



De-escalation exercise:

Guessing needs in difficult situations and giving empathy

One person (roleplayer) stands on a floor mat. All other participants sit in a semicircle in front of him. The person on the mat chooses one of the "difficult" situations (see below) and acts out the situation.

The other participants (observers) have the task to calm down the participant on the floor mat and to establish a connection so that the participant is able to listen, e.g. is willing to cooperate.

Task of the roleplayer:

The more you feel understood, the more you go down the side of the carpet in small steps.

On the mat: "reptilian brain" - fight, flight, freeze

Beside the mat: "ready to cooperate"

Informations for the observers:

- The slower the triggered person receives empathy, the greater the distress!
- Each intervention is helpful!
- It is important to reflect the feeling with the same energetic power + to assume needs.
- After placing an empathetic guess the participants wait how the own expressions are perceived:

1) How does the situation affect you - are you touched (sincerity).

2) Do you understand how the other person feels - (empathy).

Introduction – how to start:

The roleplayer stands on a floor mat and draws a card with a roleplay situation:

Questions: "Can you relate with the situation?"

"Please tell us how old you are in the role play!"

"Please tell us who is with you!"

The observers guess feelings and needs!

Note: Teenagers in difficult situations often do not show explicitly that they want help.

They often remain seated, say they don't want to talk, but in reality need support.

This dismissive attitude (appearing cool) doesn't show that in reality they are searching for orientation: Their outwardly directed "no" actually means "yes".

Topics: belonging, self-determination, independence.



SITUATIONS FOR PRACTICING TO GIVE EMPATHY (GUESSING FEELINGS AND NEEDS)

Situation 1:

You are 13 years old. You had told your best friend Maria that you are in love with David.

Then you have heard from three other girls that Maria has gone out with David since two weeks.

You are now sitting alone crying in the corner of the corridor of the school.

Situation 2:

You are 22 years old and live with your girlfriend. When she comes home at 8 p.m., you have just made yourself comfortable in front of the computer in the living room. She sees you and says: "You're glued to the computer again. Can you please turn it off!" You say, "Leave me alone!" and continue surfing.

Situation 3:

You are 25 years old and live in a shared apartment. When you come home at 5 p.m., the dirty breakfast dishes and the breakfast things (milk, cheese, butter, jam...) of your flatmates are on the dining table in the kitchen. This has already happened 2 times in the past week. You are frustrated and angry.

Situation 4:

You are 5 years old and you are playing with your train set. Your mother calls: "Dinner is ready".

You do not react and continue playing.