

Sharing the Universe: Outreach Training Videos

Role Playing Exercise for



Produced by the
Astronomical Society of the Pacific
<http://www.astrosociety.org>

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Facilitating a Role-Playing Exercise

Topic: Connecting with Kids

Role-playing exercises can be an excellent way for you and your club members to share effective ways to interact with the public in difficult situations. It can also be a way for your members to discover first-hand how to work with children of all ages.

Preparation:

Before the exercise you will need to develop a list of scenarios. Plan to allow 20 minutes for each scenario - 5 minutes for the role-playing and 15 minutes for a discussion. The scenarios should start off easy and gradually become more difficult. Make sure your scenarios are clear and have focused objectives. Important tip: the more time you spend planning the scenarios the smoother the exercise will go.

How to lead the Exercise:

1. Break the group into smaller groups of four
2. Explain the roles of the three characters – the amateur practices skills they would use, the public member should try to be as realistic as they can, the observers should watch the interaction to provide insight at the end of the exercise about what things were handled well and how things could have been handled better.
3. The facilitator should remind the group of the main points of the video:
 - a. Smile
 - b. Engage
 - c. Involve
 - d. Discover
4. Instruct the groups to spend a total of 5 minutes on each scenario (3-4 minutes role playing, and 1-2 minutes for the observer to make positive comments). The facilitator should give the signal to move on to the next scenario at the end of each set of five minutes. The facilitator should also make sure that for each scenario the players switch roles. This allows each of the four members of the group to experience all sides of the situation as well as observe how their fellow club mates handle similar situations.
5. After each scenario the facilitator should gather the groups back together and have a follow-up discussion using the questions below. This discussion is a time for the observers to talk about what they saw that worked and what didn't work as well as get feedback from the other groups about different ways to handle the situation. The facilitator should stress that comments be positive in nature.
 - Joe/Jane Public: What struck you as the motives behind your questions? Were any of these motives surprising?
 - Observers: Were there any solutions that stood out to you as particularly effective?
 - Amateurs: Were there any scenarios that you found particularly difficult?
6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 until all the scenarios are finished.

A Sample Role Playing Session

Here are four sample scenarios for role-playing surrounding the topic of connecting with kids. Please remember these are just possible scenarios. As the facilitator you should create scenarios that will be the most useful to your club.

You should allow about 20 minutes for each scenario – 5 minutes to act it out and 15 minutes for a group discussion.

1. The Enthusiastic Kid

Number of players: 4, 1 amateur, 2 public members, 1 observer

Jenny Public loves astronomy and is really excited that her mom, Jane Public, brought her to a local public observing night. It soon becomes apparent that Jenny's mom is not interested in astronomy. How does the amateur encourage Jenny to peruse her interest despite the lack of enthusiasm shown by her mom?

2. The Uninterested Kid

Number of players: 4, 1 amateur, 2 public members, 1 observer

Joe Public and his son Joey Public approach an amateur at a star party. Joe is really interested in astronomy and wants his son to be too. However Joey is obviously completely uninterested and doesn't want to be at the star party. How does the amateur engage Joey and try to pique his interest?

3. The Hyper Kid

Number of players: 4, 1 amateur, 2 public members, 1 observer

Active Jenny Public is really excited to be at a star party. She yells out "I wanna see, I wanna see!" and accidentally grabs the side of the telescope and moves it off the object the amateur is looking at. Her mom, Jane Public, starts to yell at her "Look what you did, you broke the telescope, I told you not to touch anything!" Jenny starts to cry. How does the amateur keep the situation from escalating and maintain order?

4. The Time Monopolizing Kid

Number of players: 4, 1 amateur, 1 public member, 2 observers

An amateur is holding a public viewing for a local Boy Scout group. One of the kids, Joey Public, is really monopolizing the amateur's time. How does the amateur encourage Joey's enthusiasm while giving his attention to the other boys in the group?