

Activity #3: the “plinth” aka “standing on a box”

In each group, identify a person to be “client” and a person to be “therapist” The theme is **adapting to others’ needs**. Therapists: use the text below to guide the session. Clients: let yourself be guided by the therapist.

Imagine a scene where people are coming at you in different directions such that either you or they need to move in order for them to get by. For example, you could be in a busy office, standing in a corridor between desks with people rushing by from all directions.

Phase #1 Close your eyes and imagine yourself in your scene. In this first phase, imagine that it’s **really, really important** to move out of the way of people as they come by you. People are coming from left and right and from front and back. Sometimes in order to move out of the way of one person it’s hard to avoid moving into the way of another. Remember, in this first phase it’s **really, really important** that you are as helpful as possible as people go by. It would be **really, really bad** if you made things difficult for the other people in your scene.

Scene Guidance In this and every other phase, while it may be uncomfortable, stay with your scene for a minute or so. If you like you can describe some of what is going on out loud. Keep your eyes closed. When you’ve had enough, you can let me know you’re done. If you’re in the scene for more than a couple of minutes, I’ll invite you out. So, for now, just focus on being in the scene and don’t worry about the timing.

Now tell me more about your experience. What did it feel like in your body? Was it fun, like a game? Did it provoke anxiety? Were people pleased that you moved out of the way or did they seem to take it for granted? [These are starting suggestions only – feel free to follow up these questions and try out others.]

Phase #2 Now we’re going to alter the scene. This time you’re standing on a plinth. When people approach you’re going to stay standing just where you are. You stay on your plinth. In this phase of the scene **I’m telling you that your job is to stay standing still where you are**, even if that means you are in the way and it’s making things harder for the other people in the scene. *[Repeat Scene Guidance above.]*

Now tell me more about your experience. What did it feel like in your body? Was it fun, like a game? Did it provoke anxiety? What was it like being in people’s way and knowing that you were making their movement more difficult?

Phase #3 In the final version of the scene, you’re still standing on the plinth. Only this time, **you’ve decided for yourself that it’s OK to stand on the plinth** and that it is not your job to go out of your way to help the other people in the scene. In this version, you’re going to imagine that you’re really used to standing on the plinth. You’ve practised it a lot. Occasionally you might notice a slight “ping” that makes you want to be “helpful” and move out of someone’s way, but you’re used to such “pings” by now. Now, after lots of practice, the meaning you make of them is different from what it used to be. When you get such a “ping” in your experience, it reminds you of how skilled you have become at standing still and letting others move around you. The “ping” reminds you that this is a skill you have learned over time and with a certain amount of practice. And it reminds you of what you now know – but used not to know – which is that if you choose to stand where you are, others will move to accommodate you. You don’t expect them to hate you or be cross with you. *[Repeat Scene Guidance above.]*

Now tell me more about your experience. What did it feel like in your body? How was it different from the previous phases? Did you encounter anyone being cross or wanting you to move? When you found that there were people who simply moved around you, adapting to you, what was that like? Did people ignore you as they moved around you or did they make eye contact, or nod (exchange strokes with you)?

Now exit the client and therapist role and discuss until we come back together as a whole group. (No worries if you don’t have time for this phase.) (Depending on timing, you may want to swap roles and do the exercise twice.)