Activity 3
Team purpose

3

Body, head, heart and soul

Purpose

To use an improvisational technique called *image theatre* to help teams define the team purpose in a way that engages the emotions as well as the intellect.

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Introduction

Finding a common purpose is an important first step for a successful team. Research shows that teams that do not achieve their objectives have often skipped the stage of exploring, shaping and agreeing on the aims that matter to them. The best teams put a lot of time and effort into this at an early stage, and continue to do so until the project is complete.

The common purpose needs to be translated into smaller goals. These small goals are the building blocks for the whole project. Achieving each one energises the team, and creates a momentum that moves them forward to the next goal. It also fosters trust and commitment that helps the team to continue through setbacks.

The problem is that team members rarely discuss their true desires, and don't say what they feel, so they are less committed to the defined purpose. They might seem to be exploring, when actually they are asking the same old questions in the same old way, and getting the same old answers. In this activity, participants are invited to explore team purpose in a novel way, so as to bring to the surface hidden concerns and desires.

Purpose

To use an improvisational technique called *image theatre* to help teams define the team purpose in a way that engages the emotions as well as the intellect.

Application

This is an activity that can be used with groups of people who need to improve the way they function as a team.

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| **What happens** | You start the activity by presenting a framework for the four domains of experience of the team and go on to discuss this concept with the group.

You then introduce the *image theatre* work of Augusto Boal as a way of revealing insights about the way we work together. The participants take part in an improvisational exercise where they create tableaux depicting the current state of their workplace teams and their preferred team scenarios. Polaroid photographs are taken of the tableaux and are used to draw out deeper level understandings of the domains of team experience. |
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| **Time** | Overall time required: 1 hour 30 minutes

● Domains of experience in the team: 15 minutes
● Image theatre: 1 hour
● Summary: 15 minutes |
| **Materials & resources** | ● 1 OHT master:
   3.1 *Domains of experience*

● 1 Trainer's brief:
   3.2 *The* image theatre *of Augusto Boal*

● Overhead projector, or PowerPoint® compatible laptop computer and projector, and screen
● Flipchart and stand or whiteboard
● Marker pens for trainer
● Paper and pens for participants
● Wall, screens or whiteboard for displaying Polaroid photographs
● Tape, Blu-Tack® or pins
● Polaroid camera |
| **In preparation** | You will need a large room with break-out areas and with chairs arranged in a horseshoe shape.

This activity is linked to the more complex work in *Activity 16 The awakened team*, and should precede it. |

| **How do I do it?** | **DOMAINS OF EXPERIENCE IN THE TEAM** |

Spend 15 minutes on this section. Introduce OHT 3.1 Domains of experience, by saying that, to become an EQ team, the team members need to be 'conscious' or 'awakened' rather than on autopilot. Being on autopilot involves reacting to events with habitual behaviour in an unthinking way. Being 'conscious' involves being able to step back and acknowledge the strengths and shortcomings of current approaches and ways of thinking.

Show OHT 3.1
Domains of experience

Explain that there are four domains of experience to be aware of, in order to become more 'conscious'. Describe the domains of experience on the OHT using the notes below.

Domains of experience

- **BODY**
  Physical reality – in which tangible structures exist. Membership, structure, roles, responsibilities and work processes.

- **HEAD**
  Mental reality – consists of thoughts, beliefs and judgements. Expectations, intellectual capabilities, experience and skill. (Strictly speaking, skill combines head and heart.)

- **HEART**
  Emotional reality – the world of feelings. Mood, conflicts, cooperativeness, harmony.

- **SOUL**
  Spiritual reality – concerns meaning, purpose and connectedness. Purpose, team spirit, values.

Ask the group for their views about what domains their teams need to develop. For example, they may have 'soul' in that there is a shared sense of purpose but their systems and procedures need attention – their 'body' is in poor shape.

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Say that the next exercise will help to explore these domains of experience in a way that taps into the emotional as well as the intellectual functioning of the team.

IMAGE THEATRE

Take approximately 1 hour for this section. First, describe the *image theatre* work of Brazilian, Dr Augusto Boal, using **Trainer's brief 3.2** *The* image theatre *of Augusto Boal.*

The following exercise is drawn from Boal's work. There are two options.

Option one – for a group of participants from different teams

Divide the participants into small groups of four or five. Tell them that the task is to create human tableaux that reflect their workplace teams. Explain that they are to create the tableaux by wordlessly arranging themselves as statues in the room, using their bodies, furniture or other props, to depict the essence of their respective teams as they currently are. Instruct them to talk as little as possible. A tableau is designed for each group member in turn, under the direction of that particular group member. Ask them to focus on the current state of their team relationships and prepare a tableau for each of the participants in the group.

Allow them 10 minutes per person to prepare. When the groups have indicated they have prepared their tableaux, ask each group in turn to present their tableaux to you. Take a Polaroid photograph of each one.

Next, ask the groups to do the same again, but this time to arrange themselves in a way that reflects how they would really like their teams to be. Again, take photos of the completed tableaux.

Option two – for a workplace team

Conduct the exercise as above, but with the whole working group.

Post the photographs prominently and use them as a basis for a discussion of team purpose and values.

Ask the participants to gather round the photographs. Refer to them and ask the group to discuss what the tableaux say about the body, head, heart and soul in the current and preferred scenarios. Ask what inspires them about the preferred scenarios and how they might communicate this to their teams and/or other key stakeholders.

Other ideas for discussion are as follows:

- What do the various poses and postures adopted by participants tell other members of the group about the way the participants view their position in the team?
- Was this what they meant to convey?
- What does it communicate about their feelings about the purpose and values of their team?
- Do they feel that these values are defined and agreed?
- Do they have a sense of purpose?
- Are the values appropriate to the roles of the individual and of the team?
- How did participants feel about deciding what to portray and how to portray it?
- What are the main differences between the actual and the preferred tableaux?
- What sort of insights has this approach given them?

Ask them each to say the most important things that need to be done to realise the 'preferred' scenario.

SUMMARY

Spend about 15 minutes drawing out the key themes in discussion. In particular, ask the participants about emotional honesty, the spirit and values of their teams, using emotions as well as the intellect. Ask for feedback on the exercise and how it differed from a more conventional discussion
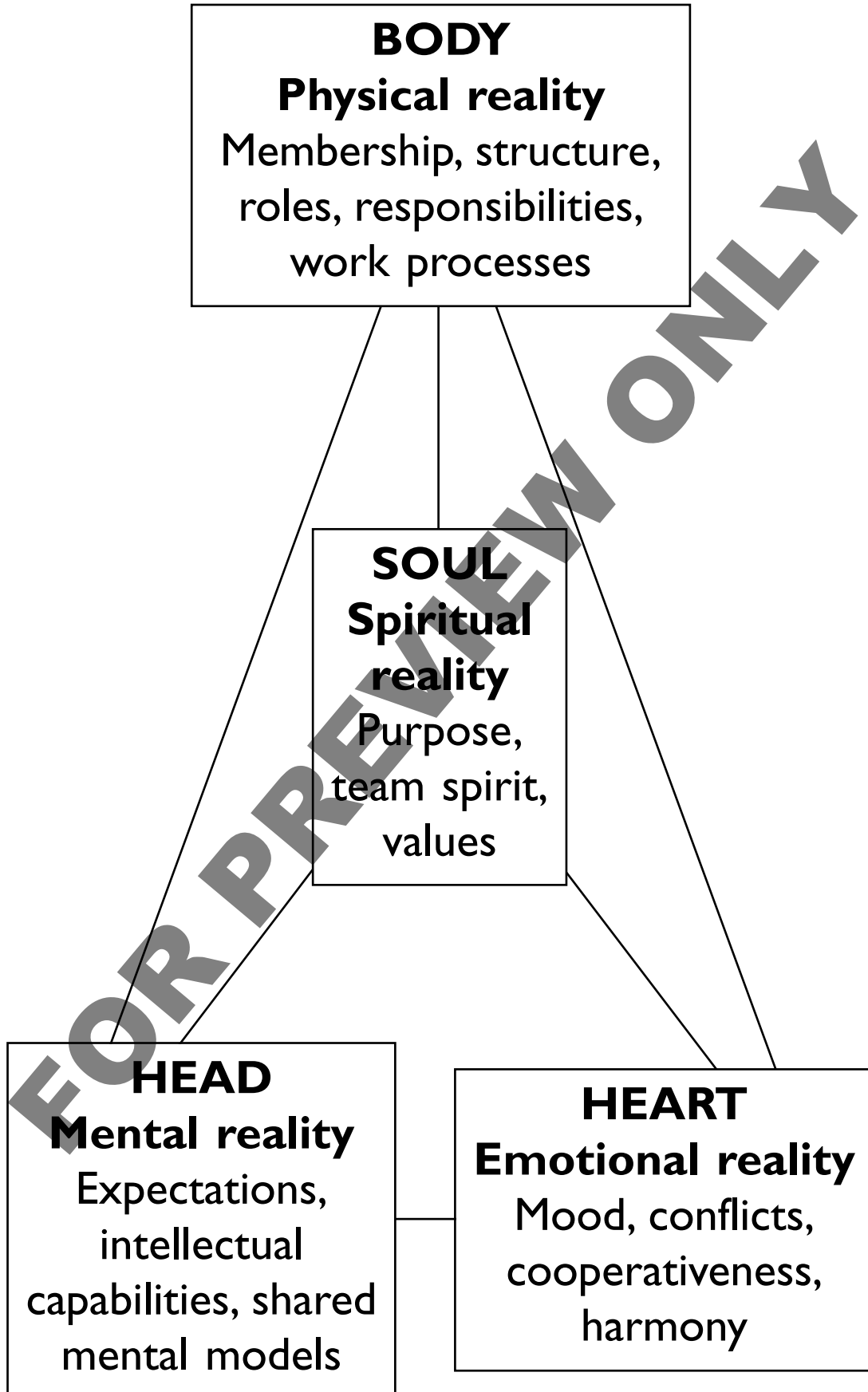
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about team purpose. Ask if they enjoyed the experience and whether the exercise really helped to enable them to move outside habitual ways of thinking, in the way that Boal intended. Make the point that this *image theatre* technique can be used by the participants in their own teams.

FOR PREVIEW ONLY

Domains of experience

BODY
Physical reality
Membership, structure, roles, responsibilities, work processes

SOUL
Spiritual reality
Purpose, team spirit, values

HEAD
Mental reality
Expectations, intellectual capabilities, shared mental models

HEART
Emotional reality
Mood, conflicts, cooperativeness, harmony

The *image theatre* of Augusto Boal

Brazilian, Dr Augusto Boal established the Theatre of the Oppressed (T.O.). This has spread the world over, and is used for political activism, community building, therapy and conflict resolution. T.O. invites questioning and critical thought. It also encourages acting above talking. It is about being a **spectactor** not a spectator.

The typical Boal-type workshop comprises a number of activities or 'games'. These usually involve physical interactions designed to challenge us to use all our senses. These games serve to heighten our senses to move us beyond habitual thinking and interacting. We also become actively engaged with other participants, developing relationships and trust, and having a good time. The human body is used as a tool for representing feelings, ideas and relationships. Through sculpting others or using their own bodies to demonstrate a body position, participants create image sculptures that reflect their reality.