

Power Station

This power station generates creative human energy!

Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peace and Violence • Citizenship and Participation • General Human Rights
Complexity	Level 3
Group size	10+ (small groups 3-5)
Time	90 minutes
Overview	Participants brainstorm acts of violence that are common in their daily lives and then look for creative ways of dealing with them and finding solutions to the problems.
Related rights	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The right to life, liberty and personal security • Freedom from discrimination • Freedom from interference with privacy, family, home and correspondence
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To identify acts of violence and their causes and to investigate solutions • To develop co-operative and group work skills • To cultivate a sense of justice and responsibility towards others
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A long piece of strong string or rope, equal to the width of the room to represent an electric cable. • A4 size sheets of paper of 2 different colours, for example red and green • Markers, one per small group • Props: a loud bell or hooter, hard hats, a white coat, a cable cutter (real or made out of card) • 2 reels of sticky tape • 2 rooms (optional, but preferable) • An assistant to operate the bells, lights and any other special effects
Preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepare one room to be the “power station”. Clear a space in the middle. Stretch the string (representing an electrical cable) across the room at shoulder height and anchor the ends firmly.

Instructions

1. Explain to the participants that they are going to be working in a power station. Normal power stations generate electricity from uranium, coal, gas, rubbish, bio-fuels, the sun, wind or waves. This power station, however, generates energy from acts of violence and is therefore potentially dangerous and ought to be closed down or converted to run on another fuel. You (the facilitator) are the manager of the power station and the participants are the technicians.

Part 1. Brainstorming acts of violence

2. Ask participants to carry out a quick personal brainstorming session of “violence around me”. Explain clearly that they are not going to look at the “big issues” such as terrorism or



Peace and
Violence



Citizenship and
Participation



General
Human Rights



Level 3



10+ (small
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90 minutes



genocide but rather at those acts of violence which we all meet in everyday life at school or in youth clubs, on the street and in our homes.

3. Divide the participants into groups of 3 to 5 people and hand out three sheets of (red) paper and a marker pen to each small group. Ask participants to share the issues they brainstormed and agree collectively on which forms of violence are the most important to tackle. They should write these down, one on each piece of paper, in big letters and using key words or very short phrases.
4. Collect the sheets together and do a quick check to see if there are any that are duplicated. Discard the duplicates.
5. Give the participants a five-minute break while you prepare for the next part. Hang the pieces of paper over the "electric cable" about 0.5 m apart. Tape them onto the string so that they stay in position and do not slide.

Part 2. In the power station

6. When you are ready and all the "forms of the violence" papers are stuck onto the rope, tell the group that you just received notification from the Health and Safety Executive that the plant will be closed down unless they – the "technicians" – can find alternative fuel to power the station.
7. Invite the "technicians" into the "power station". Split them into 2 teams and give plenty of sheets of (green) paper, marker pens and a roll of sticky tape to each.
8. Point out the power cable and the papers representing the acts of violence.
9. Explain that one of the reasons why the power station is so dangerous is that violence generates energy in a very uneven flow; there are frequent surges. When this happens the only quick way to prevent the whole place exploding is to cut the cable; however, this is an extremely dangerous procedure and should be avoided at all costs. When a particularly strong surge is building up, warning lights will flicker and they will hear a bell. They will then have to act fast to divert the build up of energy. To do this they need to identify ways of transforming the acts of violence on the electrical cable into positive actions.
10. Explain how it works in practice: They will hear bells and see warning lights flashing. You will point to where you may have to cut the cable and read out the words on the two sheets that hang on the cable either side of the cutting point. The two teams then have a maximum of 1 minute to consider ways of tackling the two different forms of violence. They note their proposals down, each one on a separate sheet of (green) paper, and race to stick them as quickly as possible onto the rope where you are about to cut.
11. Now start the power station up and let it run for just a minute or two. Signal to the assistant to start ringing the bell and flashing the lights. Take the bolt cutter and mime that you are about to cut the cable at a certain point. Read out loud the two forms of violence and urge the teams to start their rescue work.
12. After one minute, stop the bell and flashing lights and put aside the bolt cutter, step forward and read out what is written on the "solutions papers". Briefly discuss the suggestions with the whole group. Get the teams to amend or discard any papers that, on reflection, are not realistic. Remove the two "forms of violence" papers and express your relief.
13. Repeat steps 11 and 12 until all the "violence papers" have been removed and are replaced by "solution papers".
14. Finally, collect all the "solutions papers" off the wire and stick them on the wall beside the various expressions of violence.

Debriefing and evaluation

Start the debriefing with a review of the activity itself and then go on to discuss each expression of violence and the proposed solutions:

- How did people feel during the activity? Did they enjoy it? Why (not)?
- Did everybody agree about the importance of the different forms of violence?



- What are the causes of the particular expressions of violence identified?
- Were the proposed solutions and actions realistic? In the short term? In the longer term?
- What challenges or resistance might people face when trying to implement these solutions?
- How can young people best prevent violence and defend peaceful alternatives?
- Which human rights are violated by violence?

Tips for facilitators

You will need to allow about 10 minutes for part 1, the brainstorm, about 60 minutes for the work in the power station and 20 minutes for the debriefing and evaluation.

If you need to give people some help with the initial brainstorming, you could give examples of acts of violence against individuals, for instance, bullying, name-calling, sarcasm, jokes in poor taste, offensive phone calls and text messages (SMS) and vandalism to personal property. You can also suggest acts that are not directed at a particular individual, such as the violence we see in films or hear in songs.

At step 11 the teams should aim to come up with two or three proposals of ways to tackle each form of violence, but one is sufficient. The solutions should be realistic.

One key to success is the way you create the working atmosphere and generate the feeling of urgency to prevent the cable being cut. You can download sounds of machines working, and alarms ringing from the Internet. As manager you could wear a white coat and wear a hard hat; if you have access to more let the technicians also dress up. You could also think about doing the activity in the basement amongst the water pipes. Obviously a certain level of acting ability on your part will add to the fun, but you don't need special skills. Just try to keep the action moving and keep the discussions between each round brief. In-depth debate should be kept for the debriefing.

If people need a further explanation about how to come up with ideas for solutions to the problems you could give the following examples. The solutions to "bullying" could be holding awareness workshops in schools on forms of bullying or training peer mediators. Solutions for "violence on television" might be to allow violent films to be broadcast only after 11 p.m. or to organise activities for children so that they have alternatives to watching TV.

If the group is small, you can work with one group of "technicians". The reason for working with two teams is that two teams very often come up with different solutions to the same problem, which broadens the options. You can also increase the pace of the activity by adding an element of competition. To do this, give each team different coloured paper and see which team gets the most solutions.

Suggestions for follow-up

Discrimination or gender issues might have come up in the "power station" Even if they didn't, you may be interested in exploring issues about identity and the right to equality in dignity and respect. Have a look at the activity, "Who are I?", on page 332.

Ideas for action

Tackle one of the problems identified in this activity. For instance, if bullying was the chosen issue, the group could take forward the proposal to organise a workshop in their school and put it on the agenda of the next school or association council meeting.

Further information

"Power station" has been developed from an activity developed by Dariusz Grzemny, Association for Children and Young People (Chance), Glogow, Poland.

KEY DATE



4 November
The European Convention on Human Rights was signed on this day in 1950.



Note

This technique can be adapted for use with any issue which involves identifying problems and finding solutions.

