

Physical, intuitive workshop

When participants arrive ask them to take off their shoes and to place their backs in one corner. Then ask them to sit down in a circle and sit down with them while you do the introduction.

Introduction: 7 min

Physical, intuitive workshop design is about influencing participants more through their bodies and their subconscious experiences than through verbal instructions or explanations.

In this workshop I will lead you through a number of exercises and in between them tell about some of the thoughts or strategies I use for this type of workshops.

There is a lot of different ways to make good workshops, this is just one approach.

Some general design advice:

Adjust all the exercises that you use in the workshop to fit the mood/feel and theme of the larp. You can communicate a lot through the way the exercises are presented.

When I design a workshop I often start by getting a feel of what the players should get out of the workshop, both in terms of creating characters, knowing the mechanics and rules for the larp and in terms of getting into a specific mood or getting familiar with more abstract ideas like non-verbal communication or reacting intuitively on impulses from other players.

When you have designed the workshop it is helpful to go through the whole thing and imagine what it will feel like for the participants. Get a feel of the flow and pacing of the different exercises and how one exercise is leading up to the next. Get an idea of how the participants will move in the space and where and how they will be placed during the different exercises. If possible you can try out the different exercises yourself.

It is good to work with the flow of the workshop, even in the warmup. Letting exercises smoothly shift from one to the next can keep people engaged in their experiences.

Things to be aware of when starting the workshop:

When possible it is good to be aware of how the participants enter the room. The way the room looks and the way you greet the participants can help set the mood for the workshop.

Asking the participants to remove their shoes can be good for this kind of workshops. Presence exercises work better when you can feel the ground.

Giving instructions for how to behave in this room (like taking off the shoes, leave food and drink outside, stay silent, relax or whatever else fits your workshop) helps the participants navigate the space and it makes the space feel special which makes it easier to do things you would not

normally do. Setting an atmosphere and communicating to the participants what is expected of them, can help them feel safe.

You can communicate an atmosphere by giving concrete instructions or by setting an example.

Being the facilitator you are the one who sets the tone. Your voice and behavior matters. If you are present and attentive and know what you are doing it is much easier to keep people engaged. Feel the room and be attentive to all the exercises.

It matters how you use the room. Sitting participants down in a circle on the floor creates a different atmosphere than placing them on chairs in a row. Do what fits the workshop and what you as a facilitator feel comfortable with.

I often instruct people not to talk during the workshop unless they don't understand the instructions. Not talking makes it easier for the participants to keep the concentration and to emerge into the exercises. Having clear instructions and no room for verbal negotiation makes it easier for participants to turn off their critical minds.

I also ask the participants to focus on the experience of the exercises. I tell them that I will repeat the stuff that they should remember just before the larp starts and that there will be time for questions, so they don't have to worry about remembering or understanding while we are doing the exercises.

I will ask the same of you now.

Warmup exercises 35 min

Presence:

Ask the participants to lie down on the floor and close their eyes.

Ask them to listen to their heart beat and then to listen to their breath.

Ask them to tense and then relax their feet, their legs, their stomachs and upper bodies, their arm and hands and then their shoulders. Ask them to tense up their entire bodies and to try to feel the whole body at once. Then ask them to relax.

Ask them to slowly start stretching and to feel all the movements they make while they stretch.

Ask them to notice what they are touching right now, the texture and temperature. And ask them to notice what they are feeling, which emotions are there and maybe were in their bodies these emotions are placed.

Ask them to notice which sounds they hear around them. Ask them to listen for the sound of their breath and see if they can hear the breathing of others.

Soundscape:

Ask the participants to keep their eyes closed and to slowly start to make sounds like a sigh or a yawn.

Ask the participants to make smooth sounds. Then fragile sounds, strong sounds, hard sounds and soft sounds. Ask them to experiment with which kind of different sounds their mouths can make.

Ask the participants to react to the sounds that people around them are making, copying or being inspired by the sounds they hear.

Ask the participants to slowly start to move to the sounds that they are making.

Wordscape:

Ask the participants to start mixing in single words in the soundscape. And then to only use words, not worrying about making sense, just playing with words and being inspired by others, by repeating words or reacting on the images, associations, sounds or feelings of the words they hear around them.

Ask them to talk faster. Ask them to talk slower. Ask them to talk louder. Ask them to talk more quietly.

Ask them to play with volume and pacing and to be inspired by the volume and pace of the people around them.

Ask them to quiet down. And to be almost silent. And to be completely silent and for a moment just listen to their breath.

Presence two:

Ask the participants to slowly open their eyes and to notice what they see, not as objects but as colors and shapes.

Ask them to slowly sit up and to feel every movement on the way. Ask them to sit in a circle.

Ask them to close their eyes and to feel the presence of the people sitting around them.

Count to ten:

Ask the participants to keep their eyes shot.

Tell them that in a moment you will all count up from one to ten together and that if two people say the same number at the same time you will all take a deep breath together and start

over. Ask them to start by all taking a deep breath together and then someone can say the first number.

Do this a couple of time or until you reach ten without two people saying the same number at the same time.

Word at a time landscape:

Ask the participants to keep their eyes closed.

Tell them that now instead of counting to ten you will all create a landscape together, saying one word at a time in random order describing a detail (like a tree or an animal) or a quality (like hotness or softness) about this landscape. Tell them to take it slow and be inspired or build on the words/details that other people are saying.

Do this for a little while.

Then ask the participants to now use whole sentences, describing this place in more detail, and to not wait for others to finish, but still be inspired and building on the descriptions of the people around them.

Do this for a little while. Then ask the participants to quiet down and then to be silent.

Movement qualities:

Ask the participants to stand up and to start to move around the space. Ask them to feel the floor under their feet and to stretch a little to feel their bodies.

Then ask the participants to move with different qualities. Ask them to make flowing movements. Ask them to make deep movements, then to make punctual movements, then skeptical movements, careful movements, temperamental movements, spiraling movements, edgy movements and lastly optimistic movements.

Move with images:

Tell the participants that now instead of movement qualities they will get images as inspiration for their movements. Ask them to move inspired by the sea. Ask them to move inspired by a city.

Tell the participants that they can react on each other and create images or movements together.

Ask them to move inspired by a tree. Ask them to move inspired by a computer.

Feeling the group:

Ask the participants to relax and walk around the space again.

Ask them to divide evenly on the floor.

Ask them to try to all walk at the same pace.

Ask them to walk close together and to try to walk as a group, everyone following the direction of everybody else, so that no one is leading and everyone is following the direction of the group.

Starting and stopping.

Ask the participants to split up and walk around the whole space again.

Tell them that in a movement they should stop walking and they should try to stop at the exact same time, without anyone leading, so that everyone is listening and stopping when it feels right.

When everyone has stopped, ask them to try to start walking again at the same time without anyone taking a conscious decision to start.

Do this twice.

Copying and communicating without words.

Ask the participants to relax and walk around again.

Ask them to notice the people around them and to start copying small movements that they see someone else making.

Ask them to make these movements larger and then to experimenting with making these movements their own.

Ask them to find a new movements to repeat, enlarge and make their own.

Ask the participants to, without talking, find something that they can all do together.

Touch

Ask the participants to stand together in circles of 3-6 people.

Ask them to close their eyes.

Ask them to slowly stretch out their hands until they find the hands of the other people in the circle.

Tell them, that if the touch feel uncomfortable, they can withdraw their hands until they are ready to slowly get in touch again. And if the touch feels comfortable they can move a bit closer.

Ask the participants to experiment with different qualities of touch.

Ask them to touch in a shy way. Ask them to touch in a restless way, then a calm way and lastly in a sensitive way.

Lean:

Ask the participants to walk around again.

Instruct them, that when they meet someone, they should stand in front of each other and take a moment to look each other in the eyes. Then they should place their palm to palm against the other person's hands, close their eyes and gently lean forwards, just enough to feel the weight of the other person. They should then slowly lean back until they hold their own weight, open their eyes, let go of each other's hands, look each other in the eyes again and go out and find a new partner to repeat this process with.

Leading

Divide the participants into two groups, one in each end of the room. Ask one group to close their eyes and then ask participants from the other group to each find a closed eyes partner. Ask the participants who have their eyes open to take the hands of their blind partner and gently lead them around the room.

Tell them, that if they feel safe, they can let go of their partner's hands and start leading them by gentle touch on their arms or shoulders.

Ask the participants who have their eyes open, to lead their partners back were they found them and then move away from them.

Repeat this exercise with the other half of the players having their eyes closed and being lead.

Expanding movements:

Ask half of the participants to close their eyes and then ask the other half to find a closed eyes partner. Ask the participants who have their eyes closed to slowly start moving their hands and arms.

Ask the participants who have their eyes open, to gently lead the arms and hands of their blind partners, trying to listen and feel into the directions and qualities of the movements that they are already making and helping them to expand or gently change the quality of their movements a bit. Then ask the participants with eyes open to help their blind partners to make their movements smaller and then to come to a halt.

Ask the participants who have their eyes open to find a way to gently make their partners relax by small touches. Then ask them to move away from their partners.

Repeat this exercise with the other half of the players having their eyes closed.

Warm up after talk 3 min

Learning through the body is easier if you are present and are sensitivity and attentive towards what you are feeling, sensing and experiencing with your body. A lot of the exercises we just did is about getting the participants present, sensitive and responsive.

Touch exercises are good because touch creates trust. I prefer touch exercises were people have their eyes closed and don't know who they are touching, because then it becomes more about the touch itself than the relation to a specific person.

Repetition is good. If there is methods, skills or ideas that the players need to understand through the workshop (like how to react on impulses, how to move with different qualities and so on), it is helpful to incorporate these things in the warmup as well.

We will now try some exercises for world and character building. We won't create one coherent fiction, but try different approaches.

Tools, world and charters: 30 min

Characters from movement qualities:

Place the characters (consisting of two words found in the back of this text) on the floor and ask the participants to each draw one.

Ask the participants to read the words out loud to themselves. Ask them to get a feel of which kind of person these abstract words could represent.

Ask them to move around the space, letting their movements be influenced by these words.

Ask the participants to imagine, that this character is a school kid and ask them to explore this character without talking and without interacting with anyone. Then ask them to notice the people around them and imagine that they are school kids too and to try to feel into how their character relate to others (still without talking).

Ask the participants to imagine that their characters (still based on the two words they drew) are now animals instead of school children. They might be cartoon animals walking on two legs or ordinary animals. Ask them to try to get a feel of which kind of animals they are. Whether it is a small or a large animal. Whether it is a hunter or a prey.

Characters influenced by images:

Ask the participants to imagine that their characters (still based on the two words they drew) are now abstract creatures instead of animals.

Place some images in one end of the room and ask the participants to let their creatures slowly come and find a picture that seems meaningful to them. Maybe it represents the creatures personality or something the creature dream about or maybe it is the place where the creature live. Ask the participants to let the image influence their creature, making the image somehow part of this character.

Ask them to feel into what kind of creature this is.

Taking impulses from other:

Ask the participants to imagine that their creatures are slowly becoming part of the same organism. Ask them to feel the people around them.

Ask them to copy or be influenced by the movements of others.

Ask them to notice the pace and spatial distance of the group and let this influence their movements and mood.

Creating a setting through movements:

Ask the participants to keep up the influence of others, but to now only do the following movements: sit, stand, walk and turn. Ask them to follow the impulses they get from others and to play with pace and spatial distance.

Ask the participants to imagine that they are all workers at an office on a boring Monday and ask them to try to interpret their own movements and the movements of others as part of this setting.

Ask the participants to imagine that now instead of being workers at an office they are members of a tribe preparing for war. Ask them to try to interpret their own movements and the movements of others as part of this setting.

Ask the participants to start describing out loud what they experience themselves and others doing as members of the tribe.

Tell the participants that they should stay with the image of the tribe, but that they can now move around freely.

Ask them to now focus on the surroundings and to walk around and describe different details of the place where the tribe lives. Tell them, that they can be inspired by other people's descriptions and incorporate these into their own view on the surroundings.

Creating a setting from soundscape:

Ask the participants to quiet down and let go of the image of the tribe and then to come and sit close together and to close their eyes.

Ask them to start to make sounds, experimenting with different sounds and to be inspired by the sounds that people around them are making.

Ask them to look for images in the soundscape and tell them, that if an image comes up they can describe it out loud with a few words or sentences and then go back and join the soundscape.

Ask them to let the soundscape be influenced by these descriptions and tell them that it does not matter if more than one person talks at a time. Ask them to let the descriptions be inspired by the descriptions others people make and to try to make a somewhat coherent landscape, building on each other's descriptions.

Ask the participants to quiet down, open their eyes and imagine this landscape all around them.

Ask them to start to slowly move around the space, placing details of the landscape around them.

Ask them to slowly start embodying these details, by mimicking objects or movements from the landscape.

Creating a setting from movements:

Ask them to be inspired by the movements of the people around them, letting their own movements be influenced by the movements they see.

Ask them to let the movements of others influence their own inner vision of the landscape.

Tell them that when the movements around them creates an inner image, they can step into this landscape and for a moment be an inhabitant of this landscape describing what they see around them. And after a moment they should go back to moving as part of the landscape.

Tell them, that the moving landscape can be inspired by people describing and start to move or behave according to their descriptions.

Creating and influencing characters with a movement scenography:

Tell the participants that they can still step into the landscape and describe it for a moment and that they can now also describe themselves as fictive characters inside this landscape, describing their feelings and sensations.

Then tell them, that the people moving as the landscape can begin to influence the describing characters by gently touching or leading them.

Let the participants play with this for a moment, then ask them to begin to make their movements smaller. And to make them slower. And to slowly move closer to the ground until they are lying down.

Ask them to slowly stop moving and relax their bodies.

Ask them to be silent.

Ask them to close their eyes and to take a moment to listen to their breath and their heartbeat.

Ask them to take a moment to think about the experience they just had and then, when they are ready, to sit up and come and join you in a circle.

Tools, world and character after talk:

This was examples on how to use elements from the warmup to create characters and settings.

Repetition works well, especially for more intuitive elements (like creating from qualities and reacting on other people's movements or sounds) which can be hard to explain but are easy to understand when you do it.

A good flow in the workshop can make it easier for people to understand abstract or difficult elements by easing into them.

Runde:

If you want, you can end the workshop by taking a round were everybody can shortly say what they are feeling right now. This is a good tool for debriefing and evaluation.

Questions?

Good luck with your workshop design and thank you so much for attending.

Characters:

Smooth/ Nostalgic

Fragile/ Optimistic

Soft/ Restless

Hard/ Calm

Spiraling/ Shy

Edgy/ Punctual

Flowing/ Skeptic

Deep/ Careful

Light/ Temperamental

Strong/ Sensitive

Smooth/ Skeptic

Hard/ Optimistic

Soft/ Careful

Spiraling/ Temperamental

Flowing/ Nostalgic

Fragile/ Punctual

Edgy/ Shy

Deep/ Restless

Light/ Calm

Strong/ Sensitive