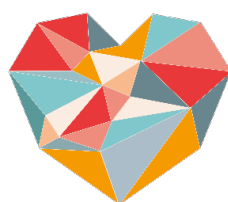




Making connection through theatre

**OPEN
DOEK**
PASSIE VOOR
THEATER

A good practice nominated by

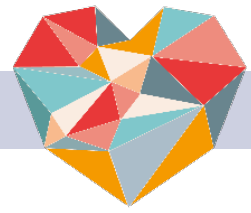


Dementia
in Cultural Mediation



With the support of the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

Aktiviteten



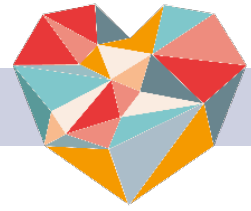
Aktivitetsens navn

At skabe forbindelse gennem teater.

Sammenfatning

A training course for 'cultural mediators'. Our ambition is to encourage people who perform theatre as volunteers or professionals to take on a social role in relation to people with dementia, with the aim of giving the latter a place in society again through theatre. Through the training, actors learn how to make contact through theatre with an audience of people with dementia.

Content



Target group

People who want to work with people with dementia through theatre. These can be theatre practitioners (both professional and amateur) but also informal caregivers, care professionals (occupational therapists, ...) and other interested parties.

Objective

Our aim is to provide our target audience with tools to perform theatre for people with dementia and to connect with people with dementia through theatre.

General

- Generate more social awareness among theatre practitioners.

In the short term

- Providing actors with play opportunities for an audience of people with dementia and thus increasing the well-being of the latter.

In the long run

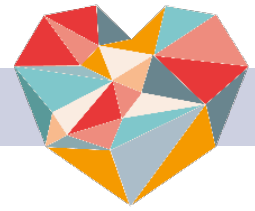
- A rotation system for groups performing in residential care homes and include theatre in training courses within the care sector.

Partners

For those parts of the training where we focus on dementia (e.g. 'what is dementia', 'how to interact with and respond to people with dementia',...) we collaborate with organisations that have expertise in the field of dementia, such as the Alzheimer League, the Flanders Centre of Expertise on Dementia, ... We ask these organisations to give these parts of the training.

For the artistic part of the training we rely on external teachers (e.g. use of voice, music, acting, improvisation, process work, ...). These professionals do not necessarily have experience with people with dementia.

Practical



Venue

For the artistic parts of the training (acting, voice, ...) you need a room where you can work 'on the floor' (e.g. parquet/ballet floor). A music system is also needed and good acoustics are important so that you do not disturb each other when working in different groups. A stage is not necessary, as we aim to keep the distance between the players and their audience to a minimum. So we teach them not to stand on a stage, but to play from floor to floor.

For the try-outs that take place in a public space of a residential care home, it is important to provide a space where actors can prepare and change. It is also important to provide a space for a follow-up discussion between the player(s) and the caregivers from the residential care home.

Day, time & duration

The training lasts about three to four months, with a weekly or max. bi-weekly frequency. It is better not to make the training longer, otherwise participants may drop out.

This programme is conceived as an internship and includes two try-outs in which we ask the participants to play in a residential care home of their choice. Afterwards, there is a follow-up whereby extra coaching sessions can be offered if necessary.

The training sessions are mainly scheduled in the weekends (on Saturdays), as experience has taught us that this is the most suitable time for the participants. The try-outs are planned more flexibly, as we are dependent on the residential care homes where the try-outs take place.

Group size

We take a maximum of 30 participants as a guideline for the training, otherwise the group will be too big. A good mix of profiles (people with a background in theatre and people with a background in care) is important, because we notice that participants learn from each other. For example, people with a background in theatre are afraid to do this because they do not know how to deal with people with dementia. The care experts can support them in this. Conversely, care workers sometimes find it difficult to express themselves on stage: that is a big step for them and one that the people with a background in theatre can help them with.

Supervisors and hosts

Regarding the training, we get the expertise where the expertise can be found: from teachers with knowledge of dementia or theatre techniques/aspects. At the try-outs, we ask that at least two caregivers from the residential care home where the play is to be performed are present.

At the try-outs we organise a preliminary discussion between the actors and the caregivers from the residential care home where the actors will be performing. The professionals from the residential care home can give the actors an idea of the audience and the actors can also ask for extra information about the audience (for example about their background, possible traumas, things they should or should not include in a performance).

Materials & facilities

It is important to create an informal atmosphere, for example by providing coffee, tea, ... In this way the participants will quickly feel at ease. Also provide chairs for all participants.

We teach the participants to work with all aspects of theatre: so provide costumes, props, music, ... A beamer/screen and Wi-Fi can be useful for presentations or when the participants need to look something up.

Costs

Currently, the training is free of charge. This is possible because we receive financial support to organise this training. A registration fee is not excluded in the future, should these funds (partially) disappear.

Name tags

The participants are not given name tags. We create a sense of community among the participants by doing introductory exercises.

Memento

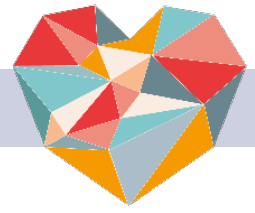
During the training, the participants receive a workbook. Furthermore, the follow-up is especially important (see below).

A certificate of participation can be important for the participants to justify their participation to their employer.

Afterwards

Also after the training, we provide guidance (e.g. at the first performance of the participants) and practical follow-up. The idea is that residential care homes approach us if they want to programme a performance. We then contact the persons who have followed the training and put them in touch with the residential care home.

Communication & Registration



Communication

We communicate mainly digitally (social media, newsletter, website, ...) via

- our own channels
- expert or umbrella organisations (Samana, umbrella organisation for volunteer carers, ...)
- the partners/residential care homes.

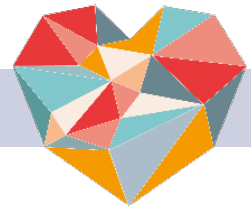
We also provide flyers in the residential care homes and at our location, namely at Opendoek in Antwerp.

We also try to generate press attention for our initiative.

Registration

People can register by phone or e-mail. We find personal contact important right from the start!

Description & Program



The workshop sessions take place in large spaces with lots of natural light. The floor is suitable for theatre: a ballet or wooden floor. Depending on the subject, a beamer is used. We start with chairs in a circle, so that everyone can see each other. Depending on the subject, these are moved aside as the activity progresses.

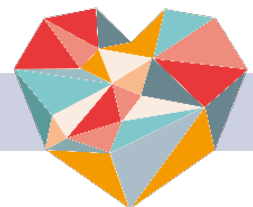
To start with, we go around the circle and let everyone introduce themselves briefly. They tell what they do in their daily lives and what their motivation is to participate in the training. Coffee, tea and water are provided.

The programme for the day is discussed and there is room for questions. If it concerns an acting-related workshop, some warm-up exercises are given before the session actually starts.

The training consists of workshops on acting qualities and theatre making. This includes voice use, music and singing, acting and making. In addition, there are workshops on dementia. These cover what dementia is, what stages there are, how to respond to certain reactions, ... The participants' own expertise is also discussed.

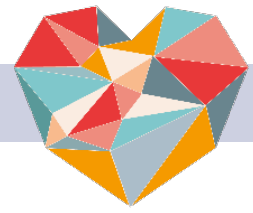
After each activity there is time for a short evaluation. Everyone is thanked for their presence. After the full programme, proof of participation is handed out and everyone is congratulated.

Evaluation



The activity is evaluated both immediately after each workshop and at the end of a full programme. This is done separately with the participants, the partners and the teachers. As organisers, we make the overall final evaluation and make adjustments where necessary.

Checklist, when to do what



Three months before the activity

- You shape the content of the programme (content, contacting partners, teachers, ...).
- You plan the sessions.
- You search for locations where the training can take place.
- You look for residential care homes where the try-outs can take place.
- You organise information sessions for potential participants: during these sessions, people can register as interested parties.

Two months before the activity

- You contact those who are interested and give them all the practical information about the introductory meeting and the selection (audition) that will take place there.

One month before the activity

- You compile the list of participants.
- You send a reminder.

Two weeks before the activity

- You send the participants the detailed practical information.
- You discuss everything once more with the location.

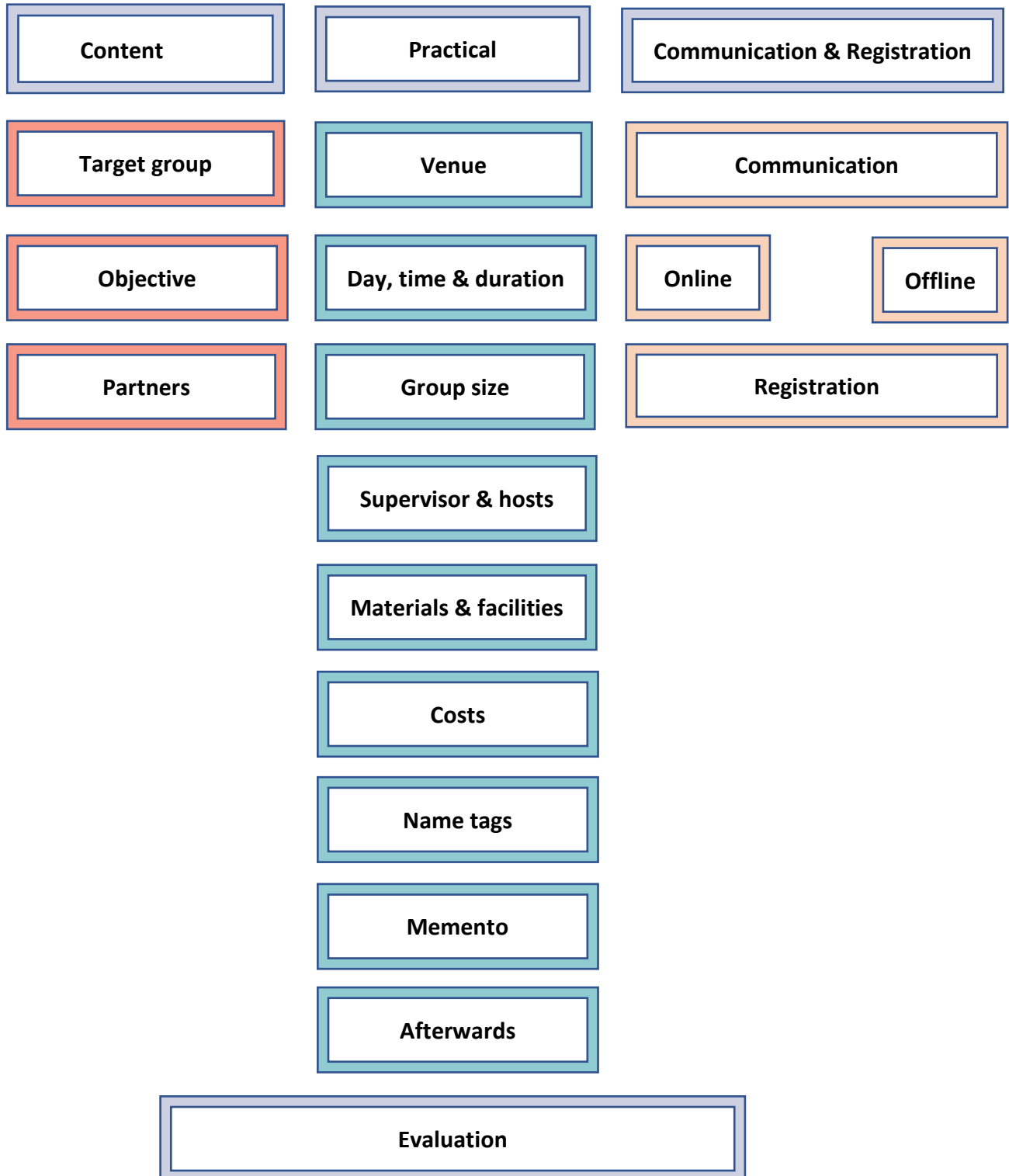
Day of the activity

- You are present well in advance to get everything ready (coffee, tea, technique, ...).

Corona

We were about to offer try-outs to residential care homes when the Corona crisis broke out and the residential care homes closed. We then continued to offer digital training to the participants, for example on 'what is dementia', 'singing and repertoire', 'character building', ... However, this was not ideal as we were not reaching all the participants. Due to the crisis, it was no longer evident for many to participate.

Points of attention



“Adding a song or a short text can give extra value to small moments of care. In these moments you really make a connection.”

