for later. The same 'theme' can be used in different ways for all ability levels, given good preparation.

NAMING/GREETING

Every session should start with an affirmation/greeting/welcome of each individual in the group. At InnerSense (as in many classrooms) this always involved improvised song/music, dance if particular clients love to move, or playing an instrument alongside our musician. In the greeting it is possible to introduce clues to the nature of the coming workshop - for example giving an item of costume to each person, or a prop belonging to the workshop, the introduction of a puppet or character, creating a mood, setting the scene and invoking anticipation of the experience to come.

SETTLING or GIVING CONTEXT ACTIVITY

The first activity should allow individuals time to acclimatise to the space and feel comfortable within it. A shared activity could include:

- some kind of textural, aural or olfactory experience to be discovered, explored and enjoyed together.
- It might be the starting place for an exciting journey, an opportunity to choose clothes/accessories and dress up
- it might provide opportunities for supported music-making,
- or create the space for the revelation of a particular character or puppet.

TRANSITION

Developing the session further might require a physical or atmospheric transition. There are several ways of achieving this change of focus:

- Lighting - dimming then re-emerging, change of colours, spotlighting
- Music/Atmosphere - sound calling
- Actual movement in the space - Travelling/dance/action
- Practical requirement (Panama Canal/Saguaro) moving objects, clearing a space
- being led/drawn/directed to the next activity by a character or puppet

CONTRASTING ACTIVITY

Following a narrative as in Oz 1 - Kansas, can provide a natural sequence to events

Moving from a sedentary experience to a more movement based activity - i.e. from meeting the creatures on the seabed to swimming in the deep, or from sensory exploration of seeds and grasses...to building a fence, hut or other structure

Changing props, instruments and/or costume could prelude a celebration of some kind; feasting, dancing or another ritual. Offering a food treat at the end is an extra special reward and also encourages clients to return for the next session :)

CHILL or CLOSURE

Having completed this wonderful sensory journey/adventure, it is good to come together and rest - relaxing in a safe, happy environment, knowing that all have participated creatively, each in their own ways. Can be achieved by just listening to music together, sharing massage, just simply sitting holding hands.

Of course you can just use a part of this session structure, as required