



# The Culturatorium<sup>®</sup>

*Improvisation Theatre for Intercultural Education*

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**Everything is possible**  
Roof of the Culturatoriums house



# Introduction

In our Culturatorium approach we use improv theater for intercultural education. We therefore facilitate either intercultural trainings with improv methods or intercultural improv workshops – which might lead to a improv show with the participants. This brochure focuses on the first: how to facilitate intercultural trainings with our approach.

In order to understand the effect of "Culturatorium: Improvisation Theatre for Intercultural Education" and what can be achieved with this approach, you need to experience it. Typical reactions from our participants of our workshops are:

- "I did not realize that I am in a training. It was so much fun. Suddenly the day was over. What a pity!"
- "I used to work relationship-oriented. Now I feel empowered to continue and explain to others why this is a professional thing to do!"
- "Laughing is so important!"

In this sense: feel invited to join our workshops and see (and laugh) by yourself!

That been stated, we will do our best to explain our concept in this brochure. In this way, those of you who already know us may get a deeper understanding of our approach. And at the same time, we reach out to those of you who are interested in our work and maybe want to experience our workshops.

## **WHO ARE "WE" ANYWAY? AND WHAT IS "THE CULTURATORIUM"?**

Culturatorium is a registered trademark and consists of educators, intercultural trainers and improv theatre players who have combined their expertise and developed this concept. Katrin Kuhla, Yusuf Demirkol and Ercan Öksüz were the first "Culturators". YOU are invited to become one as well! ;-)

*If you are interested to experience this approach in one of our workshops,  
please don't hesitate to contact [katrin.kuhla@via-bayern.de](mailto:katrin.kuhla@via-bayern.de)*

# I. The Culturatorium Approach

## HOW WE COMBINE IMPROVISATION THEATRE AND INTERCULTURAL LEARNING

Intercultural learning is essential – and can be exhausting. Our goal in intercultural trainings is to move from simplified generalizations, stereotypes and populist statements to differentiation, reflection and irritation of previous mental patterns. Within the framework of intercultural learning we look at power structures and analyse discrimination structures. We want to encourage participants to take responsibility for their actions and for our social cohesion. Best case, the added value of intercultural learning and thinking becomes tangible to our participants. Despite this positive motivation, a certain paralysis can exist and spread. Often, there is a lack of lightness that would encourage participants to be creative and innovative in shaping co-existence in diversity, and instead, the heaviness of the issues creates a feeling of helplessness and kills energy needed to transform our interactions. This is exactly where Culturatorium kicks in: In an interdisciplinary combination of unusual kind, it brings together supposedly contradictory concepts such as art and learning, wit and depth, lightness and seriousness, body and mind.

Our approach "Culturatorium: Improvisation Theatre for Intercultural Education" combines innovative methods of theatre pedagogy with intercultural education. The methods of theatre pedagogy, especially improvisation theatre, enable a playful, humorous learning effect. With this approach, learning is fun and opens up "head, heart and hand", as Pestalozzi recommended.

## THE GOALS OF CULTURATORIUM WORKSHOPS

- *Give the participants a care-free time in which they can experience themselves as competent, happy people.*
- *Show the participants alternatives for thinking, feeling and acting, which are relevant to their everyday life.*
- *Offer minorities a stage on which they can show the audience (which often consists of the majority society) what is important to them.*
- *Make participants aware of their own competences and expanding them.*
- *Sensitise participants to mechanisms of exclusion and their impact.*

## THE SETUP

We use approaches of intercultural education, as well as approaches of anti-racism and anti-discrimination and civic education. We also integrate resources and competence-oriented approaches and empowerment concepts. These have been tested in previous projects, e.g. Can Do Empowerment:

[www.candoempowerment.eu](http://www.candoempowerment.eu)

The pedagogical stance is based on the principles of improvisation theatre. We see theatre work as an approach that can change social structures, similar to the mindset of the Theatre of the Oppressed. From improv theatre we adopt the attitude that the participants' impulses arising in the moment shall determine our work focus. We have a shared understanding about what we want to convey, but how this happens is determined by the participants and not by us, the trainers. Our work is participative and process-oriented as well as resource- and relationship-oriented. In this way we achieve a high level of motivation as well as the chance to transfer the learnings to the participants' everyday life.



## I.I Principles of improv theater

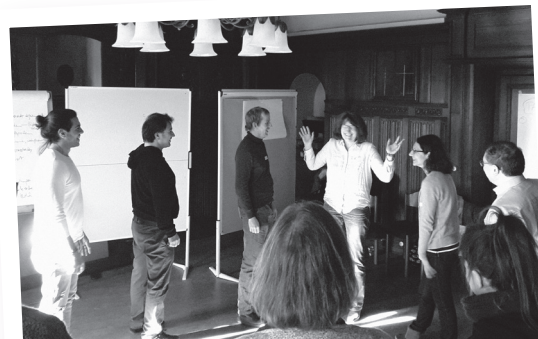
Here's a metaphor: If improvisation theatre was a pizza, what would be the most important ingredients? The dough in improv theatre is the joy and fun of playing, spiced with a lot of humour – and self-mockery.

But in order for this dough to rise really well, other ingredients are important. These are: Curiosity (about what will happen) and openness (about what is happening). Why? Because everything is possible. It's all about allowing, not blocking offers. It's about accepting them. Improvisation theatre also leads to irritations and misunderstandings. That's part of it. It needs to be dealt with and constitutes another ingredient: Indulgence. Nothing is right, nothing wrong; endure misunderstandings and use them productively, let irritations happen. If performance situations do not work out, it reinforces and shapes this attitude as well as this ingredient: Joy of failure. And in order for the play to continue, not only after failure, another ingredient is needed: Willingness to change, joyfully initiating a change of perspective. Finally, the tomato sauce that is spread over the entire pizza base is patience.

### **BUT WHAT DO WE ACTUALLY DO TO IMPLEMENT THESE PRINCIPLES?**

The pizza topping informs us about this: The first is to build trust. We make this possible by creating a relaxed atmosphere, choosing pleasing locations and taking care of physical well-being.

Trust is also created by revealing something about yourself as a trainer. That can be, for example, information about your private life or about your own failures. A further important element is the focus on similarities. When working with a group, we only do what everybody understands. Topics that require insider knowledge are neither compatible nor funny – or only to a few, while the others feel excluded. Therefore, mechanisms of exclusion must be handled sensitively.



## I.II Concept of intercultural and civil education

Intercultural and civic education is the second pillar of the Culturatorium's approach: When two cultures meet, the resulting situation is commonly called "intercultural". Intercultural education is more at home in psychology, education and business administration. "Intercultural is something that happens or takes place between different worlds" (Bolten 2007). Intercultural education is sometimes accused of using a static, narrow concept of culture and paying too little attention to power differences. Critics even point out that it cultivates them by, for example, emphasising and cementing cultural differences.

### **DEFINITION OF CULTURE**

We therefore work with Auernheimer's concepts, which work with an expanded, open concept of culture, emphasizing the process-bound character of culture. In this concept, we see culture in the context of power differences, mechanisms of exclusion, racism, and discrimination.

Culture is a system of concepts, beliefs, attitudes and value orientations with which social groups respond to structural demands. It is a continuously changing orientation system that defines the perception, values, thinking and action of people in social, political and economic contexts. (Based on Auernheimer,

Staub-Bernasconi, Hinz-Rommel, Thomas, Maletzke, 2002) We are aware that the existence of culture as such can be questioned. In some circumstances this might be appropriate. This basic idea is put forward by transcultural education, mainly developed by philosophers and ethnologists. Transculturality [does] not focus on the in-between or the juxtaposition, but on what lies beyond the cultural, on what transcends borders, and thus on what unites and unites again. (Domenig 2007): Cultures are characterized internally by the pluralisation of possible identities and show externally border-crossing contours. Cultures [...] have become transcultural. (Welsch 1994) Although the Culturatorium is very close to the approach of transculturality in terms of content, we rarely call our concepts transcultural. For many participants these fundamental reflections are too theoretical or too complex. But we have taken up some ideas of transculturality, not only in our development of culture C.

From the point of view of Culturatorium, a person is interculturally competent if one is capable of producing the so-called "culture C". The approach is based on Stefanie Rathje's definition: Intercultural competence is the ability to establish normality in situations without collective belonging to enable inclusion and to produce culture.

When two cultures – intended as in Georg Auernheimer's expanded concept of culture – meet, a "situation without collective belonging" arises. From the point of view of Culturatorium, the person capable of "establishing normality, enabling inclusion and even producing culture" i.e. creating culture C in this situation, is interculturally competent. Culture C is produced in a negotiation process between two cultures as well as in a process of change. From the point of view of Culturatorium, negotiations are possible up to the point when constitutional and human rights are violated.

#### INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE OR: CREATION OF CULTURE C

- Integration results from creating a culture C. Integration is therefore a reciprocal process that is characterised by mutual respect. The first step should be to see irritation as a positive impulse and to use it to create something new. The second step should be to focus on what unites and what is common in cultures A and B in order to create trust. Without the use of irritation and similarities no culture C can be created.

- Many principles of culture C are identical to the principles of improvisation theatre: openness to new things, allowing irritation, joy of failure, focus on commonalities, patience, etc.
- Culture C can only be created, if we know well our own culture; if we protect it and, if necessary, make it attractive to others. People often ask: Do I have to adapt? With this model this is not the case. Intercultural competence is defined as the ability to know and appreciate one's own culture (culture A or B) and the ability to create a new culture, culture C. This requires skills in negotiation rather than in adaptation.
- The more similar the two ovals are in size, the better culture C can be created. If an oval is much larger or smaller (i.e. there are substantial power differences between two cultures), an interaction can be difficult because one culture will dominate. The other culture is suppressed by the dominant culture.
- Creating culture C is a continuously occurring process in which we find ourselves at all times and which will never be completed.

## TAKING ACTION WITH HEAD, HEART AND HAND

*Sometimes participants in stage performances behave either in a highly intellectual way, or in a dominantly emotional way, or they just start acting without direction or ideas. In intercultural communication it is important to know at which of these levels communication takes place. For this we use the principle "head – heart – hand" developed by Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. It distinguishes between the cognitive (head), the emotional (heart) and the action level (hand). For the creation of culture C, it is helpful to be able to consciously switch between the different levels. Not all people are able to communicate at all levels simultaneously. People from relationship-oriented, collectivistic cultures communicate more on the emotional level than people from fact-oriented, individualistic cultures. Following the performances, the participants reflect with each other: On what level did we communicate? How can you tell? Who changed levels – when and why? What does that mean?*

*It is helpful to draw a head, a heart and a hand on a flipchart and then, while reflecting on the situation, to indicate on which level action was taken.*

#### CIVIL EDUCATION

Civic education has its roots in politics, history and education. It aims at recognizing interrelationships in political events and wants to contribute to the development and advancement of an active citizenship. We live in a world in which a variety of lifestyles is normal and protected by law. Nevertheless, living together in this diversity is not always easy, and discriminated groups find it difficult to gain access to resources such as education, health care, the labour market, etc. This is where civic education has its strength. It offers methods and concepts that sensitize people regarding social power differences, and to see diversity as a positive principle of society. Furthermore, it offers approaches to enable social and political participation for all societal groups.

#### WE USE THREE APPROACHES TO CIVIC EDUCATION:

1. Anti-discrimination and anti-racism training approaches for recognizing exclusion. In addition to the scientific description of exclusion mechanisms and excluded groups: The approach of Group Related Human Hostility (GMF) by Wilhelm Heitmeyer et. al.

- 2.** Approaches that understand the value of democracy not only as a political approach but as a value for shaping the co-existence of people. (Training) methods for this purpose: Betzavta/Miteinander, Mehr als eine Demokratie (More than One Democracy).
- 3.** Methods of empowerment that enable people to commit to social change. Here it is crucial to first perceive people as competent and resourceful and to strengthen them. For this we have professionalized ourselves with competence-oriented methods.

*There is no right or wrong.*  
*Floor of the Culturatoriums house*

## CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

The core theme of Culturatorium is working on the cultural dimensions of "fact/relationship orientation" and "individualism/collectivism". The concept of cultural dimensions originates from intercultural research (Hall, Hofstede, Trompenaars etc.). Cultural dimensions describe peoples' thoughts and behaviour patterns without assigning them to a specific culture (Turkish/German or men/women). They describe different ways of life based on their inner logic without judging them. Cultural dimensions help to understand behaviour that seems incomprehensible and to see its internal logic.

Few people associate only with one side of a dimension. For example, there are rarely people who behave individualistically in all areas of their life. It is possible though to determine whether for example a company's corporate culture is more likely to be assigned to one or the other dimension; the same goes for a person's behavior in a specific context, e.g. in conflict situations. There are many cultural dimensions in intercultural research. The Culturatorium considers the cultural distinction between fact vs. relationship orientation as well as individualism/collectivism to be the central dimensions.

## CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

<i>Fact-based orientation</i>	<i>Relationship-based orientation</i>
<i>Central</i>	
First the matter at hand, then the relationship	First the relationship, then the matter at hand
<i>Underlying value</i>	
Competence, logic	Trust
<i>Beginning of a conversation</i>	
Clarify the subject	Establish relationship
<i>Elements helping in disputes</i>	
Arguments, truth	Loyalty, rapport
<i>Communication</i>	
Direct	Indirect
<i>Liability through</i>	
Written contracts	Trustworthy relationship
<i>Concept of time</i>	
Punctuality	care for relationships
<i>Private life</i>	
Work separate from private life	Private life as part of work

<i>Individualistic</i>	<i>Collectivist</i>
<i>Central</i>	
I-Identity	We-Identity
<i>Underlying value</i>	
Self-confidence, self-reliance	Sense of belonging, loyalty
<i>Social control</i>	
Guilt	Shame
<i>Learning through</i>	
Questions, explaining	Observing, acting
<i>Promoting</i>	
Self-sufficiency	Respect
<i>Liability through</i>	
Written contracts	Confidential relationship
<i>Conflict resolution</i>	
What needs to be done?	Who will mediate?
<i>Recovery through</i>	
Withdrawal	Community



## THESE CULTURAL DIMENSIONS HAVE IMPLICATIONS IN DAILY SITUATIONS, E.G.

- **how to have a small talk**  
(Which topics? How long? Which surroundings? Hospitality or not? etc.)
- **in the design of relationships within the workplace**  
(Do I share stories about my children with my colleagues? How much time do I spend with my colleagues? How important do I consider chatting while passing by? etc.)
- **understanding time**  
(Do I try to be on time? How do I define punctuality? Why is someone unpunctual? How do you handle waiting? etc.)
- **in dealing with hierarchies**  
(How equal is my boss? Do I involve my boss in private matters? What performance can my boss expect from me, what not? Where can I expect support from my superior? etc.)

The aim of our work is to sensitize people to the effects of cultural determinations in their daily actions and to point out alternatives; these effects can appear on an individual level like in thoughts, feelings and actions of people, as well as in the structure of institutions, in the organization of work processes, time structures, etc.

## ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Intercultural education explicitly starts at two points: First, the thoughts, feelings and actions of the individual, and second, the organization of institutions that shape our society. When intercultural education works on the individual level through intercultural training, consulting, coaching, etc., we speak of intercultural sensitization. When intercultural education works through change management processes to transform the structures of institutions, this is called intercultural opening or diversity management. This means, that we support institutions in building difference-friendly structures, recognizing diversity as a resource, valuing the intercultural competence of their employees, removing barriers of access for discriminated groups and enabling the participation of customers, clients, employees, etc. Our trainings always have the purpose of intercultural sensitization of individuals. For facilitators who are already

familiar with organizational development on a professional level, it may make sense to address diversity management as well. When clients are open or can be convinced to include this perspective, we try to incorporate aspects of organizational development into the intercultural training.

In this case, we clarify beforehand with the client which sub-areas of an intercultural training will be part of organizational development (this can be an analysis of intercultural resources of sub-areas or an action plan for intercultural opening of sub-areas such as marketing, human resources, time structures etc.).

If people are enabled to change their environment themselves, they feel more self-efficient. Training the people themselves AND involving them in an organizational development process is part of an empowerment process. The participants are appreciated in their competent knowledge of their surroundings and their ability to design it in suitable ways. This also increases the participants' motivation to participate in the training. In many cases, the result of planning or manual processes is also improved, because the performers were able to co-determine processes in which they will work later on.



## DEALING WITH DISCRIMINATORY AND RACIST SITUATION

### THE CULTURATORIUM'S APPROACH IS PARTICULARLY SUITED FOR WORKING WITH DISCRIMINATION AND RACISM

We assume that almost all people, including ourselves, have racist and discriminatory attitudes (learned, adopted, acquired). One way for dealing with this is to reveal the attitudes and then to overcome them. Our approach offers different methods. First of all, the humor and lightness of the workshops create a relaxed atmosphere in which discriminatory attitudes are expressed. That's something we don't try to avoid. Only when these attitudes are expressed we can work with them. And the injury by derogatory utterances is an experience in everyday life, which we do not ignore, but actively confront. Statements and role expectations with racist and discriminatory backgrounds are broken with the help of improvisation theatre – by radical changes of context, by role changes or by conscious reversal of status relations. Through specific exercises we show the participants a possibility to deal with remarks and attitudes – in the sense of empowerment.

Prejudice: We understand this to mean assumptions about other people. We form them constantly – mostly in order give ourselves orientation (e.g. is my counterpart friendly or should I be careful?). Negative prejudices often serve to devalue others. We believe that we already know the person (or group) in front of us. Prejudices thus become judgments and create distance. Prejudice awareness means to be vigilant about our prejudices and to question them again and again. At its core, this means entering into relationship with our counterpart. Since the improv theatre audience is invited to make spontaneous suggestions, we might also get to hear racist or discriminatory remarks at this point. As members of the Culturatorium, we accept these suggestions as it allows us to then work with them.

We meet these statements with improv theatre methods: improv theatre works with clichés because they are known to the majority and it is interesting to counter them. If, for example, a black male teenager holding something in his hand is asked about the object and a person from the audience associates: "a knife", this is a racist cliché. We counter it by continuing the story with: "Ah, you are our new baker apprentice! It's great that you brought your own knife with you! Let's try it out together." Such an approach not only leads us out of the expected role, giving

the audience a new perspective, creating new reference systems in our minds. It also offers young people who experience discrimination an alternative opportunity to respond to such allegations in future.

"Rewind" is as a method for dealing with errors or problematic statements: If participants say or do something problematic or "wrong" (hurtful, politically incorrect statements, power expressions, strong blocking or other ways of sabotaging), the "rewind" method is suitable in order to elegantly correct a situation without having to expose or even dispraise. Like rewinding a videotape, the players move – accompanied by a corresponding "winding noise" – back to the point from which they can restart the scene. Thereby, the correction becomes a playful element. Another method is the role switch. If it becomes clear that one person treats the other in a discriminatory manner during a scene, the "role switch" format helps the change perspective. Let's think for example of a schoolyard scene where one person is bossed around by the other. At the call "switch roles!" the two players swap the place and the role. Now, both performers adopt the other's role and can react to and change the situation. This is really exciting, especially when the two players have a very different socio-economic status (as in the

case of the boss-secretary, the clerk of the asylum seeker, the teacher-student or the restaurant owner and cleaning staff). Both players and spectators are stimulated to an empathic change of perspective.

We are aware that dealing openly with discrimination is a balancing act – between awareness and reproduction. And we decide to accept this challenge (for all).

**Thank you for the gift**  
The foundation of the Culturatorium





## II. The Culturatorium Methods

### WHAT WE DO TO MAKE THE WORKSHOPS FLY

#### GENERAL WORKSHOP CONDITIONS

When conducting intercultural trainings according to the Culturatorium methodology, some key points need to be considered:

- The exercises work with all participants, e.g. academics, refugees, young people, educational disadvantaged people and participants with little or no knowledge of the dominant language of the group. So far, no group is known to us that does not respond to the methods.
- For young people, there must be an authority person present! This ensures that possible disciplinary and authority conflicts are not carried out with the moderator/trainer!
- The group size should be 10 to 17 persons.
- Usually we work in a circle. Enough space must be available to easily create a stage (raised or at ground level).

- Participants need no prior acting skills or knowledge in order to participate. And they join in voluntarily.
- The participants' contributions are always a gift. They are to be taken seriously because they originate from the everyday life of the people – who are the focus of the training. This may mean working on issues that “normally” are not the subject of intercultural training. By taking up the participants' impulses, they feel accepted, valued and not assessed.
- We recommend that you address each other in informal ways. Especially during the learning forum of the Culturatorium, it is important to create a relaxed, friendly atmosphere in which spontaneous reactions are possible. This is easier with an informal way to talk to each other, which can promote relationship-oriented communication and thus make new experiences possible. The methods described below make it easier for participants to reveal personal aspects about themselves.

#### THE CORNERSTONE OF SAFE PLAY

In the first introductory exercises the trainer emphasizes:

- It's all about playing! Playing is key!
- An experimental area is created, a protected space, where you can try things out.
- When people play, they adopt roles. Their play does not represent their own opinion, attitude or normal behaviour.

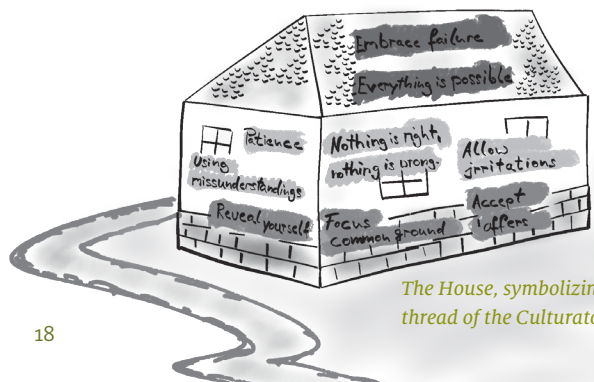
This opening introduction is very important. It is intended to remove the participants' fears of joining in. It clearly defines the framework in which the work takes place, as well: The focus is on the behaviour, not on the people themselves. This gives participants the safety to say or do things which otherwise might be considered politically incorrect or inappropriate, but which are nevertheless present as images, prejudices, etc. This method invites participants to be politically incorrect in order to make these opinions / attitudes conscious and then have the opportunity to dissolve and change them through the training.

For example, one can exaggerate opinions to the point of absurdity by when they become untrustworthy. This is only possible, however, if it is quite clear that the focus is not on the people themselves, but on the roles they play. If this is not clear, people could get the impression that you are ridiculing them. This must be avoided! For these reasons, the opening introduction is essential. It is the cornerstone for the training course, which everybody can always refer to.



## THE RED THREAD

Following we present exercises the way we use to apply them: The really special thing about our approach is that we actually work with what the participants bring with them. Impulses from the participants are always a gift to us and we empathize this often. We use participants' impulses to develop our training spontaneously and tailored to the participants. This makes the participants feel highly valued. We also empathize on resources and strenghts; our approach is deeply participative. This leads to a high motivation and joy among the participants. Through our approach, we can guarantee the transfer of what has been learned. Despite this, our trainings have a common thread: If our trainings were a house, then the house would have a foundation, as well as floors and a roof.



*The House, symbolizing the red thread of the Culturatorium approach*

### ***Our foundation is this: Building trust***

We build trust through improv principles: Accepting impulses, revealing something of yourself and focusing on similarities.

These principles must come alive in the exercises, and through the trust in the group and the trainers. Only when the foundation has been laid, namely trust, can the floors be built, i.e. further principles be worked on, such as allowing irritation, using misunderstandings, appreciating a change of perspective, patience, allowing, not blocking, nothing is right, nothing is wrong and openness to new experiences. Only in this second phase can intercultural topics such as cultural dimensions, racism and discrimination be deepened, because we believe that trust is needed for the really emotional work on these topics. Should you notice, during the training, that you don't have the participants trust, then you need to go back to the phase of building trust. The building trust phase lasts between 10 minutes and 2 hours. For short trainings, we prefer to avoid difficult topics such as discrimination.

Once the confidence is created and the floors are built, then the highest discipline can emerge; the group arrives at the condition, where it feels and makes possible the principles of "joy of failure" and "everything is possible".

## I.II Building trust

The following exercises are ice breaker and basics for building trust. However, most exercises can also be used to lead towards intercultural issues. We name the issues in the „goal“ section. However, we recommend not to start with intercultural topics until there is real trust within the group.

The exercises presented here will fill one day of training. In an actual training, some exercises must be used facultatively. We ask you, the reader, to decide responsibly which exercises you feel comfortable performing without additional instruction. Most exercises require experience as a trainer, facilitator and improv player.

For the Culturatorium approach to work, it is crucial that as many participants as possible are actively and emotionally engaged during the workshop. The participants are involved in the introductory exercises by working with their impulses. They participate with all their senses, especially with their body. Participants should realize as early as possible that learning with the Culturatorium is enjoyable and fun.

The exercises at the beginning of the workshop serve to introduce the participants to spontaneous reactions, to encourage them to show themselves emotionally and physically and to get into (theatre) acting. Participants are invited to "reveal something about themselves". By sharing something private about yourself, a relationship-oriented contact can be established. This can be an important learning step for people who are used to fact-based orientation. For the group, it creates trust, joy and courage to continue together.



## EXERCISE: TWO FACTS, ONE LIE

**Goal:** *Getting to know the trainers, sensitization for the topic of "prejudices"*

**Time:** *20 minutes*

**Room:** *Chair circle*

The exercise can be carried out at the very beginning, previous to the introduction of the trainers and the seminar content. The trainers tell three facts about themselves, of which two are true and one is a lie. The participants are asked what they consider to be a lie and why.

The trainers choose the statements with care:

- It should be facts that serve to build a relationship of trust in collective cultures. The trainer should reveal something personal about herself, e.g. "I have three children", "I have no high school diploma".

- There should be facts that contradict what is expected, e.g. "I am a Muslim", "I live in the countryside". Such facts could provoke reactions such as: "No, a Muslim woman wouldn't wear such a skirt ...", "No, a man from the country looks different!"
- We also recommend facts that provoke questions, e.g. "I drive a woman's car". Participants might want to ask: "What is a woman's car?", which leads to further questions: "What is a foreigner?", "Who determines that and why?"

You can close the exercise by saying: "We don't know each other; we don't know you and you don't know us – and yet we have prejudices against others. This is a good thing. It helps us in everyday life. But in intercultural communication we should be aware of these prejudices, and that's what it's all about today".

**Focus on common grounds**  
*The foundation of the Culturatorium*

## EXERCISE: SOCIO-METRIC EXERCISE

**Goal:** *Getting to know each other, making intercultural experiences visible, introducing migrational background*

**Time:** *20 minutes*

**Room:** *free area*

Participants are asked to stand up. The centre of the room is defined as the place where you are, e.g. Munich. The points of the compass are distributed around this imaginary centre: Front north, right east, back south, left west. The participants are asked to position themselves there in space ...

1. Where they got up this morning,
2. Where they were born,
3. Where she's been in the hospital for more than three months in the past,
4. Where the parent was born, who was born furthest away
5. Where the grandparent was born, who was born furthest away.

The trainer walks around and asks, for example: Where exactly were you born? Where exactly did you live? And so on. This creates small dialogues in which the participants talk about themselves.

The exercise makes visible in which countries the participants have had real intercultural experiences and to what extent migration is an issue in their families. In very homogeneous groups, the question about the grandparents surprises the participants the most; in many cases, there has been migration in the family, due to historical events and political change.

The group can then reflect on the issue of migrational backgrounds, based on what definition there is in the country of reference. For example: according to the definition of the German Federal Statistical Office, the term "migrational background" refers to those who – themselves or their ancestors – immigrated to the territory of today's Federal Republic of Germany after 1949.

These questions can be asked: Does it make sense to exclude migration directly after the Second World War? What are the similarities between the immigration after the Second World War and that which is happening today? What competencies were acquired in post-war migration that could be relevant today? To what extent is the migrant background issue relevant in the everyday life of the participants?

## **EXERCISE: THE STORY OF MY NAME**

**Goal:** To get to know each other in a relationship-oriented way (by asking for "private" stories and not, as usual in comparable training courses, for name, function in the organization, area of responsibility etc.).

**Time:** 20 minutes

**Room:** Circle of chairs

**Source:** Adapted to Handschuck/Klawe 2004

Participants are asked to share the story behind their name – "Why are you called as you are called? Is there a story of how you got your name? Does your name have a meaning?" The exercise makes clear how meaningful the name is for many people. The exercise can be concluded with the question: "And what do you do if you cannot pronounce the name of your future colleague, your client, your patient, a fellow tenant? Furthermore, we take some time to speak about the meaning of names in the languages relevant to the participants. For the improv theatre player, this is an exercise in which he receives impulses through the short conversations with the participants, which can be used later on during performances. He already starts working with the impulses by absorbing and processing them within the context of the training.

## **EXERCISE: I AM ...**

**Goal:** To begin playing, to show oneself, to accept the impulses from others

**Time:** 5 to 8 minutes

**Room:** Standing circle

A participant establishes a still image through her posture and by saying what she represents. The next person adds to the image and the third person completes it. For example: The first person says, "I am a tree" and stands like a tree. The second person says, "I am a bird on a tree" and crouches down by the tree like a bird. The third person says, "I am a branch," and connects to the tree like a branch. New people join the still image.

### **Further exercise...**

To include feelings in the exercise (work on relationship orientation): use characteristics such as "I am a big tree", "I am a singing bird", "I am a fragile branch". In the exercise, participants are encouraged to participate by sharing in their own images. The participants dare to reveal something about themselves and learn to accept the impulses of others. Accepting the impulse of the other is an important competence for the creation of culture C. Only if we do not block the other person can we continue communicating and build something new together.

## **Reveal yourself!**

*The foundation of the Culturatorium*



## **EXERCISE: PASSING ON WORDS AND GESTURES**

**Goal:** The participants begin playing, learn to accept impulses from others spontaneously and respond to them

**Time:** 8 to 12 minutes

**Room:** Standing circle

Standing circle: The participants form a circle. A person says a word and passes it on to any person. Words can only be passed on if eye contact is established with the person who is to accept them. It might be helpful to clap hands as you pass words on. The person who receives the word associates it with a new word. The next receiver again associates with a new word, and so on.

### **Variant**

Instead of words, we pass on gestures. This variant is well suited for groups in which many different languages are spoken. The trainer may have to make clear that it is important to really only react to the impulse of those who passed the impulse on to you. This increases awareness for each other and we learn to really accept what is offered instead of pushing one's own ideas – both elements are important competences for the creation of culture C.

## EXERCISE: THE INTERCULTURAL FLY

**Goal:** Dealing with irritations

**Time:** 5 to 8 minutes

**Room:** Standing circle

There is an "intercultural fly" that flies over the heads of the participants and the participants are asked to catch it. This is how it works: The group stands in circle. The fly is above a person's head. The people standing on the right and left of this person look at each other, and the person with the fly on his head goes down to his knees. At that moment the other two try to catch the fly above his head by simultaneously clapping their hands above the middle person's head. The fly is not caught and continues to fly in the same circular direction. Now the next person goes to his knees and so on ... This is done in one or two rounds with the group. Then the trainer sends a second fly in the other direction.

At the point where the two flies meet, an irritation develops. Just like when two cultures meet. This is the experience that is valuable – the trainer only encourages: "Just keep going! React spontaneously to an irritating impulse". Dealing with irritation and the ability to act in irritating situations is an important aspect of intercultural competence. This exercise can be used to introduce the concept of intercultural competence. But the exercise is also suitable for the end of a seminar, e.g. with the final sentence: "We have not caught the intercultural fly. It is the same with intercultural competence – we will never stop learning it".

**Accept offers**  
The foundation of the Culturatorium



## EXERCISE: YES, EXACTLY, AND

**Goal:** Accepting unexpected impulses,  
producing a common history, a culture C

**Time:** 15 minutes

**Room:** Two persons in a chair or standing circle

Two persons tell a story on the basis of a specification. The story is built up sentence by sentence alternately. Each reply must begin with "Yes, exactly, and...".

For example: The specification (by trainer or group) is: "Apples".

**Person 1:** "Eating apples is healthy."

**Person 2:** "Yes exactly, and because eating apples is healthy, I only eat apples."

**Person 1:** "Yes exactly, and because I only eat apples, I have diarrhoea all the time."

**Person 2:** "Yes, exactly, and because I have diarrhoea all the time, I have to see a doctor." And so on ...

The conveying of an open, curious attitude that does not directly judge and reject unfamiliar impulses is a fundamental goal of most intercultural trainings. It is also the basis for creating culture C or building a relationship of trust. With the exercise "Yes, exactly, and!" the participant practice accepting impulses from others. And – whatever the situation – we weave a story together, i.e. we create culture C. We deliberately chose the example of diarrhoea because it makes it clear what can happen when people are allowed to play freely. Topics can arise that are not actually addressed in such trainings. However, it is important to understand one's own irritation as an opportunity to accept impulses as a gift and to continue working with them. This creates an atmosphere in which the participants dare to get involved and in which they feel taken seriously.



## EXERCISE: FREEZE

**Goal:** *Self-reflection/recognition of self-efficacy*

**Time:** *5 to 8 minutes*

**Room:** *Standing circle, in the middle a stage for two players*

The participants walk through the room and receive various instructions, such as "picking apples from trees". In a supposedly arbitrary situation in which postures have been changed, the trainer gives the command "freeze". The participants "freeze", remain in their position and are asked to take a closer look at their own posture. The trainer selects two participants to continue working with in the situation. The others return to the standing circle.

The participants will develop a story with their own posture and that of the person next to them on stage. They spontaneously play the unfolding story until the trainer calls "freeze" again. The

participants are asked to generate a new story on the basis of the form that has now been created. They can touch the player who started the first story, allowing him to move out of the situation, take his posture and start a completely new story.

The exercise teaches the participants that they can step up and take action themselves. Everyone can establish their own story at any time, even if it's a completely new one that has nothing to do with the previous story.

"Start with yourself! Make something out of it!"



## II.II DEEPENING INTERCULTURAL THEMES

The Culturatorium concept is a very effective approach for intercultural sensitization. It can be used to convey many different aspects of intercultural trainings, e.g. sensitizing for the distinction between seeing and interpreting and for the introduction of the cultural dimensions of fact-based vs. relationship-based orientation as well as individualism/collectivism.

### EXERCISE: ALBATROS À LA CULTURATORIUM

**Goal:** *To learn to distinguish between seeing and interpreting, first introduction to the cultural dimensions*

**Time:** *45 to 60 minutes*

**Room:** *Circle of chairs with stage in the middle*

**Source:** *Adapted from "The Albatros" by Theodore Gochenour, in Sabine Handschuck (2004)*

A situation is sought which is relevant to the participants, e.g. a care situation for geriatric nurses, a parental interview with teachers, a counseling situation for immigration counselors, etc. The participants are then asked whether they have already experienced intercultural issues in these situation – we collect their feedback. Then one trainer leaves the room and the other trainer writes on a flipchart "What have I seen?". He asks all participants to ask themselves this question in the following exercise. The other trainer returns and performs a pre-determined situation with one of the participants. We recommend that the trainer takes on the role that is more alien to the participant. If the participant is more individualistic/ fact-oriented, then the trainer should play a collective/relationship-oriented role and vice versa.





After the performance, the participants' perceptions are collected on the flipchart. At this point is important to repeat the flipchart question again and again: "What did I perceive?" In the second step, the answers that express what was seen/heard are marked green, and all others are marked red. The answers marked in red are interpretations by the participants.

The exercise closes with the summary: "We all, including us trainers, interpret situations all the time. In intercultural communication, however, we need to be aware of this. In difficult situations, I need to recognize clearly when I interpret and when I just observe. When I have problems, a first step could be to interpret the situation differently. We learn alternative interpretations by working with the cultural dimensions".

This exercise is an adaptation of the well-known exercise "Albatros". The advantage of doing the exercise as described is that the participants can directly link the learning to situations that are relevant to their everyday lives. This was, they can easily recognize the relevance of this exercise for their everyday life. For the training, it is important that elements of the cultural dimensions can be incorporated into this variant of the "Albatross" during role plays. These can then be retrieved when working with the cultural dimensions.

Attention: The exercise only works with experienced improv theatre players!

## EXERCISE: WORKING WITH CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

**Goal:** Transfer of the cultural dimensions through impulses from the participants

**Time:** 1 to 2 hours

**Room:** Circle of chairs with role plays – usually in pairs

**Handout:** The cultural dimensions of fact/relationship orientation and individualism/collectivism

**Material:** Laminated pictograms, one per participant

To convey the cultural dimensions, we work with pictograms by Yan Liu "East meets West". These are distributed on cards spread on the floor – one per participant. The participants are asked to choose a card and find their corresponding partner. They are invited to discuss what this pair of cards tells them about intercultural communication and whether they have ever experienced such situations. After about 5 to 10 minutes of conversation, we ask the participants to share their insights with the whole group. The reflections by the participants are used as impulses for clarifying the cultural dimensions. There are different methods that can be used depending on the situation.

**Situation: "I've experienced a difficult intercultural situation before!"**

Sometimes participants provide situations in which intercultural differences played a role and which they found to be stressful, irritating or unpleasant, etc. (this is called a "Critical Incident"). We use these to create spontaneous performances with the participants; in the best case, they include the affected person. If the participant communicates in a very matter-of-fact way, the trainer communicates in a very relationship-oriented way. The trainer supplies missing cultural dimensions which the participant does not show. The advantages and disadvantages of both sides of the cultural dimension are made visible and tangible. This role play is then reflected upon with the whole group. If some participants think that they have behaved completely differently or if an alternative behaviour has been developed, the same issue can be enacted with a different participant. A participant might provide this situation: "I inquired about the way to a location. My counterpart doesn't know the way, but doesn't tell me this and instead says something else." This is a repetitive situation often shared by participants and that can be used well to make relationship-oriented and fact-oriented communication tangible. The fact that the participant deals with the situation makes it clear that he does not understand the

relationship-oriented side. Therefore, the trainer adopts this part. The situation is acted and probably allows other participants to recall similar situations.

After the role play, the situation is resolved in the group with the help of the cultural dimensions: "What was the relationship-oriented side in the communication about?" "No, it wasn't about 'the way to the location', but about relation-oriented topics, for example, to signal to the other person that you find him sympathetic and that on the relationship level saying, 'I don't know the way' can be interpreted as a deviation, as 'you are unsympathetic to me' and is therefore prohibited. Or also that it is perceived as a loss of face or dignity to have to admit not knowing the way, or other relationship-oriented explanations that have nothing to do with the fact-oriented level 'way to the location'." Building on this, the cultural dimension of factual relationship orientation can be introduced.

## Cultural Dimensions

Visualisation:  
Elli Kosek

Collectivistic - individualistic

relationship related - content related

indirect communication - direct communication

**Situation: "This is my way of behaving and not differently!"**

Sometimes participants say that in certain situations they would only behave in a certain way and not differently. The exercise is about experiencing what the pros and cons of this behaviour are and possibly what it is like to change one's behaviour.

For example, a participant may say: "Half an hour late for a team meeting – that's not acceptable". This shows a fact-oriented concept of time. The trainer says: "Okay, we can walk this through! Will you join us? The trainer now plays a person who has very good reasons to be half an hour late. She exaggerates and uses emotions in a targeted way.

In this example, she would play a person with a relationship-oriented time concept who still had many relationship-oriented obligations before she could leave for the meeting (little sister, sick grandmother, important telephone call, etc.). In this role, the trainer might even be a bit emotional, i.e. crying. Emotional exaggeration can lead one side of cultural dimensions ad absurdum and can thus lead to a change in behaviour for both performers. Either the fact-orientated participant gives in: "Okay, I understand, maybe I can help you find a good babysitter?" and shows relationship-oriented behaviour. Or the relationship-oriented trainer recognizes: "I'm not available for this anymore! My family endangers my job! I'm moving out" and thus shows rather fact-oriented behaviour.

After the role play, the participants reflect on why they behaved in this way. If the performer changed his behaviour, this is discussed. Often the participant reveals an openness to concepts, which he excluded before. The example above shows an access to a relationship-oriented time concept. This exercise is then reflected upon with the whole group and the corresponding cultural dimension is theoretically introduced. In the example above this would be "factual and relation-oriented time concepts".

**Situation: "I just don't understand them!"**

Sometimes participants say that they just don't understand a certain behaviour. In the previous situation (punctuality), you could change roles with other participants. A participant can then adopt the role of a person on the opposite side of the cultural dimension, i.e. the side she does not understand well. This gives the participants the possibility to change their perspective and can lead them to develop empathy for the situation of those who they didn't understand. For the watching participants new possibilities for action might arise from seeing the other side of the cultural dimension.

If participants play a role that they find rather difficult, it is helpful to ensure that they can adopt the role – possibly through previous experience with the participant or through training exercises. This exercise generates the capacity for action within the less familiar side of a cultural dimension.

It may also be important to explain the internal logic of other patterns of orientation. In the logic of a relationship-oriented time concept, punctuality is defined differently, people have a different approach. They are based on relationship-oriented values, which do not include punctuality.

**Situation: The participant is only in the head, only in the heart, only in the hand**

Sometimes participants in stage performances behave either in a highly intellectual way, or in a dominantly emotional way, or they just start acting without direction or ideas. In intercultural communication it is important to know at which of these levels communication takes place. For this we use the principle "head – heart – hand" developed by Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi. It distinguishes between the cognitive (head), the emotional (heart) and the action level (hand). For the creation of culture C, it is helpful to be able to consciously switch between the different levels. Not all people are able to communicate at all levels simultaneously. People from relationship-oriented, collectivistic cultures communicate more on the emotional level than people from fact-oriented, individualistic cultures.

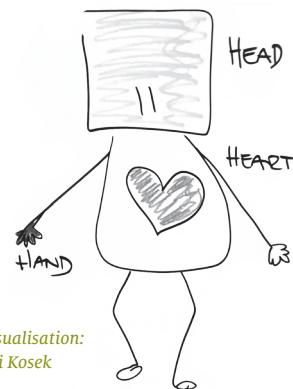
Following the performances, the participants reflect with each other: On what level did we communicate? How can you tell? Who changed levels when and why? What does that mean? It is helpful to draw a head, a heart and a hand on a flipchart and then, while reflecting on the situation, to indicate on which level action was taken.

**Situation: "One is good and the other is bad"**

Sometimes participants say: "Yes, but this specific behaviour, this culture, this value, etc. is good and the other is wrong". In this case, the trainer takes the two corresponding pictograms in her right and left hand and first asks, "What are the benefits here? Then she asks, "What are the disadvantages?". The participants then collect ideas.

Then she has the advantages and disadvantages of both sides listed. If necessary, it is useful to point out that the advantages of one side should not be compared with the disadvantages of the other – that would be like "comparing apples with pears" (logic of the square of values). Finally, it can be pointed out that every

culture has its advantages and disadvantages, that every person can theoretically decide which he wants to belong to – but that there is no culture that has only advantages. This learning step can also be reinforced through an experience-oriented performance.



Visualisation:  
Elli Kosek

A situation is chosen in which the side which the participant favours has disadvantages. The participant is requested to either act the disadvantages of this cultural dimension or to change his behaviour and switch cultural dimension sides. It makes sense to choose a conflict situation in order to be able to work out the disadvantages in a really concise way or to provoke the change from one to the other side of the cultural dimension. A participant might, for example, say: "Direct is much better than indirect communication!" The trainer selects the following situation: "Imagine that I am your colleague. We like each other and have been working well together for a long time. But unfortunately, since a few days I have an unpleasant body smell. It is increasingly getting on your nerves and you have decided to talk about it. Now, we are meeting for a coffee break ...". If the participant sticks to her statement and communicates directly, she accepts the disadvantages of direct communication: It can be hurtful, the other could be embarrassed, offended, it could even lead to a break in the relationship.

During a group reflection about the situation, alternative methods of indirect communication can be developed, such as:

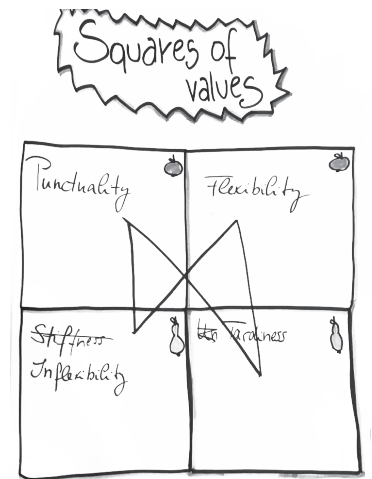
- "Telling a story": I once knew someone who had such a body smell, do you know what I did? ...

- Instead of talking, take indirect action: Give her a deodorant. – Communicate via third parties: Ask his best friend, to tell him that he should shower more often...

**Situation: "Yes, I don't know how to do that!"**

Sometimes the participants find it difficult to really access new concepts and don't know how to implement them. Then you can have them collect topics together on a flipchart. Experience has shown these to be the following topics:

- Culture of waiting: How can I organize myself in this way so that I like to wait?
- Building a relationship of trust: What are the ingredients for a successful relationship of trust?



Visualisation:  
Elli Kosek

## BASICS OF AUTHENTIC PERFORMING ART

Authenticity is a key competence in acting and we work with it a lot in our workshops, because it brings energy and joy into the group process. We can work specifically on authenticity itself – but it can also be enhanced by working on breath and voice, language and physicality. Here we present a few exercises on these themes. The exercises can be done throughout the workshop: either as an integral part of the workshop or as needed.

### AUTHENTICITY

The aim is the credible creation and representation of a character. The question the actors ask themselves here is: Do I believe what I play and say?

#### *Acting from experiences*

Participants are asked about an everyday experience, for example, eating ice-cream. Then we invite them to play this experience. In order to intensify the performance, the trainers encourage the participants to think about the last time in which they actually experienced the situation: What did you smell, what was the weather like, what did you feel, what did you think of, what person was there?

Then the actors work intensively on the actual feeling of eating an ice-cream: Where do I feel it? Does my facial expression change? How do I hold the ice cream? Where does it feel cold?

This exercise is first done with everyday experiences. Then it can also be applied with very succinct experiences, e.g. first kiss, first time driving a car, etc.

#### *Deepen impulse thoughts*

The participants run through the room and the trainer provides an impulse thought, e.g. "I feel like uprooting trees!" (This is German proverb meaning a person feels very enthusiastic and full of energy). Following the trainer's impulse, everybody starts working on their own with questions such as:

- What kind of posture does someone have who feels like uprooting trees? How do your head, back, arms and legs feel like?
- Where do you feel most that you can uproot trees? Bring this part of the body more into focus.
- In which part of your body do you not yet feel that you can uproot trees? Focus your awareness there and with each inhale create the feeling of uprooting trees.

The trainer questions a person:

"How do you feel?"

"I can uproot trees!"

"Really?" – this is followed by giving tips about body parts, voice, posture, etc. where the statement is not yet visible.

#### *Accepting gifts*

The group stands in a circle. One person begins by giving a "gift", an imaginary object to a neighbour. This can be anything, from a rose to an elephant. The person names this gift: "Look, I have a rose for you". The recipient has the task of joyfully accept the gift and making the object "visible" to rest of the group by using and handling it. These suggestions help: How do you handle this object? Which senses can you use to admire it? What first action can you do with it? (Place the rose in a vase with water, tie the elephant to a stick and pat it, etc.) Accepting and using the gift should take at least 15 seconds per person in order to learn to take your time and not hurry.

### BREATH AND VOICE

The Buddha is said to have stated, „First comes the breath“. Breathing is fundamental to the use of the voice. Through the conscious use of breath and voice we can perform more convincingly and authentically. The diaphragm is of great importance for voice generation and projection and can be supported here.

#### *Tapping*

The trainers instruct the participants to slowly tap one part of the body after the other with a hand. They are invited to send their breath to this body part (this is a question of intention). Then they are asked to create a tone with their voice and to add it to the body part as well.



### **Diaphragm exercise**

The group stands in a circle. The trainer sets the pace, and everyone joins in. The following three consonants are spoken as loud as possible, but without a consonant (vowel): P – T – K.

These are repeated a few times, then the trainer gives a signal and they are spoken twice as fast, so PP – TT – KK. Followed by: PPP – TTT – KKK, PPPP – TTTT – KKKK and finally PTTTT – TTTTT – KKKKK.

The hand is placed on the stomach to feel the diaphragm, which should move quickly during the exercise. Repeat the exercise along the same pattern with the sounds: F – S – Sch to FFFFF – SSSSS – SchSchSchSchSch.

The first consonant sequence trains the lower diaphragm, the second the upper diaphragm. Feeling the movement of the diaphragm can be intensified by putting a hand on your stomach.

### **Breath, word and gesture**

The trainer interrupts the participants with the instruction: "Say this word again. Before you say it, breathe in. Then you say the word as you exhale and underline it with a body gesture".

This exercise helps the participants to notice the corresponding feelings, themes and statements and amplify them with gestures and voice. In this way the participants playfully deal with self-expression.

### **LANGUAGE**

Loud and clear language is essential for the actors to be understood by the audience. Working on language makes speaking and expression more precise.

#### **Language exercises**

These exercises can be used:

- Joint practice of tongue twisters (possibly also in other languages)
- Conscious pronunciation of words, sentences; if necessary, with repetitions
- When someone speaks very softly, turn up an imaginary volume control
- Possible intervention if a participant speaks very quietly: go to the other corner of the room and ask the participant to project their voice there.

### **PHYSICALITY**

The foundation for physicality is relaxation. Only when the body is relaxed can it show presence and emotions without blockages

#### **Relaxation exercise**

There are many relaxation exercises. A simple one is to have the participants lie or sit down and then give the following instructions: "Please lie down/sit down comfortably. If you like, close your eyes. If you leave them open, focus on a chosen point in the room. Feel the floor under your back/under your feet. Feel how it supports you. Then continue with your feet; breathe into your feet, right and left. And relax your feet. Then continue with your lower legs, relax your lower legs etc."

When you've moved through the whole body in this way: "... sense again how your body feels now. Maybe you feel a difference to how you felt before the exercise. Then take three deep breaths and bring your awareness back into the room."

### **WATER PLANT EXERCISE**

This exercise intensifies the body feeling. It can be planned or used spontaneously: "Make yourself very heavy, the floor feels like a magnet, the feet stick firmly to the floor. Your body is like a water plant: the upper part of your body is like rubber, the rest is dangling. Now the sea becomes wild ... then the water current is weak again ... a shoal of fish swims by and a whale pushes the water plant to one side ..."

Physicality can also be trained by paying attention to precision during the Freeze play: What is the posture which I enter after the freeze, exactly? Are all my body parts correct?







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Merlitzstraße 9 12489 Berlin

### Writer

Katrin Kuhla, Silvia Simbeck

### Consultant

Florian Wenzel, Elli Kosek

### Translator

Hanno Langfelder

### Photographer

Selda Cetinceviz, Katrin Kuhla, Eliz Kircicek

### Design

unikat Werbeagentur GmbH, Wuppertal · [www.unikat.net](http://www.unikat.net)

### Contact

[katrin.kuhla@via-bayern.de](mailto:katrin.kuhla@via-bayern.de)



