

# **ROLEPLAYING FOR REAL LIFE**

**STAFF AND YOUTH TRAINING AVAILABLE IN HOW TO  
PROVIDE PEER EDUCATION THROUGH YOUTH ISSUE  
IMPROVISATIONAL THEATER**

**ROLEPLAYING FOR CONFLICT RESOLUTION  
EDUCATIONAL THEATRE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE  
DRAMA THERAPY TRAINING FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

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Training is provided for staff and youth interested in developing improvisational theatre performances around issues impacting youth (e.g., peer pressure, career choices, substance abuse, identity, violence, relationships, etc.). Youth audiences are more inclined to respond to information if it is presented by their peers. Peer education theater is a particularly effective approach for it "brings to life" situations common to youth's life experiences and engages youth audiences in interactive discussion.

Roleplaying for Real Life enables youth players to explore difficult situations from the safe distance of dramatic enactment. Youth can choose to play themselves or elect to play characters other than themselves. Role reversal leads youth to see situations from others' perspectives.

## Drama helps youth

- Develop empathy for others' situations
- Improve decision-making skills
- Explore consequences
- Practice refusal skills
- Explore their values
- Release emotional tension
- Increase their self-esteem
- Rehearse for life situations they will encounter
- Develop the imagination
- Improve in communication skills
- Enhance concentration and focus
- Develop teamwork/Work toward collective goals
- Disclose personal concerns in a non-threatening forum
- Explore alternative behavior by roleplaying various options
- Reveal thoughts and feelings that might otherwise remain hidden
- Develop conflict resolution skills
- Release emotions
- Experience the natural tendency to play
- Develop self-discipline
- Learn more about personal motivations and issues
- Establish sense of personal control

## Roleplaying for Real Life; Rehearsal for a Better World

### Developed by:

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In Roleplaying for Real Life; Rehearsal For A Better World, youth identify social issues of concern and improvise original scenarios dramatizing these issues. The process includes: brainstorming of issues, group improvisation activities, scenario development, and techniques for leadership of group discussion.

### SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR PRESENTER:

Many youth will have the perception that drama means theatre experience and auditioning for a part to perform before an audience. It is important to dispel this image so that youth are receptive to participation. From the outset, establish the fact that no prior acting experience is necessary. In Roleplaying for Real Life : Rehearsal For A Better World, the focus is not on performance, but rather on group process.

Because the youth are entering the dramatizations in character roles, they are more free to explore issues than if acting as themselves. In the process of roleplaying real life scenarios, youth develop the ability to make constructive real life choices. In processing their improvisations through group discussion, youth identify resolutions to the conflicts and issues dramatized in the scenarios., in effect "rehearsing for a better world".

In Roleplaying for Real Life : Rehearsal For A Better World, youth engage in three levels of improvisation, in which they first create a spontaneous group image, then move to creating a scene from that image, and finally improvise this scene before the larger group.

Time: Prep Time: 10 minutes

Lesson Time: 1 1/2 hours

Clean Up Time: 10 minutes

### AUDIENCE:

Middle-High School  
Levels

### Materials Needed:

Chalkboard/Easel Paper  
Chalk/Markers  
Props and costumes  
optional

### Background:

The term "roleplaying" refers to improvisations that explore characters' responses to dramatic situations. Roleplaying develops imagination, empathy,,decision-making ability, values, clarification, communication skills, teamwork, and conflict resolution skills.

### Learner Objectives:

- > Utilize brainstorming techniques to identify social issues
- >Develop improvisational skills leading to group improvisation
- >Demonstrate ability to lead group discussion following group scenarios





## References:

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## **Roleplaying for Real Life; Rehearsal for a Better World**

## Learning Activities/Procedures:



In a circle, begin by conducting a drama warm up/ brainstorming session. Ask each youth to complete the sentence "The biggest concern of my age group is..." Record the responses on a chalkboard or easel. Ask the group to see if there are any commonalities among them. Following group discussion, have the group select their top 3 issues. (for example, unemployment, substance abuse, bullying, etc.). Highlight these on the chalkboard/easel.

Now have the group form smaller groups of four. Following is a sample activity leadership text for your reference:

"As a group, you have identified the social issues of greatest concern to you. Now, in your groups, you will dramatize those issues. When I call out the issue, as a group, freeze in a position which represents that issue. This group image is called a tableaux. Think of yourselves as characters in a photograph " ( As you call out issues, each group assumes the tableaux positions).

Now as I call out these same issues, assume your tableaux positions, but now each of you will think of who your character might be based on your physical position and facial expression. Turn to your fellow group members and introduce yourselves in character. Together create a scene in which your characters reflect the issue being dramatized. For instance, a youth in a crouched position might become a victim of bullying, another with arms folded a disinterested bystander, etc." (Repeat this activity until all 3 issues have been dramatized within the groups). " Now that you have explored all 3 issues, your group will select the one that resonated the strongest with you. Develop that scene further. Leave the resolution of the issue open ended ".

Each group presents their scene before the group. "Invite the audience to join you in coming up with possible resolutions. In your group play out those endings that are suggested. Invite those who made those suggestions to assume roles in your scene". Following each scene, volunteers from each group lead a group discussion on how the resolutions could be implemented " in real life " to address these social issues. Ask each group if they are interested in developing their scenario more fully and presenting it to outside groups. If so, they could consider **Roleplaying for Real Life : Rehearsal For A Better World** as community service, peer education, or other educational outreach. initiative.

## Experiential Learning Questions:

1. Share: How did your group determine what issue to dramatize?
2. Reflect: How did your character's responses relate or not relate to your own personality?
3. Generalize: What did you learn about yourself and your fellow group members in the Improvisation process?
4. Apply: How can you apply to your own life situations the skills you utilized in **Roleplaying for Real Life; Rehearsal for a Better World**?



## **Contact Information**

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