

Soft Skills Training Event

We can repeat the theory many times, but experiencing it at least once is the most valuable thing!

That was the starting point for us to shape a series of training events for - in total - 7 modules. Each module reflected an area that should be covered while we were working in a Social Solidarity Economy milieu. These 7 modules are appropriate no matter where you are working or with whom, but especially for the communities where the model of organization is more horizontal than vertical, where all members of the community regardless of the task performed should be seen and heard. Such conditions are demanding and competence in how to listen, receive, and give feedback is key to preventing misunderstandings, resolving difficult situations peacefully, and ultimately growing in the community instead of descending into chaos. Such a cherry on the cake was the module on taking care of yourself. We came out of observing how the activist community is fragile and prone to burnout, so taking care of yourself is the first and necessary step to taking care of the whole team. We ended the training series with this module although you might as well take it as the first.

We wish you to set up your combinations in implementing the pieces of training. We have shared our comments at the end of this collection, hope you can find there some inspiration and worthwhile reflections.

Modules are as follows:

1. Nonviolent communication model
2. Active listening & giving and receiving a feedback
3. Organizing a successful meetings: facilitation & moderation
4. Inclusive decision making
5. Distributed leadership
6. Working with conflict
7. Self-care

Module 2. Active Listening & Giving and Receiving Feedback

Duration	What	Content	Materials
15'	2.01 Soundscape meditation	Relax and focus on the sounds around you	
30'	2.02 Deep listening	Exercise with two forms of listening – with active feedback and without. Discuss the differences.	
30'	2.03 What brings you joy	Participants share in pairs 5' one at a time	
30'	2.04 Active listening skills	Theoretical input for techniques of clarifying, paraphrasing, summarizing.	
60'	2.05 One-on-one	Participants conduct a structured conversation in pairs	Printed description
10'	2.06 Compliments warmup	Give 3 people in the room a compliment	
30'	2.07 Von Thun - 4 ears theory	What do we focus on when we listen to other people? – short presentation and discussion.	Marker & flip-chart
30'	2.08 Conditions for feedback	What do you need to comfortably receive feedback? – brainstorm	Marker & flip-chart
30'	2.09 Model for giving feedback	Facts, Emotions, Results, Expectations	Marker & flip-chart
30'	2.10 Communication challenges – drawing game		Blindfolds, papers, markers
30'	2.11 Feedback exercise	Give feedback to each-other concerning the drawing exercise – later discuss in plenary	

2.01 Active Listening & Feedback

Soundscape Meditation

Goal: Help participants relax and sensitize them to their bodies and the environment

Group size: any | **Duration:** 15 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** preferably outdoor

Description: Stand in a circle. Ask ppl to focus on their breathing. Then slowly shift attention to the different sounds around them. Try to focus on singular sounds and then on as many as possible including sounds of their bodies and their neighbours.

Meta comment: Good warmup exercise. Can be connected with the theory about active listening.

Needed materials: none

2.02 Deep listening

Goal: Participants experience what it is like to be heard and to listen to others with real respect.

Group size: ideally 12, pairs | **Duration:** 15 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** rather indoor

Description: Participants create pairs. The first participant has 2 minutes to talk and express his/her emotions, feelings, and thoughts relating to a given topic or question. Silence is also a way of communication. The other participant is paying maximum attention to the speaker. They observe not only the content of the words, but also all manifestations of non-verbal communication. The listener will then have two minutes to express what they have heard, seen, felt. e.g., I saw that... I heard that... They do not judge, just describes the situation. In this way, the speaker can gain valuable reflection. Thereafter, the roles are reversed. In the end, participants can share mutually and discuss their experience.

Materials: paper and pens for taking notes

Meta comment: This method has been used in the Food & More project.

Resources: <https://www.rogerkallen.com/the-art-of-deep-listening>

http://www.dragondreaminginstitute.org/documents/DDI_WorkshopHandbookV01.pdf

<https://www.lifehack.org/789807/listening-skills>

<https://www.tonyrobbins.com/mind-meaning/the-power-of-deep-listening>

2.03 What brings you joy

Goal: Practice identifying joyful activities and develop listening skills.

Group size: any, even number | **Duration:** 30 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** any

Description: Participants sit in pairs in front of each-other. Each has 5 minutes to talk about the things/activities that bring him/her joy. The other person only listens and doesn't intervene in the talk. After that the group can discuss observations and difficulties they encountered.

Meta Comment: This exercise connects well with the NVC section about emotions and also about the theory of 4 ears.

Materials: none

2.04 Active listening skills

Goal: Learn to identify and distinguish active listening techniques: paraphrasing, clarifying, summarising

Group size: any | **Duration:** 30 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** any

Description: Short presentation about the three basic active listening techniques:

- Paraphrasing is restating the speaker's thought, in your own words. For instance, "I think you're saying that..." or "It sounds like you're saying ...". This is so they know you understand, or don't understand, in which case they can clarify for you.
- Clarifying involves asking questions to make sure that you understand. For example, "Can you give me an example of that?" or "You just said that such and such is important, can you help me understand what that means to you?"
- Summarizing is accurately and briefly summarizing the intent of their message. For instance, "I think the main ideas here are ...".

The video in the linked website can be watched together, and examples of the different techniques and the differences between them should be discussed with the participants.

Meta Comment: This input complements active listening exercises and can be provided before or after the exercises. If provided before the techniques can be applied in the exercises, if provided after, it can serve as a reflection topic against the experience.

Resources: <https://www.e-education.psu.edu/marcellus/node/807>

2.05 One-on-One

Goal: Acquaint participants with the One-on-one method and practice

Group size: any, work in pairs | **Duration:** 60-90 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** any

Description: *This activity could be one of the entry points to introduce the SSE theme - also due to the fact that 1-on-1s are an essential method of organizing. people could talk about e.g. what makes them interested in SSE, joining the movement, what solidarity means to them, what bothers them about the system, etc*

Introduce the One-on-one method to participants and let them acquaint themselves with the printed explanations. Let the participants choose pairs and help them find a place where they can have a deep conversation undisturbed. At half-time signal a change of roles in pairs. After the conversations get together in the plenary and discuss the experience.

Short summary of a One-on-one: A planned meeting between two individuals, in which they establish a personal 'public' relationship. It is a strategic meeting used to shed light on the problems and issues people care about (their interests) and to figure out other people's ideas, motivations and visions, and identify where they intersect with yours. It is a purposeful semi-structured conversation/dialogue, in which the organiser ensures the main protagonist is the

other person, in order to gain insight into his/her values and priorities. This method is widely used in community organizing for various causes and in various areas of life.

Meta comment: This method has been used within the BUSSE project.

Materials: Printable method description: https://socioeco.org/bdf_fiche-outil-716_en.html

2.06 Compliments warmup

Goal: Stimulate participants to get in contact with each-other and get into a good mood

Group size: any | **Duration:** 10 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** any

Description: groups of 3 is staying one behind another (as in a queue), and they are discussing the special features of the person in the first row (she/he does not see the others) one for 2 minutes. Then the first person goes at the end and the discussion restarts, this time about the new one in the first row. Once all of 3 persons were as first in the row they stay in a small circle seeing each other and then find a way to thank for the good words (compliments) they have heard.

Meta comment: Great warmup for exercises concerning NVC and feedback. The compliments can be even later analysed using proposed feedback frameworks (are we complimenting the person, their looks, their behaviour, their personality?)

Materials: not needed

2.07 Von Thun four-ears communication model

Goal: Acquaint participants with the communication square/four-ears model, relate it to other activities in the workshop

Group size: any | **Duration:** 30 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** rather indoor

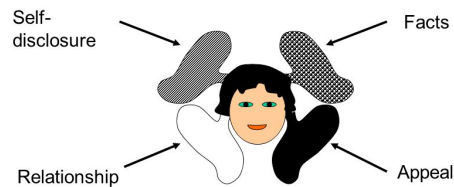
Description: Explain the four-ears communication model using a visual chart to help illustrate the idea. Discuss with participants about different examples of how the theory applies to their lives. Relate the model to other communication exercises done on the workshops, discuss which “ear” was active when.

Short summary of the model: “The four-sides model (also known as communication square or four-ears model) is a communication model postulated in 1981 by German psychologist Friedemann Schulz von Thun. According to this model every message has four facets though not the same emphasis might be put on each. The four sides of the message are fact, self-disclosure, Social relationship between sender and receiver, and wish or want.”

Meta comment: This theory connects very well with the “Facts, Emotions, Results, Expectations” feedback model. It can also give good effects to relate it to other exercises.

Materials: Chart printed, displayed or drawn on flipchart.

Receiving with One of Four Ears



Example chart:

(cf. Schulz von Thun 1994:45)

Resources: Example explanations of the model: <https://www.vinodbidwaik.com/2011/12/four-ear-dimensions-of-communication.html>, http://www.linus-geisler.de/dp/dp06_speech.html

2.08 Conditions for feedback

Goal: Assess the participants' knowledge and experience of feedback practices and fill in the gaps

Group size: 12 is ideal | **Duration:** 30 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** rather indoor

Description: Pose the question: "What do you need to comfortably receive feedback?" and collect answers from participants on a flipchart. Fill in the gaps and talk about the different needs and how they relate to each-other.

Here are the most important aspects of feedback that should be covered on the flipchart. Proper feedback should be:

- based on shared facts and concrete actions
- important and relevant to the receiver
- given with consent and in a moment appropriate for the receiver
- direct and honest
- expressed one-on-one (with the possible exception of positive feedback)
- expressed as close as possible to the relevant event or action
- done in a calm and safe manner (consider your emotional state)
- giving the recipient space for their own perspective and solutions

Meta comment: To facilitate a meaningful discussion knowledge of NVC and feedback models is advisable.

Materials: Flipchart & marker

Resources: <https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/guide-to-giving-constructive-feedback>

2.09 Model for giving feedback

Goal: acquaint participants with basic models of giving feedback

Group size: any | **Duration:** approx.30 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** any

Description: Introduce the theory about giving feedback. We propose an example of a model that bases on four basic elements that one should be aware of when constructing a feedback message: Facts, Emotions, Results, Expectations. These can be conveyed in an informal manner or constructed very methodically.

Meta comment: Better to experiment first a little bit before introducing the theory. The feedback model proposed above (Facts, Emotions, Results, Expectations) connects very well with the von Thun 4 Ears theory. It is also very much related to NVC practices and theory.

Materials: Marker & flip-chart, sources on feedback models, eg.:

<https://www.indeed.com/career-advice/career-development/feedback-model>

2.10 Communication challenges – drawing game

Goal: Experience a situation where the quality and precision of communication affects the outcome of the exercise.

Group size: ideally 12, even number | **Duration:** approx.30 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** indoor

Description: Participants sit in two rows and there are tables between them. On the tables there are papers and markers they can use for drawing. People in one row are blindfolded, so they cannot see, and they will draw on the paper in front of them on the table. The facilitator shows an image of geometric forms (can be easy or more difficult) to the ones without the blindfold. They have 2 minutes to instruct their partner - sitting in front of them on the other side of the table - to draw what they see. They cannot communicate with each other after that.

Next round: now the blindfolded people will explain - and not seeing what their partner is drawing. In this round, there are no shapes to copy, and image - for example - a horse on a farm (they cannot use the word of horse and farm). So, there are also 2 minutes to explain this and allow the other person to draw. This time the person who is drawing can ask questions.

Meta comment: This exercise is used here so that participants can give each other feedback about the process later on. It can be any other exercise that is based on communication.

Materials: Paper, pens, blind-folds, pre-prepared drawings

2.11 Feedback Exercise

Goal: Participants exercise giving each other feedback and reflect on the practice

Group size: any (work in pairs) | **Duration:** 30 min. | **Indoor/outdoor:** any

Description: This exercise should be preceded by an activity where participants work together in pairs. After the activity the participants sit together in the same pairs and give each-other feedback concerning the activity. The feedback should concern the quality of cooperation and communication between the participants. Example questions are: What was helpful for you in the cooperation? What was an obstacle? What would you do differently in the future?

After the feedback session the process should be discussed in the plenary and experiences compared.

Meta comment: This exercise can be done before and after the theoretical input about giving feedback and NVC given that the participants reflect on their feedback technique after the exercise and have a chance to relate it to the theory.

Materials: not needed

This module is part of the Soft Skills Training for the social solidarity economy initiatives and organisations developed within the project Hard Times – Soft Skills. All other related materials can be found at the address: <https://www.socioeco.org/hati-SOS>

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