

# Take a step forward

**Main Activity** : role play & discussion

Source: *Gender Matters*



60 minutes



10-30 people

## Topic

Human rights

## Objectives

- To promote empathy with others who are different
- To raise awareness about the inequality of opportunities in society
- To foster an understanding of possible consequences of belonging to minority groups



## Materials

- Role cards
- List of situations
- Optional: art materials to make name tags and/or pictures

## Steps

1. Introduce the activity by asking participants if they have ever imagined being someone else. Ask for examples. Explain that in this activity they will also imagine that they are someone else, another person who may be quite different from themselves.
2. Explain that everyone will take a slip of paper with their new identity. They should read it silently and not let anyone know who they are. If a participant does not understand the meaning of a word in his/her role card, they should silently raise their hand and wait for the facilitator to come and explain.
3. Discourage questions at this point. Explain that even if they don't know much about a person like this, they should just use their imagination. To help the participant get into the role, ask them to do a few specific things to make the role seem real to them.
4. To further enhance their imagination, play some peaceful music and ask the participants to sit down and close their eyes and imagine in silence as you read out a few questions such as these:
  - a. Where were you born? What was it like when you were little? What was your family like when you were little? Is it different now?
  - b. What is your everyday life like now? Where do you live? Where do you go to school?
  - c. What do you do in the morning? In the afternoon? In the evening?

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- d. What kind of games do you like playing? Who do you play with?
  - e. What sort of work do your parents do? How much money do they earn each month? Do you have a good standard of living? f. What do you do during your holidays? Do you have a pet?
  - g. What makes you happy? What are you afraid of?
5. Ask the participants to remain absolutely silent as they line up beside each other, as if on a starting line. When they have lined up, explain that you are going to describe some things that might happen to a person. If the statement would be true for the person they are imagining themselves to be, then they should take a step forward. Otherwise they should not move.
  6. Read out the situations one at a time. Pause between each statement to allow the participants to have time to step forward. Invite them to look around to see where others are.
  7. At the end of the activity, invite everyone to sit down in his or her final position. Ask each participant to describe their assigned role. After the participants have identified themselves, ask them to observe where they are at the end of the activity.
  8. Before beginning the debriefing questions, make a clear ending to the role-play. Ask the participants to close their eyes and become themselves again. Explain that you will count to three and then they should each shout out their own name. In this way, you conclude the activity and ensure that the participants don't stay caught up in the role.

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## Roles

- 1- You are 8 years old. You and your two brothers live in a nice house with a big garden and a swimming pool. Your father is the manager of a bank in your town. Your mother takes care of the house and family;
- 2- You are 10 years old. You live in a farmhouse in the country. Your father is a farmer and your mother takes care of the cows, geese and chickens. You have three brothers and one sister;
- 3- You are a Roma child of 12 years old. You live at the edge of a small village in a tiny house where there is no bathroom. You have six brothers and sisters;
- 4- You are 11 years old. You have lived in an orphanage since you were a baby. You don't know who your parents were.
- 5- You are 9 years old and an only child. You live in an apartment house in a town with your parents. Your father is a construction worker and your mother delivers mail. You are very good at sports;
- 6- You are 13 years old, the oldest of six children. Your father drives a truck and is away a lot, and your mother is a waitress who often has to work at night. You often have to babysit your brothers and sisters;
- 7- You were born in this town, but your parents moved here from Asia. They run a nice restaurant, and you live in rooms above the restaurant with your sister. You and she help in the restaurant after school. You are 13 years old;

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8- You are an only child. You live alone with your mother in an apartment in the city. Your mother works in a factory. You are very good at music and dancing. You are 9 years old;

9- You were born with a disability and have to use a wheelchair. You live in an apartment with your parents and 2 sisters. Both your parents are teachers. You are 12 years old.

10- You are 9 years old and have a twin. You live in an apartment in the city with your mother, who works in a department store. Your father is in jail.

11- You and your parents came to this country to find safety from the war going on in your home country in Africa. You are now eleven and have been here for three years, since you were 9. You don't know when you can go home again;

12- Your parents divorced when you were a baby. Now you are 12. You live with your mother and her boyfriend. At the weekends you visit your father and his new wife and their two small children;

13- You are 11 years old. You have lived with different foster parents since you were a small child because your parents couldn't take care of you. Your foster parents are nice. Four other foster children also live in the same small house as you;

14- You have a learning disability that makes you two classes behind in school. You are ten years old and taller than all the other kids, who are only 8. Both your parents work so they don't have much time to help you with homework.

15- You are 8 years old and the youngest of three children. Your family lives in a small apartment in a big city. Your father is a mechanic but he is out of work right now, so you don't have much money. But your father has more time to play with you;

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16- You are 11 years old and living in a village with your parents and a younger brother and sister. Your parents run a bakery. You are sometimes teased because you are rather fat;

17- You are the child of the American ambassador in your country. You go to an international school. You wear thick glasses and stammer a little. You are 11 years old.

18- You are 8 years old. You and your sister live with your grandparents in a small town out in the country. Your parents are divorced and your mother works as a secretary in the city. You rarely see your father.

19- Your mother died when you were born. Your father remarried and you live with him and your stepmother and her two daughters. You are 8 years old and they are teenagers. Your father is a lawyer.

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## Sample statements

1. You and your family always have enough money to meet your needs.
2. You live in a decent place with a telephone and television.
3. You aren't teased or excluded because of your different appearance or disability.
4. The people you live with ask your opinion about major decisions that concern you.
5. You go to a good school and belong to after-school clubs and sports.
6. You take extra lessons after school in music and drawing.
7. You are not afraid of being stopped by the police.
8. You live with adults who love you and always have your best interests at heart.

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9. You have never felt discriminated against because of your or your parents' origins, background, religion or culture.
10. You have regular medical and dental check-ups, even when you are not sick.
11. You and your family go away on holiday once a year.
12. You can invite friends for dinner or sleep over at your home.
13. When you will be older, you will go to university or choose any job or profession you like.
14. You are not afraid of being teased or attacked in the streets, at school or where you live.
15. You usually see people on TV or in films who look and live as you do.
16. You and your family go on an outing to the cinema, the zoo, a museum, the countryside or other fun places at least once a month.
17. Your parents and grandparents and even great-grandparents were all born in this country.
18. You get new clothes and shoes whenever you need them.
19. You have plenty of time to play and friends to play with.

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## Debriefing

- a. What happened in this activity?
- b. How easy or difficult was it to play your role?
- c. What did you imagine the person you were playing was like? Do you know anyone like that?
- d. How did you feel stepping forward / or not?
- e. If you stepped forward often, when did you begin to notice that others were not moving as fast as you were?
- f. Did the person you were imagining move ahead or not? Why?
- g. Did you feel that something was unfair?
- h. Is what happened in the activity anything like the real world? How?
- i. What gives some people in our community more / fewer opportunities than others?