

The Production
of HealthyMinds.
Health Sciences
Forum Theatre

Forum theatre provides a very powerful tool for learning and changing behaviours, which is practiced in a fun and engaging way that facilitates the sharing of personal reflections and experiences.

Augustus Boal (1985) has been mostly credited for the formation and development of forum theatre. The purpose was to use it as a way of exploring solutions to real-life dilemmas in a safe environment that stimulates action, discussion and debate. It has been used successfully in many different places and formats around the world.

The Benefits of Forum Theatre

Using Forum theatre as a tool for learning has many benefits:

- Turns a problem into a solution
- Provides a means to test tools and techniques in a safe environment
- Gives an opportunity to try out various approaches to a single issue
- Interact at a level that suits you
- Allows for group consensus to determine what works for them
- Empowers individual creative thinking
- Facilitates behavioural change
- Challenges working frameworks to assess their validity

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“Theatre is a form of knowledge, it should and can also be a means of transforming society.

Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it.”

Augusto Boal

The Aim of Forum Theatre

The aim of forum theatre is to explore real practice scenarios in a way that empowers students to rehearse solutions and change the outcome of a scenario for the better. It is a form of interactive drama.

The Process

Forum theatre is a wonderfully flexible method. In close consultation, we can produce a play which resonates with challenges faced by the student audience. Alternatively we can work with the student audience to create and present their own forum theatre productions.

Essentially, a scenario relating to a specific practice dilemma is enacted by actors. Subjects for example can be as diverse as basic communication skills, breaking significant news and psychosocial interventions in psychosis.

The play will be presented in front of an audience who will journey with a selected protagonist who will face a variety of challenges.

After some facilitated discussion and/or group work about the key issues, the scenario is re-enacted. This time however the students are able to ‘stop’ the action at any point to interject ideas. This will revise the course of the scenario in order to improve the outcome. Each change is explored by the group and the whole scenario is gradually dissected as it is re-run in this stop/start method.

This play often provokes lively debate, as there are usually several different ways forward at each ‘stop’ point which can be explored, leading towards a successful conclusion.

During a session of Forum Theatre, many people will take to the stage and show many different possibilities. In this way, the event becomes a kind of theatrical debate, in which experiences and ideas are rehearsed and shared, generating both solidarity and a sense of empowerment.

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