

Empathy for the villain



OBJECTIVES:

- Explore the relationship between a resilience mentor and the transformation of suffering.
- Understand and empathise with the perspectives of others, including those from diverse backgrounds, cultures and contexts.
- Delve into the “other side” of stories and/or situations to better understand how they may react/behave with others.
- Recognise and appreciate points of view and feelings and cultivate respect for someone seen as “a villain”.



AXES:

Collective emotional intelligence



STEP BY STEP OF THE ACTIVITY

»» Introducción a la actividad:

Introduce the topic by mentioning that there are times when empathy is a challenge to us, since it is impossible to empathise with certain people who naturally generate rejection and even fear. “*How to find empathy for those who at first sight do not seem to deserve it?* Let’s use a very extreme example of this, namely the villains or villainesses in fairy tales.” (Try to give concrete examples).

Ask participants to reflect on the following questions and share their thoughts in the community chat or via audio:

- What is a villain?
- Why is it difficult to show empathy with them?
- Why do you think they are villains?

»» First part of the activity: Finding a villain or villainess

Divide participants into small groups of three or four using breakout rooms.

Ask each group to think and share about villains from their own history, without naming them, but trying to reflect as a group on people who have generated rejection or fear. The idea is that once they have listened to all the situations, they will create a villain integrating the different contributions.

When creating the villain, they must give him/her a name and describe him/her physically and emotionally, his/her values, feelings, socio-affective relationships, etc. They also must think about how this villain acts to be considered as such. For example: “*She stole the kingdom’s precious stone and wants to be the queen*”.

»» Second part of the activity: The “tipping point”.

Bring all participants back to the main room invite them to share their villains. Next, introduce the concept of the ‘tipping point’ by talking about how many villains have a critical moment that turns them into villains. Give an example, such as Darth Vader/the Joker.

Participants are sent back to their breakout rooms in groups. Ask them to reflect on:

- What happened/may have happened to your villain to make him/her a villain?
- What would their life be like if that event had not happened?

Each group will also choose one of the following slogans and write a short script:

- *A day in the life of the villain if he/she had not become a villain.*
- *The event that triggered the villain to become a villain happened to someone else.*

- A situation in which the villain and a hero/heroine meet, the villain explains why he/she is a villain, and the hero/heroine shows empathy for him/her.

Encourage them to be as detailed as possible. Include at least one of the elements of resilience. How would that form of resilience have helped the villain?

»» **Third part of the activity: Performance**

Bring all learners back together in the main session.

If time allows, ask each group to act out a part of the villain's story (max. 3 minutes)

»» **Closing**

Reflect on the purpose of understanding the other person's "darkness" beyond their behaviour - descriptive vs. comprehensive framework.

Dynamise the question:

Is understanding the other person the same as allowing or justifying any behaviour?

Could a villain change his/her behaviour without bonding (emotional guidance)?

»» **Conclusion:**

People evolve according to the events and encounters that we may have throughout life. This may help to avoid quick and definitive judgements and to promote a sympathetic view without being permissive towards harmful behaviour.



METHODOLOGY:

Creative storytelling, theatre

PREPARATION:

- Research and prepare some "villains" and their backgrounds to help participants find their own (e.g. Voldemort from Harry Potter, Dark Vader from Star Wars or the witch from Kiriku's story).
- Familiarise yourself with digital tools before presenting and using them for this activity.



DIGITAL TOOLS INVOLVED :

Computer or phone with sound, camera, microphone

PLATFORM USED :

Zoom/Jitsi/Meet platform



DURATION:

At least one and a half hours



TIPS FOR THE PERSON DOING IT

Try to get to know the group you are going to work with beforehand in order to give relevant examples of their personal and professional background, so that they can become involved in the search for the villain.

Every culture and generation has its own villains through storytelling and the media.



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Accompanied artistic creation, and especially theatre, forces us to put ourselves in the place of others and to recognise other perspectives that can be very useful when it comes to understanding and empathising with others.

Some relevant framework can be found in the Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Paulo Freire) and Theatre of the Oppressed (Augusto Boal)