

ART-BASED EVALUATION TECHNIQUES



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ART-BASED EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

Margo Charlton, Resonance Creative Consulting
(margo.charlton@gmail.com)

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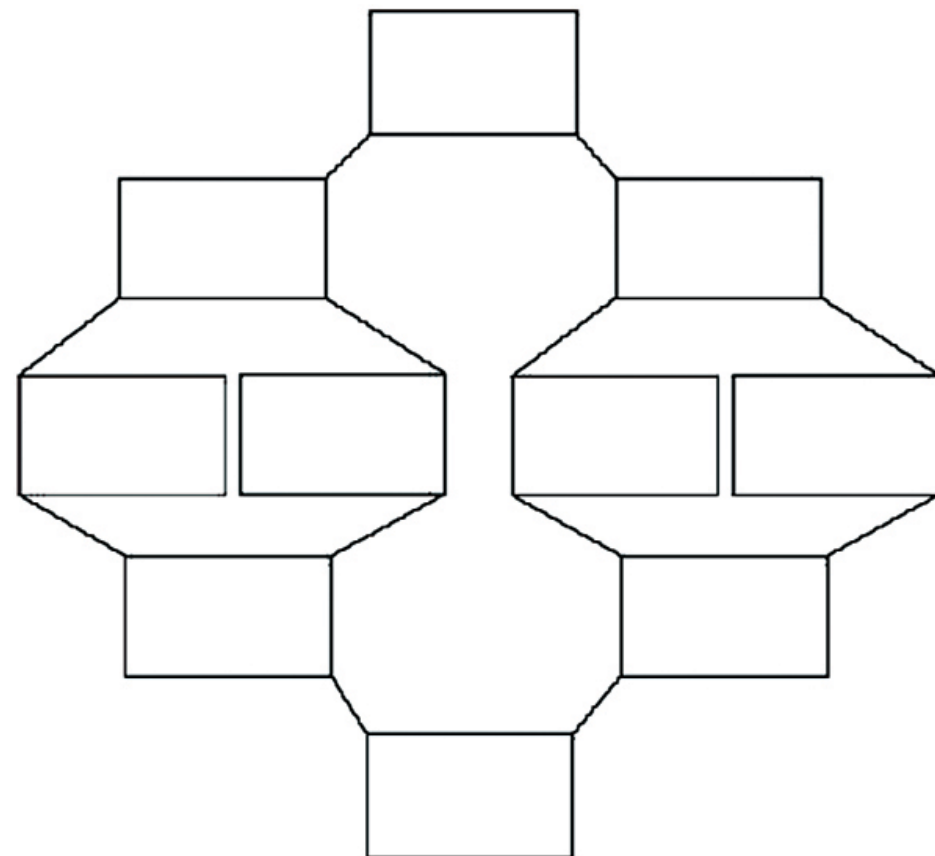
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MATERIALS

- Blank word trees (see below) or paper, pens

TIPS AND VARIATIONS

- Take the word trees and write a poem including as many words from the word trees as possible.
- Add joining words (if, and, but, then, we, sometimes, etc.) for more flexibility.



>>>WORD TREE

OBJECTIVES

- To encourage participants to approach a topic from a non-literal angle.
- To welcome stream of consciousness responses.

STEPS

1. Brainstorm words associated with the project or words associated with the beginning, middle or end of a process.
2. Hand out word tree skeletons or ask people to create their own. See below for diagram.
3. Ask participants to select a word from the brainstorm list and put it at the top of their tree.
4. Encourage them to work through the tree quickly by writing the first words that come to mind when they look at the boxes on the word tree. There are no right or wrong answers and they only share what they choose to share.
5. After trying several words ask participants to share some of their word trees. The unexpected and interesting juxtaposition of words creates instant poetry.

INTRODUCTION

Numbers cannot fully express the scope of community arts work but neither can questionnaires or interviews. So why does a program that has dealt in colour, movement, texture, sound or rhythm abandon art-making when evaluating the experience? Why not use art-making to evaluate art?

Example:

After a theatre project, a group responds with poetry writing and after a writing project they paint. Improvisation, openness, risk and play are at the heart of all creative activity. Why not put that kind of free play to work for evaluation?

WHY USE ART BASED

EVALUATION (ABE) TECHNIQUES?

- Some people either delay or refuse to fill out evaluation forms
- Inviting participants to respond to their experience with art making helps them share their feelings and reflect on their experience
- When participants are asked to fill out a questionnaire and hand it in there is no chance for group sharing.
- ABE helps participants step back from their work without stepping away from the language of art-making;
- Sets a good tone, which leads to more in-depth responses when follow-up questionnaires or interviews are given;
- Provides an opportunity for individuals to express their experiences with a project and/or share their experiences with the rest of the group.
- Provides the safety of metaphor. Metaphors are powerful ways to express complex things through images, gestures or sounds;
- Helps participants remember the project in way that is less focused on words and literal questions like "What worked? What new things did you learn? What could have gone better? What do you recommend for the future?"
- Asks participants to explore their reactions in an expressive and creative way that is not separate from the activities of the project.

HOW TO USE ABE

- ABE helps program planning, skill building of participants, and reporting activities
- ABE can examine different stages of the project or different points in a person's involvement with a group.

Example:

A drawing exercise at the beginning of a project asks participants to express their feelings towards the project or their ideas about being creative. This exercise can be repeated in the middle of the project and again at the end to help program planners see if attitudes have shifted.

- ABE can provide a quick snapshot of where the group is at (poetry trees, drawing activities, or image sculpting take only a few minutes to do) especially when it takes place throughout a project.
- ABE art-making (poems, songs, videos, paintings) can be scanned into final reports or sent to funders so they can get a different feel for the project.

HOW ABE BENEFITS THE GROUP

- Helps the members of the group get to know each other better.
- Triggers memories that can lead to group discussion. The "product" that is created and shared with the group leads to a sense of group history and belonging.
- One person's memory can help awaken other stories and increase individual and group pride and sense of accomplishment.
- No one has to explain their work if they aren't comfortable but once something is created it can help others express their ideas.

>>> POETRY STEMS

OBJECTIVES

- To generate responses on a theme.
- To provide a way for participants to share their thoughts.

STEPS

1. Create poetry stems that relate to the session. For

EXAMPLE:

When I am at the beginning I feel _____.

When I am at the end I feel _____.

Making things is like _____.

Change is _____.

2. Select one or two stems and repeat them on the page. Encourage participants to find as many responses as possible.
3. Ask participants to share their work. There is a rhythmic feel when the poetry stems are read because the beginning of each stem is repeated.

MATERIALS

- Poetry stem sheets, pens

GENERAL

Poetry Bowl, Poetry Stems and Word Tree can be used on their own at any stage of a project. They are sometimes part of a larger activity.

For example: Word Tree is a way to generate lists of words that can be used in other evaluation activities.

>>> POETRY BOWL**OBJECTIVES**

- To provide an opportunity for participants to give feedback throughout the project.
- To act as a temperature check or as a starting point or part of a larger evaluation process.

STEPS

1. Encourage participants to add to the bowl whenever they get an idea. Or start off each session by asking people to add feeling words to the bowl. Or use brainstorming sessions to add words. The idea is to generate a lot of words as raw material and to keep the bowl as a resource.
2. The words can be used to: generate poems by asking people to select words from the bowl and stick them on paper; or be used as a check in.

MATERIALS

- Small pieces of coloured paper, bowl, box or hat (anything to collect words in), paper, glue.

>>> HOW ABE HELPS INDIVIDUALS

- Helps channel emotions that might be difficult to express within a questionnaire or be too personal to express in an interview format.
- Encourages participants to remember past activities, be involved in the moment and think about what might happen next.
- Honours the creativity of participants and their abilities to respond in an artistic way.

HOW ABE CAN BE USED BY COMMUNITY ARTISTS AND FACILITATORS

ABE can help participants look at their own reactions to their work. This can involve personal art-making or journaling, or be a way for a group of artists to collectively discuss a project. For example, artists could be asked to respond to a project using the metaphor of a journey with curves, twists, detours and roadblocks.

It's a good idea for facilitators to try out exercises to see how they feel about the experience before working with the group.

TRYING ARTS BASED EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

If you use any of these techniques in your evaluation process, let us know how it went. If you create any variations or new techniques we'd love to hear about it. Contact us at: info@rccpartners.com

>>>ARTS BASED EVALUATION TECHNIQUES

Art-based evaluation (ABE) techniques provide opportunities for group participants to express their feelings about a project in creative ways using activities such as drawing, writing, drama games and movement.

Usually evaluation of community arts is limited to questionnaires, surveys or interviews. These are all good ways to tap into what happened but ABE encourages participants to express their reactions to the project by "doing and making" before turning to other evaluation methods.

ABE can happen at all stages of a project. When done at different stages throughout a project it can help group facilitators get a sense of how the project is going, how the participants are feeling, and what might need to change. ABE activities help document the process and can be used for planning future projects and reporting to funders.

BEGINNING OF A PROJECT ACTIVITIES

PURPOSE OF THESE ACTIVITIES

- Break the ice
- Set a base line

Activities in this section provide participants with an opportunity to express their concerns and reactions. When done at the beginning of a project then there is something to compare at the end. Activities done in this section can be returned to later to see if attitudes have shifted. For example: The photo collages done in First Glance can be passed out again at the end to spark a discussion on how the group's impressions have changed/or not changed.

>>>SIGH-KU

OBJECTIVES

- To assist participants to express themselves without words.
- To encourage participants to embody their responses.

STEPS

1. Ask participants to stand in a circle facing outwards. After a moment of reflection facilitator claps hands and participants turn around and "freeze" in an image of their feelings about the project.
2. Repeat several times to be able to get out several responses. Do this part in silence.
3. Ask participants to add a sound to each gesture or image. Encourage participants to either explore new gestures or return to the ones from step one.
4. Ask participants to keep their own images and sounds in mind and the sounds and images of other group members and to discuss what they saw, felt and heard.

MATERIALS

- Paper and pens

TIPS AND VARIATION

- For groups who have trouble discussing, provide sentence stems to be filled in. For example:
The sound of this project is like _____
This project looks like _____
This project feels like _____.
- This activity can be done during a project as a temperature check (with or without the follow up discussion) to see how people are feeling about the project.

>>> **ONE HUNDRED WORDS**

OBJECTIVES

- To encourage and welcome first and unedited responses.
- To share impressions with the whole group and to work with other people's responses.

STEPS

1. Ask participants to brainstorm the first words that come to mind when they think of the project.
2. Flip chart the words and ask participants to choose a few words from the list that interest them.
3. Using the "Word Tree" method (see General section for instructions) ask participants to spin out more words.
4. Ask participants to read their words out loud, they can read all of them or select a few. They can improvise with them and add joining words or make changes to the word by adding a different ending. For example: change "jump" to "jumping".
5. Facilitator collects the words and creates poetry kits (like those magnetic ones you can buy).
6. Facilitator can add a few useful pronouns and conjunctions. Place 100 or so words (any number will do but make sure there are lots of words to play with) into several envelopes.
7. Provide each participant with an envelope of words and ask them to play with the words until they have created a poem that expresses their feelings about the project.
8. When they have a poem they are happy with, they stick the words down and read the poem back the group.

MATERIALS

- Paper, pens, glue sticks, envelopes

>>> **FOUND POETRY**

FOUND POETRY OBJECTIVES

- To share the grant application process with participants.
- To assist participants in deconstructing "grant speak."
- To transform one text into another.

STEPS

1. Read the mandate and objectives of the project, as taken from the grant application(s), to the group and hand out copies. Ask group members to select words that stand out or interest them. (e.g.: empower, transform, collective, marginalized, reporting).
2. Take one word at a time and use the Word Tree poem method to generate more words (See General Technique section for how this works). Read out loud how one word led to the next.
3. Using everyone's Word Tree words, ask participants to use some of the words to create a poem. Participants may want to add a few joining or connecting words or change word endings.
4. Share the found poems

MATERIALS

Copy of the mandate of the group and/or objectives stated for project in grant application, paper and pen for each group member, flip chart paper

TIPS AND VARIATIONS

- Do this as an individual activity or in small groups.
- Revisit the poems at the end of project and discuss whether or not the project objectives were met.
- Keep the found poems they might be useful later in the project.
- Instead of using the Word Tree method, cut out words and phrases from copies of the grant application and used the 100 Word Poem method to make poems (see End of Project activities).

>>>MEMORY BOXES

OBJECTIVES

- To provide a vehicle to collect totems, words or images that are important to participants.
- To help participants recall moments in the project and to reflect on how things changed/or didn't change.

STEPS

1. Provide each participant with a small box. The boxes can be painted, written on, collaged or decorated in whatever form the participant might choose. The outside of the box represents the community, group or project (an external concept) and the inside of the box represents their experience and feelings.
2. At the beginning of the project decorate the outside of the box. During the project urge the group to place things in the box that reflect their feelings about the project or are connected to the activities of the project.
3. Revisit throughout the project to add or remove things from the outside or inside of the box.
4. Organize a display or an activity to show boxes but give the option to keep the inside private.

MATERIALS

- Small wooden boxes or cardboard boxes with lids, glue, scissors, old magazines, paint, etc.

TIPS AND VARIATIONS

- Photograph or videotape the boxes at different stages during the project.
- View the images at the end so the participants can see how their boxes changed.

>>>STORY TELLING WITH ARTIFACTS AND PROPS

OBJECTIVES

- To help people remember parts of the project.
- To encourage people to share their stories which might reveal new perspectives for other members of the group.

STEPS

1. Place the objects so everyone can see them and ask them to remember aspects of the project.
2. Ask each participant to select one object that appeals to them.
3. As a group or in pairs, ask the participants to tell a story they remember about the object.
4. For example: trying to use the stapler to create a prop but the material kept ripping; or the hat they wore as a character and how it made them feel tall or silly or elegant. Encourage positive and negative stories.

MATERIALS

- Gather things that were used during the project. For example: tools (camera, glue gun, paint brush, stapler, microphone)
- Gather things that were part of the finished project. For example: props, costumes, picture frames.

TIP AND VARIATIONS

- In the case of visual arts projects don't present the "finished" product, the idea is to ask participants to respond to objects that were part of the process.
- Record the stories with participants interviewing each other, include the object in the video-story.

>>> ON THE SURFACE POEMS

OBJECTIVES

- To help participants discover new aspects of the work that they might have overlooked.
- To encourage ways to combine personal responses with the responses of other group members.

STEPS

1. Divide group into pairs or small groups and give each group copies of the photos. Ask them to describe what they see in terms of what is literally in the image ("on the surface"). For example: "people holding hands" rather than "group building" which is an interpretation of the image. Encourage responsive, "feeling" words such as: kindness, beautiful or sad.
2. Ask participant to write their descriptions (a few words or a phrase) on the strips of paper (large enough to be read at a distance). Try to get several responses from each participant; each response is written on a separate sheet of paper.
3. Bring the "on the surface" responses back to the circle. Ask each group to read their words and put the strips in the centre so every one can see them.
4. Ask participants to look at the strips and to select a few that they feel drawn to; encourage moving the strips around until they have the combination they want.
5. Participants read out their strips in the form of a "poem" and facilitator flip charts each "poem" as it emerges.

MATERIALS

- Photos from the documentation of the project (of the process, or the final product or performance)
- 11x17 paper cut into long strips, marking pens

TIPS AND VARIATIONS

- Extend this activity by making copies of the poems in different font sizes and styles.
- Using copies of the photos and the poems ask the group to cut up the images and make a collage around the poem or cut up the poem and the images and make another picture.

>>> MAPPING

OBJECTIVES

- To assist participants to identify assets in their neighbourhood.
- To see if participant's ideas about their neighbourhood change over the course of the project.

STEPS

1. Ask participants to draw a map of their neighbourhood or community. Suggest different colours or images to indicate different resources. Encourage participants to identify the resources they value: e.g. a good spot for skateboarding.
2. Ask participants to indicate some of the following; Where do you live? Where do you play or hang out or go to? Where do you work or shop? What places do you avoid? What places do you know but have never been to? What places do you want to go to?
3. Hand out Poem Stems (see General Techniques) with a sentence such as:
 - come from ...
 - go to ...
 - don't go where ...

MATERIALS

- Paper, crayons or marking pens

TIPS AND VARIATIONS

Repeat the Mapping exercise throughout the project to see if anything changes.

Facilitator can do the same activity. Keep the poem stems as they may be used at some other point in the project.

>>> DURING A PROJECT

PURPOSE OF THESE ACTIVITIES

- Check in
- Build group communication skills

Activities in this section are "temperature checks" to give group leaders a sense of how people are doing individually and as a group. These activities focus on building communication skills and ways to identify power dynamics in the group. This can help group leaders see if they need to adjust their planning for the rest of the project.

>>> COLLAGE

OBJECTIVES

- To check in with participants to see how they are feeling about the process to date.
- To stimulate group discussion and to flag any areas of tension or problems.

STEPS

1. Ask participants to cut or rip out images and words from magazines that express how they are feeling about the project.
2. Create individual collages, use markers to add more words.
3. Share collage in large group and discuss.

MATERIALS

- Old magazines, glue, markers

TIPS AND VARIATIONS

- Do this as a large group adding pieces and discussing as the collage is created.

>>> ROTATING MURAL

OBJECTIVES

- To help participants share their reflections with other members of the group.
- To help participants see they are not alone in their reactions.

STEPS

1. Brainstorm words or phrases that come to mind when participants think of the project they have completed.
2. Roll out the paper and have participants spread out around the paper. Ask them to think about themselves in relation to the project and draw an image that comes to mind. Remind the group it doesn't have to be a literal representation of the work but could be a metaphor, eg: they felt like a leaf on a plant.
3. Participants create their image in the space in front of them. After some time ask them to stop and to move over to the image on their left or right, look at this image and then add to it. Side-coach during the activity reminding the participants to include details and to represent other people as well as themselves in the picture. Suggest that they add words or phrases.
4. Continue to rotate around the mural until each person returns to their original work.
5. Ask participants to look at what has been added to their image.
6. Discuss what they see and feel.
7. Facilitator record discussion.

MATERIALS

- Roll of mural paper, markers, crayons

TIPS AND VARIATIONS

- If it is a large group, ask people to move over two, three or four positions so it doesn't take too long to return to the "home" position. If the group is larger than 15, consider having two murals created at the same time.
- After they return to their "home" position they can cut out their image or leave the mural as a whole (this will involve some sort of group or consensus decision) If the images are cut out they can be placed on the wall in new arrangements.

>>>DRAWING IN THE DARK

OBJECTIVES

- To encourage participants to discuss their expectations for the project and if they are being met.

STEPS

1. Ask each person to take a crayon, pencil or marker and a piece of paper and find a comfortable space either seated or lying on the floor.
2. Ask them to close their eyes and with their non-dominant hand draw how they feel the project is going. Encourage images or use the crayon to express the rhythm of the work (eg: spirals or zig- zag lines).
3. Ask them to open their eyes and look at what they have drawn. Is it the same as they envisioned? What is different?
4. Discuss with whole group how this activity is similar to the process of the project.

MATERIALS

- paper, crayons, coloured pencils or markers

END OF A PROJECT

PURPOSE OF THESE ACTIVITIES

- Deconstruct the experience
- Reflect and share with the group
- Provide feedback to the program

Activities in this section are for reflection. They help participants think about what happened and how they are feeling about the experience. It is best to plan enough time for these activities so they don't feel rushed and there is a chance for talking and sharing.

>>> BLIND CARS

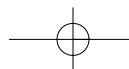
(BASED ON AUGUSTO BOAL'S THEATRE OF THE OPPRESSED TECHNIQUES)

OBJECTIVES

- To build group communications skills.
- To identify power dynamics within the process

STEPS

1. Ask the group to divide into pairs. One person is the follower and one person is the leader. The follower is the "car" and the leader is the "driver."
2. The leader "drives" the car by signaling through touch. A Tap on the head means go forward, on the back means back up, on the left and right shoulders means turn in that direction, and no touch means stop.
3. Do this activity in silence. Reverse roles.
4. Discuss questions such as: What did it feel like to lead and to follow? What did it feel like to not know where you were going? What made it difficult to move? How is this game like the project?



MATERIALS

- None

TIPS AND VARIATIONS

- Doing this in silence is important so the participants can focus on alternative forms of communication.

VARIATION #1:

- Use the person's name to steer. Leader moves around the room and finds a variety of ways to say the person's name (whispering, high-pitched, low-pitched, etc). The follower moves in the direction of the voice, when they don't hear their name they stop.

VARIATION #2:

- Use sounds to steer. Sounds can be vocalized or be percussive using parts of the body. The follower moves in the direction of the sound, when there is no sound they stop.

VARIATION # 3:

- Using the above two variations, the facilitator acts as a "rogue" driver. The facilitator tries to copy the sound and steer the "car" off course. The "driver" tries to maintain control.

>>> BLIND DRAWING

OBJECTIVES

- " To build group communications skills.
- " To identify power dynamics within the process.

STEPS

1. Divide group into pairs. Each person takes a turn being the illustrator and the copier.
2. Each person draws a simple picture of one thing or person using several colours (eg: butterfly, whale, tree). The drawing is done in secret and not shown to the partner.
3. The first illustrator describes their picture, one element at a time, so the copier can copy it (eg: draw a large orange oval, now take a blue crayon and make three small round circles in the centre of the orange oval, etc.).
4. The copier listens to the instructions and draws an interpretation of what they have heard.
5. When the illustrator has finished their description and the copier their interpretation, they share the original and the copy and see how they are similar and how they are different.
6. Reverse roles.
7. Discuss questions such as: What did it feel like to draw and to copy? What did it feel like to not know the whole picture? What made it difficult to draw? How is this activity like the project?

MATERIALS

- Paper, crayons, coloured pencils or marking pens

TIPS AND VARIATIONS

- Try doing this in small groups. There will be several interpretations of the picture that can be compared and discussed.

