

Resources for educators and facilitators

Icebreakers and energisers

The star exercise

Length		10 minutes
Difficulty		Beginner
Group size		Small to medium
Aim	To make the participants reflect over the different starting points people have in life and the possibility to not accept the given. To make them ready and motivated for human rights education.	
Description	A simple, quick icebreaker that introduces the topic of human rights.	
Materials	Handout - one printed star per participant A small number of scissors. A room you that you can move around in.	
Source	Adapted from Georg Lakey Facilitating Group Learning p. 109	

Outline and instructions

- Give each participant a piece of paper a big star printed on it.
- Give a very few people in the group a pair of scissors (e.g. one or two pairs of scissors per 20 participants)
- Describe the task without explaining the purpose of the exercise: “your task now is to get the star out of the paper within 1 minute in any way possible. Use your imagination and be creative to find a way. A very few of you are lucky and have a pair of scissors”.
- Afterwards you commend them for their effort and ask them what they felt:
 - o What did you feel during this exercise? How did you solve the task?
 - o How did it feel to not have scissors?
 - o How did it feel to be the one with the scissors?
 - o Did anyone think of borrowing the scissors? Why/why not?

- Did anyone think of lending the scissors to somebody else?
Why/why not?
- Explain why we did this exercise:

The exercise illustrates that people around the world are born with different starting points in life. Many factors that determine how our lives will be, depending on what country we are born in, who are parents are. A few are lucky and born privileged, with “scissors”, the majority of the world’s population are born without scissors. Many people think that they have to accept the role and place they are given, without trying to borrow a pair of scissors or doing something about it. And the privileged people don’t always think of how they can help the ones without “scissors” or who are less privileged.

Human rights are about a right life of dignity – they are like the star we each need. Being more aware about human rights can help us to start to think differently. We don’t have to be defeated by the fact that we “don’t have the scissors” or accept injustice. We can find other ways to solve the task or “ask” for the scissors. Human rights also help the privileged, the ones with scissors, to be inspired to stand up for the rights of others and less privileged. But in order to ask for our rights, we first need to understand and know what human rights are.

Eleanor Roosevelt said that the ideals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights will "carry no weight unless the people know them, unless the people understand them, unless the people demand that they be lived."