

The Boy and The Milk - Workshop Programme

Introduction talk

- Say hi and welcome and introduce ourselves
- Introduce the scenario
 - o What is the scenario? A story about a five-year-old boy that is sent out by his mother to buy milk at the supermarket. The story follows his adventures in a grown-up world.
 - o What do we want to achieve with the scenario? It's a feel-good story about imagination and growing up.
 - o How is it designed? Storytelling, silent embodiment, scene-based, fast-paced, crazy imagination. First of all it is about play, so just give it all you've got.
 - o How is it played? One tells the story, the others act it out. It is important to be aware what the other players are doing. This is a game about reading your co-players.
- Introduce the program for the evening. First about two hours of workshops, then the game, and then some time for evaluation. The workshop will consist of some exercises to get in touch with the story and some to get in touch with how we are going to play it.

The inspirational story

- You read the following story to the players while they sit and listen in a circle on the floor.
- Tell them to pay special attention to how the imagination is created and how it is a layer on top of the real world.

Two little boys stand in the living room talking about what they should play. It's a Sunday afternoon and they are alone, mum and dad are outside. They want to build their own world to play in, but should it be on a continent? Should it be an island? Yes, an island, let's call it Islandia.

We can use dad's winter scarf as a moat around the island. They place it on the floor and instantly it becomes a water filled moat.

The island needs a fort. No a palace. A castle for the king, ruler of Islandia. It should be made of diamonds. They think of sparkling diamond crystals and look around the room for something that will do. The fine vase. They take the crystal vase from the shelf and get some pillows from the couch to be mountains. They place the vase on top of the pillows, on top of the mountain.

We need a forest, let's use the house plants. The boys gather the house plants and place them together inside the moat.

But we also need people in Islandia. Yes, soldiers to guard the castle. They search the house for something to use. There is nothing in the living room, or in the bathroom, but in the kitchen they spot the spice containers. Salt, pepper, paprika, oregano and the others. They have the right size, they are clearly the soldiers they're looking for. The boys climb the kitchen table to get the spices down. One finds the strainer, that separates the pasta from the water, which could be a prison, and a toothbrush is brought as well. The strainer become a dome-like cage and the toothbrush is placed inside. The boys place the spice containers around the floor and pillows, and suddenly they have helmets and long swords and march around the castle. One is placed as a guard by the cage.

They get dad's slippers and put them on the scarf to become boats.

Wauw, Islandia. 12 soldiers guard the entrance to the castle and the one by the cage gets surprised when the toothbrush transform into a wild lion. Good thing it's inside the cage. The boys laugh. Let's go exploring for more wild animals, tigers or lions.

One of the boys imagines to walk out of the castle dressed as a king and enter his boat and sail off. But where is Islandia?, the other boy asks. Out in space? The boys start levitating off the floor, up amongst the stars. No, space is too ordinary. Islandia lies in the ocean, on the bottom of the sea. The stars turn into bubbles, and the boys descend to the floor. It is ruled by two very wise people, that is us! They laugh. But if we live under the sea, we must be fish. Their arms transform into fins, and the living room fills with water. They swim all over. The lion escapes the prison and scares off all the soldiers. But luckily the boys are way bigger and can help the soldiers put the lion back in the cage.

They swim into the ocean and spot an old pirate ship. The king finds a huge chest filled with gold inside it. As he tries to take the chest back to the castle the other boy changes into a enormous shark that smiles hungrily at him. He flees back inside the ship with the shark circling round it. He must be saved by his soldiers.

Suddenly the boys hear the distinct sound of dad coming in the front door. They clean the room like lightning. Everything needs to go back where it came from, so that dad won't notice. Only dad's slippers are left on the floor when he enters the living room. He looks confused.

I am sorry dad, your slippers are a bit wet because they were boats. They seem fine to me, dad replies and put them on. Oh yes sorry dad. The boys laugh. Because even though there is something you cannot see, it can still exist. Dad sails away to the kitchen.

"What is this" exercise

- For this you will need four different objects to hold in your hands. A rock, a couple of clothespins, a scarf and a couple of toy building blocks. Or something similar.
- This exercise is about jumpstarting everyone's imagination and how everyday objects easily can become something amazing just by using your imagination.
- Everyone stands in a circle. You hold out your hand with one object in it so everyone can see and ask "what is this"? Everyone should then in turn describe what they see, trying to be more and more imaginative.
- You start with the rock. The players might not be that imaginative, for this object and that is ok. When everyone has described what it is, you continue to the next object. Hopefully they will be more and more imaginative. To jumpstart their imagination, try holding the object in different ways. This should create different associations for them.
- The sequence is: Rock, Clothespins, Scarf, Toy blocks.

Embodying actions and objects

- This exercise focuses on portraying imagination with your body.
- You stand in the middle with the player around. Bring a very common item. Ex. A stick or a broom.
- The players should now in turn describe what the item can be used as. Ex. A sword, guitar, stilts, dancing partner.
- Every time a new description is said you have to position yourself to portray and hold the item like that. Ex. As a sword you would hold the stick/broom with two hands at one end and maybe stand heroic. You change to a new position as a new description is presented.
- After one round (every player gets to tell a description) you put away the stick/broom. The exercise is now the same except the object is now invisible.
- Then it is the players turn. They each get an invisible object. Now you say what the invisible object is, and the players have to position themselves to portray the object. Tell them to look at each other when they have found their position, so they see different ways to portray it.
- These are the objects they should portray: A walking stick, A ball, A bicycle, A boat, Fire

Talk about the first time they experienced to be out on their own

- Introduction. We will tell our story about the first time we were out on our own.
- Players sit together two and two and tell their story to each other. First one then the other.
- If the players can't remember the first time they were out on their own, then how about the first time they were home alone. The goal is to have the players tap into their own memories about being small and alone in a big world.
- This should not take too long, so ask players to raise their arms, when they're done.

"What happened next" game

- The Boy and The Milk is a storytelling game, so we have to practice at storytelling.
- We continue in the two-and-two groups, but shift one player to the left.
- The players have to tell a story, starting with the sentence "When I was five years old.."
- Whenever there is a short break in the story, the other player asks "What happened next?"
- Then the storyteller continues with the story, and if the player asking the question agrees with it, she just lets the storyteller go on, otherwise she says "No!", and then she takes over the story.
- Use your imagination, it doesn't have to be real.

Circle-walk and introduction of the characters of the story

- Now we turn our attention towards the game itself. We start by walking round in a circle.
- One by one the characters are introduced, and the players try at moving about as that character.
 - o The boy, Spiderman, Tinkerbell, Winnie the Pooh
- For each of the characters show the costume prop that represents that character.
- Explain that the characters will rotate between the players; they will each get a chance to play them during the game.

Character portraits

- To further invest some energy in understanding the imaginary friends we will make character portraits of them.
- Explain that the three imaginary friends are all aspects of the boy's personality, as such they represent certain values inside the boy.
- The character portraits work in the way that we walk all over the room, and when a character trait is being read out we try to make a physical portrayal of that character (ex. "Spiderman is heroic").
- Read from the list of character traits of the three imaginary friends.
- End the exercise by making group portraits for the three imaginary friends. Divide the players into groups of three and let them pose as the three imaginary friends and ask each which character they are and which emotion/characteristic they are portraying.

Frozen moments

- The remaining players who don't play the boy or the imaginary friends can play anything. They are the surroundings and the story elements around the boy.
- We will practice at playing surroundings using frozen moments or character portraits in the circle. We'll try each of different types of thing you can play:
 - o Other characters, such as pedestrians, animals or the boy's own family.
 - Collaborative make a frozen moment: People at a traffic light, where is just turned green
 - o Objects, such as trees, cars, toys or a magic sword.
 - Frozen moment: A dusty bookshelf
 - o Ambience, such as the wind or the falling rain.
 - Frozen moment: A snowy forest
 - o Emotions and sounds coming from other characters.
 - Frozen moment: Frightening bark of a dog or the overwhelming sadness of a lonely boy.

"The Machine" game with a storyteller

- To practice the storytelling, we will start out with classic workshop game, "The Machine".
- But this time there is an angle to it. For one of the players will have to be the storyteller, and tell what the machine does each time a person adds herself to the machine.
- And the other players have to accept and build upon what the machine is already doing.

Practice of a scene

- Now we are ready to practice a scene, as they will look in the game
- First a little introduction to the way scenes are written down:
 - o "Title", "Location", and "Where we learn" must all be read aloud.
 - o "Fact" and "Inspiration" is for the storyteller only.
 - o As the storyteller you should read the whole thing through before starting the scene. First when you have read the whole scene should you start reading aloud.
 - o When the storyteller starts reading aloud the scene starts for the other players.
- We have two scenes that didn't make it into the final version of the game:
 - o Counting numbers, where the boy remembers how he learned to count.
 - o We are lost, where the boy is frustrated because he can't find his way around town.
- Be aware that the central theme in the game is the schism between reality and fantasy.
- Practice with "We are lost" and talk afterwards.

Practice of the scenes from different angles

- When we have practiced once and talked, we may have a better understanding of the scenes.
- Now we will play the other scene from two distinct angles: Use "Counting Numbers"
 - o In the first angle the players have to do exactly what the storyteller tells.
 - o In the second angle the storyteller looks at the players and tells what they are doing.
- We talk again, how did this difference in angle feel for the players and the storyteller?

Practice of a scene with co-player observations

- The key in playing this game is to be able to read your fellow players, both as the storyteller and as the players.
- This is one of the most difficult tricks in roleplaying, two ways to improve are the following:
 - o Accept that you're not always the center of attention, give other people space.
 - o When you're not engaged in a scene take a moment and stand and observe.
- Now we will play "We are lost" again. This time pay attention to the other players. How can we act on their ideas to improve the story?
 - o Playing the sound, emotions and ambience around the scene could be used to improve it.
 - o Standing behind other players and imitating them can be used to enforce their actions.
- The storyteller should also practice at looking at the players
- We talk again, how did these observations improve the scene?

A view inside the blackbox

- There will be a podium for the storyteller, so it is possible to see everything the players do. The storyteller will have a microphone. Speak into it because there will also be music playing.
- There will be stage platforms for the players and colorful lights. These are just meant as inspiration for the scenes, use it as you see fit.
- Tell the players that you will cut the scenes by turning the lights off.

Practice of the character rotation

- Character rotation works in the following way:
 - o After each scene the lights turn dark, except at the storytellers position.
 - o All players gather near the storyteller, like kids listening to the story.
 - o Then the storyteller steps down, while the players place their props at a designated table.
 - o A new player takes the storyteller position and starts reading to himself/herself.
 - o The other players distribute props for the next scene and stand ready.
 - o When the storyteller starts reading aloud, the lights will turn back up and the scene will start.
- Let us try it.

Read out loud:

Test chapter 1 - We are lost

Location: Somewhere in town, but the boy doesn't recognize the streets

Where we learn that it is good to have friends to help you on the way

Only for the storyteller:

Fact:

The Boy and his imaginary friends eventually find their way

Inspiration:

- All the streets look the same
- Similar houses and people
- People going this way and that way
- Nobody is smiling
- Looks like the place he just left
- The Boy is sad, frustrated, in panic?
- His friends come to the rescue
- Perhaps Winnie comforts The Boy with a big hug
- Perhaps Tinkerbell can fly up to scout the way for The Boy
- Perhaps Spiderman can swing ahead in webs and guide The Boy
- Hugs and comfort
- Help and guidance
- The Boy gets his confidence back

Read out loud:

Test chapter 2 - Counting numbers

Location: The boy sits at a bench in the park trying figure out how much he can buy for his money

Where we learn that counting and math is very difficult for a five-year-old boy

Only for the storyteller:

Inspiration:

- What does the milk cost?
- Will there be enough money to buy chocolate?
- Thinking back to how Grandma taught him to count
- Suddenly Grandma appears in his imagination
- Something with pears and apples
- Can the three imaginary friends count?
- Winnie only have paws and not fingers, so he can only count to two
- Tinkerbell is so small that she cannot think of numbers higher than ten
- Spiderman never bothered learning to count, he would rather battle the numbers
- Numbers fly around him
- Plus and minus