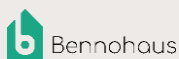


E-HANDBOOK OF CIRCUS A.C.T.



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CIRCUS ACT



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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME TO THE E-HANDBOOK

As defined by experts, youth and social circus is any practise that utilizes Circus Acts, such as juggling, acrobatics, balancing, etc. as a way of working with young and marginalized people. Youth circus is a student-centred practise that employs circus acts as a method of engaging youth people both physically and mentally with creativity as well. Social circus is an innovative approach based on the combination of circus arts and social-pedagogy which aims to assist personal development and boost self-esteem and social competence of at-risk youth through circus instruction and performance. In addition to teaching general social skills such as leadership and teamwork, it connects people who might otherwise be socially isolated and presents a novel method for engaging disadvantaged youth. Normally, social circus includes strong collaboration with other experts such as social workers, artists, health workers, teachers from formal education, or youth workers.

At-risk youth transitioning into Adulthood through social **Circus Training (CIRCUS A.C.T.)** aims at easing the transition into adulthood of youth at-risk of social exclusion by strengthening their key competences and basic skills through the social circus methodology. The youth will take part in local social circus workshops with the aim of enhancing their emotional, physical, and mental health, improving their physical literacy, personal development and social growth and thus, helping them take up an active role in society.

This e-handbook, aims to provide guidance to the youth workers who might have little social circus experience, in an endeavour to support them in creating a basic workshop for young people transitioning into adulthood. More specifically, throughout the handbook the youth worker will explore pedagogical and organisational techniques for when creating social circus activities. Finally, it will be a know-how and knowledge reference for the youth worker in relation to social circus.



The e-handbook training materials are split into the following modules:

1. Introduction to Youth and Social Circus The aim of this course is to familiarize students with the background of Youth and Social Circus. Students will be introduced to the spectrum of target groups of Youth and Social Circus. Emphasis will be placed on the historical and pedagogical context and the development of these approaches. The theories will be based on the relationship of specific methods of Youth and Social Circus to general educational goals. Through the analysis of examples of best practices, students will learn about the values, key issues and approaches of Social and Youth Circus.

2. Educational settings in Youth and Social Circus This course provides orientation on how learning is affected by social, cognitive, emotional and physical environments. It gives students tools to ensure emotional safety in the Youth and Social Circus practice and knowledge about their duty of care. It also introduces the students to work with various groups. The roles of relevant collaborators as well as of Youth and Social Circus trainers are clarified. The concept of a youth worker and student relationship and well-being in a new learning environment will be introduced.

3. Circus Techniques and Human Body: The focus of this course is understanding the basics of how the human body works in relation to circus practice. The course includes the practice of different circus techniques as well as orientation to the functioning of the human body in action to aid in injury prevention and recovery.

4. How to build a Social Circus Project (Didactics and Creativity): The objectives of this part of the e-handbook will focus on teaching the basics of different circus disciplines in a safe learning environment, to provide learning about the different target groups/clients and how they can benefit in the context of Social Circus and fit in together with social and youth circus in the best way, and provide emphasis on inclusivity. In addition, it will explain how to plan, prepare and evaluate a circus class/ workshop in a safe emotional, physical and social environment, how to manage a group and adapt teaching in different learning situations and finally how to use creative approaches in teaching and foster self-expression and creativity in learning.

5. Evaluation: At this part of the e-learning handbook you will have the chance to evaluate your experience from using it. Clear questions will allow you to reflect on your understanding as well as the clarity of the handbook.

In the next page, you can find some key instructions on how you can further enhance your learning experience by using this e-handbook.



INTRODUCTION

GUIDELINES ON HOW TO USE THE E-HANDBOOK

Since this is an electronic handbook, our lovely team has worked into bringing you a unique experience. Follow the GUIDELINES mentioned below and provide to your team, the best training!

GUIDELINES

- a. Log in to the [e-learning platform](#) with your registered email address
- b. Select your preferred language from our language selection toolbar
- c. Click on the menu with quick links to navigate through the sections
- d. Use the search box with the keyword you are looking for to find everything you need easier.

This handbook is also available to download in a Pdf format and you can have it with you wherever the training is taking place by just printing it out, or having it on your tablet/laptop for easy-access.

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INTRODUCTION TO YOUTH AND SOCIAL CIRCUS

The aim of this module is to familiarize students with the background of Youth and Social Circus. Students will be introduced to the spectrum of target groups of Youth and Social Circus. Emphasis will be placed on the historical and pedagogical context and the development of these approaches. The theories will be based on the relationship of specific methods of Youth and Social Circus to general educational goals. Through the analysis of examples of best practices, students will learn about the values, key issues and approaches of Social and Youth Circus.



Photo: Jonne Renvall

WHAT IS YOUTH AND SOCIAL CIRCUS ?

Youth and Social Circus Arts as Cadwell (2018) defines it, is any practice that utilizes circus arts (juggling, acrobatics, balancing, etc.) as a way of working with young people or marginalized people. Youth circus is a student-centered practice that employs circus arts as a method of engaging young people physically, mentally and creatively. Social circus can be thought of as an umbrella term for the use of circus arts in any caring, supportive or community building setting. In addition to the Youth and Social Circus field, the Youth and Social Circus teacher can work in different fields of education, early childhood, health sector,

social sector and youth work. Social circus normally includes strong collaboration with other experts such as social workers, artists, health workers, teachers from formal education, or youth workers (Source: European core curriculum for youth and social circus pedagogy 180 ects, 2022,5).

Youth circus, defined as “circus created and performed by youth, as opposed to entertainment devised for youth (Ott, D. (2005).

TARGET GROUPS

All the people who enjoy practising social circus, but also (and especially) people at risk:

- Small children and their families
- Elderly
- Young People
- People with special needs
- Immigrants
- Prisoners
- Children and the young in the war zones



(Studying Social Circus- Openings and Perspectives . Culture has an Impact. Ed. Katri Kekäläinen (2013)

CURRENT STATE OF RESEARCH

- Features of the social circus
- Learning environments and pedagogy of the social circus
- Skills and competencies of the trainers
- Well-being impacts of social circus
- Integration of circus arts to the various subjects of curriculum (maths, PE, language teaching)
- History of social circus
- Impact of various pedagogical philosophies on (social) circus pedagogy

RESEARCH METHODS

Observation, ethnographic method, video analysis, interviews, literal sources.

FEATURES

- Education and teaching through the circus arts
- The learning the circus skills are not the main target
- The objective is empowerment through the arts, growing up as a person through challenging earning experiences => holistic development of human qualities
- "Education to self-education" (Ernst Kiphard) (Jung, 2014, Bessone 2017)

RELATION TO OTHER PEDAGOGICAL DISCIPLINES

- Related to the experience and adventure pedagogy, basing on experience with others, sense of community and togetherness, related to nature and education
- Motopedagogy and mototherapy => aiming at development of movement and psychomotoric experiences
- Sports pedagogy and physical education
- Drama pedagogy
- Play based pedagogy



Since 1980's: Theatre and arts pedagogy

Prof. (sportpedagogy) Ernst Johnny Kiphard 1923- 2010

"Learning is most effective when it is fun"



Photo: Rolf Verres

Psychomotor learning intertwines mind and movement which supports individual's whole personality.

The activities involve arms, hands, fingers, and feet by games, dance, circus, pantomime - in interaction with others (Kiphard,1997)

HISTORY

Whilst the history of circus goes back to Ancient Rome, youth and social circus begins in the 20th century.

Click on the pictures below to explore more about the history of circus:



The background of the social circus was in the child protection and youth work, emphasized by the catholic principles of charity and education.

Boys Town, founded by Edward J. Flanagan was the beginning and hence the paragon for the future youth and social circus activities around the world.

BOYS TOWN

Along with supporting the self-agency and empowerment of the young through education, the use of sports, music (orchestras), theatre and circus were used also for collecting funding for their youth work activities.

Click on the picture to learn more about Father Flanagan:



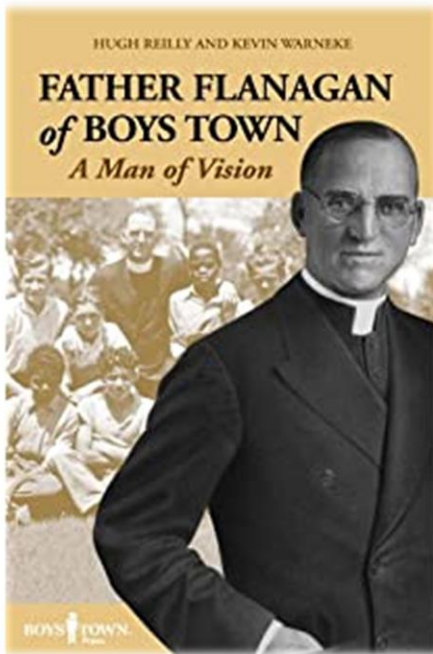
Photo: Boys Town National Alumni Association
Edward J. Flanagan (1886-1948)



Photo: Boys Town National Alumni Association



Boys Town inspired also literature and film industry



CIUDAD DE LOS MUCHACHOS



Ciudad de los Muchachos (Childrens' Town) in Barcelona, established 1956 by Padre Jesús Silva Mendes, in Spain followed the example of the Boys Town, but began to practice youth circus as the main artistic activity.

Read more:

<http://www.circopedia.org/Pancracio>

<https://www.ashtonentertainment.com.au/about-los-muchachos/>

<https://www.turismodeourense.gal/en/recurso/museo-circo-de-los-muchachos/>

<https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/religion-obituaries/8758373/Father-Jesus-Silva.html>



Padre Jesús Silva Mendez
"Padre da Silva" 1933-2011

WHY THERE HAS BEEN A HISTORICAL CONNECTION BETWEEN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH ESPECIALLY JESUITS AND YOUTH AND SOCIAL CIRCUS?

- The founders of Boys Town and Ciudad de los Muchachos were Jesuits. Paulo Freire was inspired both by Jesuit philosophy and socialism.
- Leena Kurki (2002) introduces Jesuit Social Pedagogy and Ignatian education according to the life and mission of Ignatius Loyola (1491-1556)
- Since the middle ages, the role of monasteries and their philosophy of "caritas", charity, was central in the societies by taking care of the people at risk: the poor, widows, orphans, etc.
- When teaching religious stories, performing arts such as theatre and music, were central means of Jesuit education due to the prevalent illiteracy of the common people.
- The philosophy also entailed the growth of an individual as a human being and a broad utilization of science and arts as both as subjects to be learned but also as educational means .



THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE YOUTH CIRCUS YOUTH AND SOCIAL CIRCUS COMMUNITY CIRCUS

Youth circus activity emerged as a discernible component of grassroots engagement with the arts in the developed nations of Europe, North America, and Australia during the 1970s through to the 1990s. The closely associated processes of 'social circus' first appeared in numerous sites around the globe in the early 1990s, and both of these expressions of circus, indicate a re-imagining and a re-purposing of the circus arts within a social situation other than the professional/commercial entertainment arena (Arrighi, 2014)

Reginald Ernest Bolton (13 November 1945 – 14 July 2006) was a clown, teacher, actor and writer about social circus since 1983. In 2004 he wrote the very first dissertation about social circus [Why Circus Works](#) that is a scientific foundation of the youth and social circus

Learn more about Reg Bolton by clicking on the picture:



Photo: HICCUP Photos

Caravan Circus Network was established in 2008 by 6 European circus schools, with a common goal to use social circus as an educational tool and to dedicate this work to groups from disadvantaged backgrounds with specific needs.

See more: <https://www.caravancircusnetwork.eu/>



YOUTH AND SOCIAL CIRCUSES TODAY

Click on the picture below to see a world map of social circus:



Where is your nearest social circus?

Here you can examine different case studies of Youth and Social Circus:

- [Charity Impact Awards 2021 Galway Community Circus](#)
- [Cours de cirque et cultures urbaines au PPCM](#)
- [Filip Jevič: Cirkus ve fyzioterapii funguje!](#)
- [Terezie Kochová Cirkus je skvělý pomocník pro pohybový vývoj nevidomých](#)
- [Step Off! - Find Hope and Joy on the Wire.](#)
- [Herr Professor Clown](#)

LITERATURE

- Studying Social Circus- Openings and Perspectives . [Culture has an Impact](#). Ed. Katri Kekäläinen (2013)
- [Cadwell, Stephen \(2018\) : Falling together: an examination of in youth and social circus training. Theatre, Dance and Performance Training. Vol. 9, No.1. 19-35.](#)
- [Hannes & Uten \(2018\) : On the act of giving, receiving and rendering: Piloting the use of YouTube videos to develop a contextually inspired portrait of social circus trainers. Learning, Culture and Social Interaction. Volume 19, December 2018, Pages 96-108](#)
- [Social circuses around the world](#) (Social circus map- Cirque du Soleil)



Photo: Jonne Renvall



EDUCATIONAL SETTINGS IN YOUTH AND SOCIAL CIRCUS





STUDY METHODS

POSITIVE AND SAFE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Here you'll learn about of positive and safe learning environments and team building games for children:

[Positive Learning Environment](#)

This video explores my philosophy of creating a positive learning environment for my students and how it is implemented in my practice. I believe that creating a positive, safe and supportive classroom environment is one of the most important aspects of teaching. The one thing that I can guarantee for my students is an environment in which they ...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KrS5xeizx2w>

Team building for kids can be tricky. UNICEF Kid Power has created an awesome list of 22 fun team building games & activities that your kids will love! Indoor & outdoor, for pre-school & middle-school kids. Read it here!

[22 Fun Team Building Games & Activities for Kids](#)

Fabian Jung explores here on how to promote group dynamics within circus pedagogy. The publication is available only in German:

Jung, F (2014) Gruppendynamik in der Zirkuspadagogik : Eine Studie Zu Den Gruppendynamischen Veranderungen Wahrend Eines Zirkuspadagogischen Schulprojekts.et

How do you supporting learning by giving feedback. Learn about fixed and growth mindset:

Dweck, Carol (2012) [The Power of yet](#) and

[Better than yesterday. Growth Mindset by Carol Dweck \(animated book summary\) - Growth Mindset and Fixed Mindset](#) (2016)

Circus learning engages diverse people and promotes social-emotional, physical and cognitive well-being. Here you can learn the various effects of social circus:





They are smiling from ear to ear. Well being effects of social circus: https://www.kulttuuriakaikille.fi/doc/research_and_reports/wellbeing-effects-from-social-circus.pdf

Jennifer P. Agans, Jacqueline L. Davis, Spyridoula Vazou, Tal Jarus (2019) : [Self-Determination Through Circus Arts: Exploring Youth Development in a Novel Activity Context](#), JYD, Journal of Youth Development Vol. 14 Issue 3 DOI 10.5195/jyd.2019.662 | ISSN 2325-4017 (online)

Here you'll find more literature about the topic: <https://www.circusmoves.com/circademics>

According to Paulo Freire, sociocultural animation - or Animación sociocultural as he utters it in Spanish- is an emancipatory movement and method to support social consciousness towards agency and responsibility of one's own life (and in the society).

Literature about it:

[Montez, Mario \(2018\):Sociocultural Animation and Community Development -contributions for social work:.Conference: Hradec Days of Social Work 2018 At: Hradec Králové, Czech Republic. Researchgate.](#)

[Morris, Chritine Ballengee \(1998\) Paulo Freire: Community based arts education. Journal of Social Theory in Arts Education, Vol.18.](#)

Here's about special pedagogical features and learning environment of the youth and social circus.

[Bessone, Ilaria \(2017\): Social Circus as an Organised Cultural Encounter, Embodied Knowledge, Trust and Creativity at Play. Journal of Intercultural Studies 38:6](#)





CIRCUS TECHNIQUES AND HUMAN BODY

The focus of this module is understanding the basics of how the human body works in relation to circus practice. The course includes the practice of different circus techniques as well as orientation to the functioning of the human body in action to aid in injury prevention and recovery.

This module will be divided into four (4) parts:

PART 1 PHYSIOLOGY

The module offers basic knowledge about human anatomy and physiology. The holistic approach to learning enables students with different starting points to develop their body awareness (and consciousness) in practicing and teaching circus.

PART 2 WARM-UP METHODS OF PREPARATION

This section will introduce physical and emotional 'warm-up' techniques to be included in circus or daily practice. The course will also demonstrate trust & team building exercises

PART 3 CIRCUS TECHNIQUES TUTORIALS

1. Juggling
2. Partner Acrobatics
3. Tightrope
4. Diabolo
5. Poi
6. Chinese Plate
7. Balloon Modelling

PART 4 PERFORMANCE

This course will contribute to the understanding of the performing nature of circus arts and how to present circus techniques in front of a smaller audience in youth work.

PART 1 PHYSIOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

Circus is an activity at the crossroad of artistic expression and physical activity. In circus pedagogy, there is a strong component of movement and participants use their bodies in many ways. Practising circus alter the body's structures in various way depending on the disciplines: juggling for example is not particularly demanding physically but requires training coordination. On the other hand, some aerial disciplines require building a certain physical strength. There is much too much to say about the physiology of circus for the scope of our manual but we will anyway take a brief look at some basics.

Let's start by a short definition:

Sports physiology investigates the effect of exercise on the function and structure of the body. This provides coaches, trainers, health educators, athletic trainers and exercise physiologists with valuable information that they can use to plan their teaching, enhance performance and avoid injury.

Click on the image below to see some of the benefit of exercise on the younger ones:



THE BASIC PRINCIPLES IN EXERCISE PHYSIOLOGY

In sport as in circus, there are common principles that need to be considered when teaching activities that involve physical training:

OVERLOAD

A system must be exercised at a level beyond which it is presently accustomed for a training effect to occur. The system being exercised will gradually adapt to the overload or training stimulus being applied, and this will go on happening as long as the training stimulus continues to be increased until the tissue can no longer adapt. The training stimulus applied consists of different variables such as intensity, duration, and frequency of exercise. It is important to give the system being exercised enough time to recover and only apply a training stimulus again when the system is no longer fatigued.

SPECIFICITY

Any exercise will train a system for the particular task being carried out as the training stimulus. Examples below:

- A training programme including muscle strengthening will train the muscle in the range that it is working and the way that the muscle is being used, i.e. isometrically, concentrically, or eccentrically. It is important that any exercise to strengthen muscle targets the muscle range and type of muscle work specific to the task required.
- Riding a bicycle requires concentric knee extension from mid-to inner range, as the pedal is pushed down to propel the bicycle along. cyclist wishing to increase the strength of his quadriceps will need to train concentrically in mid-to inner range. Depending on the presenting problem, the required task should become part of the training programme at an appropriate stage.

REVERSIBILITY

The beneficial effects of training begin to be lost as soon as training stops. This happens in a similar time frame as it takes to train the system.

INDIVIDUALITY

Variation in response to a training programme will occur in a population as people respond differently to the same training programme. This response can be explained by: the initial fitness level of the individual; their health status; and their genetic makeup. Training programmes should be designed to take this into account.

- Some individuals will have a predisposition to endurance training and some to strength training.
- Some will respond well to a training programme and others much more slowly.
- Individuals with a lower fitness level before starting an exercise programme show improvement in fitness more quickly than those who are relatively fit before training begins.
- Some individuals with health conditions may not be able to work at the same kind of intensity as a healthy individual and so will take longer to achieve a training goal.

MOTOR LEARNING

Motor learning is concerned with the acquisition of motor skills and how the individual interacts with the task to be learned and the environment. This uses perception or sensing, cognition, and motor processes. Learning a skill is a relatively permanent change in an individual and there are several stages that the person will go through before the skill is retained.

1. Initially, a person may be unable to perform a task. With practice, they will achieve the task but it will not be carried out efficiently.
2. With further practice and feedback, the person will be able to carry out the task to a reasonable standard but they may forget how to do it if they do not do the task regularly.
3. In the final stage, the person will carry out the task efficiently, in a skilled manner and will not forget how to do the task.

When teaching a participant an exercise:

- Explain or demonstrate how to carry out the exercise, doing this as a whole if the exercise is simple or breaking a complex exercise into parts.
- When the person is able to carry out the component parts, the exercise should be practiced as a whole.
- Both the physiotherapist and the person should evaluate how well the exercise was performed and if the exercise task was completed.
- The physiotherapist should allow the patient a short time to evaluate their own performance, before providing feedback prior to subsequent practice.
- Practicing a skill (or exercise) in a varied manner, for example at different speeds or in different environments, will help with learning.

SAFETY

Whenever an individual exercise, there is a risk that they may injure themselves. Safety factors are considered here in relation to the physiotherapist, the environment and the patient or person carrying the exercise.

THE FITT FACTORS

The principles of exercise apply to everyone at all levels of physical training, from the Olympic champion to the weekend golfer. You can easily remember the basic principles of exercise if you use the so-called FITT factors:

1. Frequency
2. Intensity
3. Time
4. Type of activity

Click on the image below to see a sum up of the FITT Principle:



FREQUENCY HOW OFTEN

Training one to two times a week produces significant training effects. However, training three to five times a week at a lower-intensity exercise may be more manageable for some people. Little additional benefit is seen with more than five training sessions a week, and the risk of injury is increased.

INTENSITY HOW HARD

Intensity can vary between light, moderate and vigorous intensity activities. For example, walking slowly is a low intensity activity, walking briskly or shooting around a basketball is a moderate intensity activity and running (>5mph) is a vigorous intensity activity. A good rule of thumb is that a person doing moderate-intensity aerobic activity can talk, but not sing. A person doing vigorous-intensity activity cannot say more than a few words without pausing for a breath.

Intensity can be monitored by heart rate in most participants.
Click on the image below to see a short video about heart rate calculation.



TIME DURATION OR HOW LONG

A total of 20-60 minutes of continuous or intermittent aerobic activity a day should be performed. The activity can be divided into a minimum of 10 minute bouts throughout the day. The duration of training is dependent on intensity. Individuals starting at the lower end of the training band need to sustain exercise longer (30-60 minutes) to achieve training effects.

TYPE

Refers to the sort of activity to complete e.g. Aerobic activities like walking, jogging, biking, swimming or dancing or strengthening activities such as exercises using exercise bands, weight machines or hand-held weights.

IN CONCLUSION

When preparing a physical activity routine, it is important to set realistic goals. Too often, individuals expect to lose unrealistic amounts of weight, run faster and longer and start seeing drastic body composition changes instantly. Instead, use the acronym S.M.A.R.T.

- Specific is the what, where and how of the goal.
- Measurable is how you will evaluate whether or not you met the goal.
- Achievable is setting a goal that you can accomplish.
- Realistic is setting a goal that is challenging, but attainable.
- Timely relates to when you want to achieve your goal by, and what time frame you have to reach your goal.

Putting the FITT principle together, one can effectively plan an exercise routine and set a S.M.A.R.T. goal.

PART 2 WARM-UP METHODS OF PREPARATION

INTRODUCTION

In this section, we will look at warming up for a circus pedagogy training.

The following is not necessarily a warm-up in the sense of raising the body temperature, mobilizing the joints, or soliciting cardio-pulmonary functions, but rather an entry into the world of the circus which constitutes a determining moment in the session. It is a precious moment when participants lower their guards and establish a relationship with others and circus objects. It is an important opportunity to explore creativity and imagination, while mobilizing the body and taking ownership of the space. The goal is also to establish a relaxed atmosphere where participants can laugh and don't need to take themselves so seriously. The warm up use elements drawn from dance, theater, mime, but also gymnastics, games... The circus pedagogy warm up benefits from being detached as much as possible from the traditional warm-up.

CREATING A WARM UP PLAN

Depending on the trainer's sensitivity, each lesson (or cycle) can be built from various entry points:

- Entering through objects and research into their manipulation (circus objects but also newspapers, plastic bags, sticks...).
- Enter through inducers: action verbs; words given by each person or picked from the dictionary; association of words illustrating a gesture, a place, a figure, a feeling...; texts (newspaper articles on various events, advertisements, sayings, poetry); illustrations (paintings, advertisements, photos), sounds (rhythmic structures, onomatopoeia, etc.); letters and numbers (Pi, 13, the 4 cardinal points, the 5 fingers of the hand or the 5 senses); sports or everyday gestures...
- Entering through relationships with others: games in a circle, in line, games with crazy rules...
- Entering through games: energizers, team building games...
- Enter by theme: the door, a meeting, a wall... (be careful to avoid cliché-inducing themes)
- Enter through accessories and material: benches, ropes, sheets, chairs, plinth, ladder, trash can, step ladder, etc.



- Enter through music: without censoring yourself for fear of the participants' remarks, which will happen no matter what: Accordion, classical, rap, variety, madison etc. Beware of the great circus parade: "Entrance of the gladiators", caricatured and counterproductive!
- Enter through characters, expression games: situations from everyday life: people in the street, at the train station, world cultures, professional situations, conflicts, transportation, leisure, ages of life, seasons, etc.
- Enter through philosophical, cultural and historical questions: from myths, tales but also mangas, science fiction, films (ex: Matrix, Avatar, Inception).

As soon as they arrive in the gym, the participants spontaneously rush to the objects and other balancing devices and it sometimes takes all the authority of the trainer to impose the planned chronology to his lesson when she/he/they has planned to set up the workshops or the material before the warm-up.

An introduction based on games and exchanges that focuses exclusively on one point and uses one material avoids this pitfall.

It is also possible to surprise the students, to show that a circus training does not obey any rules and to enter directly into the manipulation of objects, which delights the students and sometimes makes the trainers feel guilty for lack of warm up. But this has the advantage of entering the activity without wasting time and rely on the students' motivations to better rebound towards other objectives during the session.

The teacher's involvement in the lesson from the beginning is essential. She/he/they gets involved with the students, laughs at their failures and plays with them. Even if her/his/their technical skills are modest, She/he/they can invest her/him/them self more particularly in this time of the lesson, in the framework of the exercises of expression and also give an opportunity to the participants to see another image of her/him/them self.

Physical and emotional 'warm-up' techniques should be included in your daily circus practice. These preliminary exercises may include stretching, meditation, and team-building practices. Like with any sport or exercise, a warm-up gets the blood moving, prepares the mind and body for physical activity, and helps to prevent injury.

Warm-up techniques are crucial for new beginners and advanced professionals, alike. Each circus technique may require a different warm-up process. For example, warming up for acrobatics may

differ somewhat from the preparatory techniques for juggling. You may wonder, how does one prepare for acrobatic, or group-based, circus training, balance, and other circus practices that require muscular strength, which could lead to wear and tear on the muscles over time.

Click on this picture to see a 15-minute Aerial Circus Warmup video provided by artist and performer, Sara Chwastiak :



For both juggling and aerial practice, the hands require some much-needed attention. Repeated repetition of movement can cause inflammation of the joints, soreness, and even chronic pain, commonly known as arthritis. It is important to move, stretch and massage your smaller muscles just as much as your larger ones.

Click on this picture to see Laura Witwer, professional aerialist and instructor for SassyPants Aerial Arts and ImaginAerial, provides some tips for warming up your hands and wrists :



Exercises for improving balance and coordination can be useful as warm-up preparation for circus techniques, such as slackline, tightrope, unicycle, and Rola Bola board. Healthline provides 13 exercises for balance on their website that are customized for senior citizens, kids, athletes, and those with Parkinson’s disease. These examples are accessible here: [Healthline - 13 exercises for balance](#)

A blogpost featured on Ready 2 Run (author unknown) lists circus-inspired balance exercises specific to circus training. These exercises (featured here: [Ready to Run training - 3 circus inspired core workouts](#)) are divided into levels of progression. Weights or bands, for example, are added to make each level more challenging. These techniques assist with tightrope training, acrobatics, core strength, and coordination. Some equipment, such as an elastic band and balancing ball, may be required for these recommended exercises.

Trust & team building exercises are very effective training practices in support of circus techniques that involve two or more participants. One particular team-building exercise is a “Ropes Course” which is an “outdoor personal development and team building activity... [usually consisting of] high and/or low elements. Low elements take place on the ground or above the

ground. High elements are usually constructed in trees or made of utility poles and require a belay for safety” ([Wikipedia](#)). Here are some of the examples of Low Challenge Elements, according to [Common Ground Adventures](#):

1. All Aboard – fitting your entire group on a miniature platform.
2. The Islands – getting your entire group from one platform to another with the use of planks for bridges and leaving no one behind.
3. The Whale Watch – balancing your group on a large teeter-totter for at least 30 seconds.
4. The Spider Web – passing members of your group through a giant “spider web” made of ropes.
5. Trolleys – moving your group in synchronization with the use of ropes and planks.



6. Mohawk Walk – “Traverse a series of low steel cables without touching the ground. On some sections of cable, your group will have hanging ropes or long tethered ropes to use for support. On other sections, the group will not be able to use anything but each other for balance.” These cables are tied to posts or wrapped tautly around trees.

7. Wild Woozy – Similar to the previous Mohawk Walk challenge, low steel cables are used but are tied in a way that creates a V shape. Two people stand on each cable and make their way across with only each other for support. As the cables get farther apart, the more difficult it is for the pair to stay on their respective cables. It is mentioned that, “Successful teams learn that you can achieve far more when you lean on your partner (giving) rather than pulling on them (taking).”

Here are a few questions that can help you create an effective warm up session:

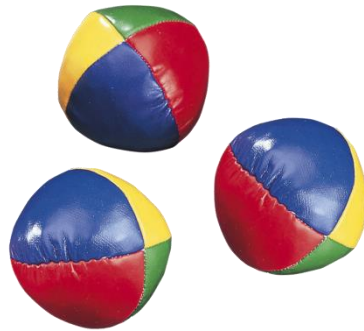
1. Does the warm-up effectively prepare the body for the physical demands of circus training?
2. Is the pace of the warm-up appropriate for the participants?
3. Are the instructions clear and easy to follow?

4. Does the warm-up include a variety of exercises to engage different muscle groups and movements?
5. Does the warm-up address specific areas of concern or injury prevention for the participants?
6. Does the instructor provide modifications or progressions for different skill levels or physical abilities?
7. Is there enough time for participants to complete the warm-up without feeling rushed?
8. Does the warm-up incorporate elements of fun and play to engage participants?
9. Does the warm-up create a positive and inclusive atmosphere for all participants?
10. Does the warm-up set the tone for a productive and enjoyable training session?



PART 3 CIRCUS TECHNIQUES

JUGGLING WITH BALLS



In this section, we will look at a way to teach and learn how to juggle the basic cascade pattern with three balls. Here under are a few simple exercises that will give the participant enough confidence and skills to juggle with three balls.

Trying to juggle alone with three balls can be difficult and discouraging but following a step by step method of teaching provide participants with quick reward for each exercise and keeps them involved and motivated. It is a very special feeling for people to realize that they can indeed, juggle and the excitement and pride that they get out of it is a very big boost of self-confidence.

1. GROUP JUGGLING

This exercise is a very good and fun introduction to juggling. Everybody is involved including the trainer and it is also good to remember the names of the participants. You can do this exercise with large groups. Juggling is about throwing and catching so during this exercise you can check quickly the abilities of the participants.

What do you need?

- Around 10 balls depending on the number of participants

First round of group juggling

- Arrange participants in a circle, not too close, not too far from each other
- The trainer is included in the circle
- The first participant calls the name of someone and throws a ball to her/him/them.
- The next person calls someone else and throws her/him/them the ball and so on.



- Everybody gets the ball once and at the end of the circle the ball come back to the first participant.

Second round of group juggling

- Try again to do the same circle. Follow the same order as before and keep calling the name of the next person.
- Keep going like this but try to do it as quickly as possible.

Third round of group juggling: add more balls

- Again, let's start in the same order
- When the first ball comes to the third participant, add another ball.
- If it works, slowly add more balls
- The game can finish when a certain number of balls are rotating nicely or you can keep adding more and more balls until the participants can no longer handle it.

The beginning of this exercise is a bit slow and requires quite a bit of concentration from the group but as soon as the energy starts to rise, it is very fun and gives a taste of what it feels to be juggling to the participants.

During the game, observe the participants and notice how do they throw the ball (upwards with their hand's palms facing up or straight in front of them with their hand's palm facing forward.) Bring the attention of the participants on the correct way of throwing a ball for our purpose: upwards with their hand's palms facing up.

2. JUGGLING IN PAIR PASSING THREE BALLS FACE TO FACE

For this exercise, the trainer form groups of 2 people and give to each pair 3 balls.

The goal is to pass three balls between the 2 participants in a special pattern: One participant will pass his balls in a straight line to the opposite hand of the other participant, and the other participant will pass his balls across to the other:

Here is how to do it:

- The participants stand facing each other, one of them has one ball in each hand, the other, only one ball in one of his hand.
- They agree which one will pass straight and which one will pass across
- The participant that has two balls starts first: He passes the first ball to the other person aiming for the only hand that is empty. The second person does the same and so on.



- At first the passes are very slow. Participants should concentrate on throwing the balls at eye level and focus on accuracy rather than speed. Once the participants integrate the movement, they can try to accelerate the rhythm, increase the distance between them...

The main mistake beginners do during this exercise is that they pass the ball to themselves. They tend to exchange the ball from one of their hand to the other but they must not! They must pass only to the other participant's free hand.

For the younger participants, you can try the same exercise but instead of throwing the ball in the air, you can seat down and roll the balls on the floor.

3. JUGGLING IN PAIR PASSING THREE BALL FACE TO FACE WITH ONE HAND

The goal of the second passing exercise is to understand the basic principle of juggling with three balls: there is always one ball in the air while the other two are in the hand of the juggler.

Here is how to do it:

- The 2 participants face each other. One has 1 ball in her/his/their dominant hand, the other has 2. They will work only with one hand. They can bring the hand that is not working behind their back to avoid using it.
- Participant 1 who has two balls in her/his/their start by throwing one ball to participant 2. When it reaches the middle of the trajectory, participant 2 throws his ball and catches the first incoming ball.
- The movement continue so that at any given time there is always one ball in the air, one in the hand of participant 1 and the other in the hand of participant 2. The participants should not pass the balls at the same time but rather alternate the throw. It helps to count out loud: 1-2-1-2-1-2...

4. JUGGLING IN PAIR PASSING FIVE BALLS FACE TO FACE

The pattern of the fourth exercise is the same as exercise 2, passing 3 balls face to face, except that it is twice as fast. The speed of juggling is very close to juggling 3 balls alone.

Here is how to do it:

- The position of the participants is the same as exercise 2 but now participant 1 has two balls in the dominant hand and one in the other hand and participant 2 has one ball in each hand.
- Participants agree which one will pass straight and which one will pass across
- The movement start with the hand that has 2 balls. Just as the previous exercise number 3, Participant 1 who has two balls in her/his/their start by throwing one ball to participant 2. When



it reaches the middle of the trajectory, participant 2 throws his ball and catches the first incoming ball and so on.

- At first participants will only manage 2 or 3 throw but soon, once they understand the logic and find a common rhythm, they will manage more throws. The accuracy of the throw and the catch is now more important than before but the feeling for the participant when they succeed to keep up the rhythm is very satisfying and motivating.

5. JUGGLING IN PAIR PASSING THREE BALLS FACE TO FACE

The fifth passing exercise in pairs mimics the basic juggling pattern with three balls, the cascade. The objective is to understand the pattern using a partner to slow down the movement.

Here is how to do it:

- The participants stand facing each other very close. The helping participant stand on a step or a bench so as to be higher than the other one and the working participant stand on the floor.
- This time, the working participant has all three balls: two in the dominant hand and one in the other. The pattern is the same as exercise 2 but this time it is done vertically.
- The movement start from the working participant's hand with 2 balls and the passes are always across.
- The working participants throw the first ball vertically and across to the hand of the helping participant who catches it.
- The working participants throw the second ball from her/his/their other hand vertically and across to the other hand of the helping participant who also catches it.
- The helping participant then lower the first ball in the free hand that is directly under her/his/theirs.
- The participants slowly continue the pattern until they get comfortable and can increase the speed.
- Thee participants then exchange roles.

6. SOLO JUGGLING

This is the ultimate goal of this workshop. At this point, each of the participants gets 3 balls and is going to practice alone.

- We start with one ball. At first, we just pass it from one hand to the other making sure it flies to about eye level before it fall back in the hand. It is possible to play a bit and try to pass the ball



under the leg or behind the back before catching it. Be creative! You can invent as many throws as you like.

- Then each participant gets two balls. Spontaneously the participant will want to through one ball up and simply pass the other to their free hand. They should not do that! Both balls have to be thrown up in the air, even if you don't catch them at first. First, throw the first ball, and when it comes to the highest position throw the other. Try this for a while until you get it right.
- Only then participants can get their third ball in the hand. On one side they have 2, on the other only one. They must start with the hand that has two: first one fly, come to its highest point, then second one fly and so on...

During this exercise you will notice that some participants will get it faster than others. As they practice individually you will have to pay attention and adapt the pace to each participant. To help participants visualise the pattern, the trainer can mention the square method: tell the participant to imagine a square that is in front of them and get them to throw the balls aiming at the corners of this imaginary square.



BASICS OF ACROBALANCE

HOW TO CREATE AN ACROBALANCE WORKSHOP

There are several ways to organize an acrobalance workshop depending on the situation. But some rules are common to every workshop. These are the **safety rules**:

1. Acrobalance is a physical activity that can be strenuous. **Always make warm-up** exercise before starting.
2. The trainer **should adapt the acrobatic figures to the age and abilities** of the participants.
3. The trainer should make sure that there is a **spotter** (safety person) at all time next to the one trying, ready to hold and catch in case of a fall!! This is very important!! It doesn't need to be the trainer, but the rules are strict: No fooling around when being the spotter, stay focused. If not, change the person or stop the activity.
4. Organize a **clear communication** amongst the participants: If the bottom of the pyramid screams '**down!**', everybody must go down IMMEDIATELY.
5. If any of the participants feel that they are going to fall, they must tell the others by screaming loudly '**I'm falling**'. This way the upper persons can prepare for the fall.
6. When you step on a person, **verify whether it hurts** and adjust the position of your legs, arms, knees ... so it will be painless (participant should not confuse pain with effort though).
7. **Never stand on someone's spine**. You should place your foot on the pelvis, above the legs, not higher up the body.
8. This will sound like evident but at the end of a figure, people should **climb down in the reverse order in which they climbed up**. First the top person climbs down then the middle ones and finally the bottom one.
9. The best way to organize an acrobalance workshop is based on a **step by step method**. For each figure, there is a progression of exercises that can be taught, each one preparing for the next skill level.



ACROBALANCE 1

WARMING UP EXERCISES

WARM UP THE WHOLE BODY

Make a series of warm up exercises

THE RUN OF TRUST

- Participants form two rows that are facing each other. They stretch their arm in front of them so as to block the tunnel they form. One person is standing a few meters before the start of the tunnel.
- At the signal, this person starts to run as fast as possible through the tunnel.
- The people forming the tunnel have to raise their hands just before the passage of the running person.

PURPOSE: Testing self and group confidence.



ACROBALANCE EXERCISES

THE TUNNEL

- Four people kneels as shown in the figure.
- Four other people stand on the base's legs a little above the knee and hold hands.
- The base holds the flyer above the knee.

PURPOSE: Getting to know the feeling of what it's like if you stand on someone.



BASIC POSE THE CAT

- Position your knees right under your hips and your wrists right under your shoulders.
- Keep your back straight.

Correct position



Incorrect position



THE SURFER

- The base assumes the position of the cat.
- The flyer stands on the base with one foot on the pelvis and one foot between the shoulder blades.
- The spotter is there at all times and holds the flyer hips.
- **To come down, step down, don't jump!**



PURPOSE: Get to know one of the fundamental elements for setting up pyramids.

WARNING: Each person has a different constitution, it is necessary to be cautious and always check with the base where we stand.

If it hurts, come down immediately!

VARIATIONS



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PYRAMID WITH THREE PERSON

- One participant assumes the cat position.
- The second step over and position his/her hands on the base's shoulders.
- The third person climbs up on the pelvis of the base and holds the shoulders of the middle one.
- Going down from the pyramid takes place in the reverse order of the assembly.

PURPOSE: The use of cat position in an easy pyramid.



THE CHAIR

- The base lay down and put his/her hands flat next to his/her ears.
- The flyer lightly steps in the hand of the base and seat on the base feet.
- The base simultaneously pushes his/her hand and leg so that they are stretched vertically.
- Come down the opposite way you came up. **do not forget to let go of base's feet so he/she can step down.**

PURPOSE: Feel the balance and be relaxed in the position.



THE FLAG WITH THREE PEOPLE

- One person assumes the position of the cat.
- The second lean on the base.
- The flyer steps straight up on the middle person's knees.
- Both lean back and try to find the balance point between the two.
- If they are stable, the base can move away so that the pair stands on their own.

PURPOSE: To learn the principle of counterbalance.



THE FLAG

- With practice, you can do the flag without the base person in the cat position and deep balance holding only one hand.



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THE TOWER

- One person assumes the position of the cat.
- The second person rest his/her hand on the base's shoulder and keep a flat back.
- The third person does the same on the pelvis of the first.
- The fourth also climbs on the pelvis of the second.
- Come down the opposite way you came up.

PURPOSE: Getting used to balance a bit higher.



THE ROOF

- Two persons assume the cat position facing each other.
- Two others are placed bottom to bottom in the middle.
- Two other climb on the pelvis of the cat's persons.
- The last one stands on the pelvis of the middle persons.
- To come down, the flyer carefully climbs down in front or back then the others come down the opposite way they came up.



PURPOSE: Strengthen the feeling of togetherness, cooperation, responsibility from the entire group.

THE DOUBLE ROOF

- Follow the building order just as the roof but had two persons in the middle.
- The top person climbs up from the shoulder of an assistant.
- This one is quite high so there must be at least 3 spotters!!!

PURPOSE: Strengthen the feeling of togetherness, cooperation, responsibility from the entire group.



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VARIATION OF THE CLASSIC PYRAMID

- Four persons are placed in the cat position.
- Three persons stand in between.
- Two other climb on top.
- Come down the opposite way you came up.

PURPOSE: Very adjustable pyramid which can include all the participants.



CLOSING EXERCISE

- Everybody lay down on their stomach next to each other very tightly and put their hands over their head.
- The person at the start of the group begins to roll over all the others taking care not to hurt them with his/her elbows.

PURPOSE: Relax, calm through physical touching, fun.



ACROBALANCE 2

WARMING UP EXERCISES

WARM UP THE WHOLE BODY

Make a series of classic warm up exercises

I AM FALLING!

Participants walk around the room and at any time can decide to scream "I'm falling!". At the same time, this person begins to fall backwards. The goal for the other participants is to immediately rush to him and catch him/her.

At the beginning, only one person should be falling at one time but later on it can be more people at once.

Upgrade: The same game can be played but without warning others by screaming 'I'm falling'. Someone just start to fall and the other should jump to help him/her. Somebody can also tell the others: such and such is falling!

PURPOSE: Observing, directing attention to the other members of the group, readiness to react, strengthen confidence.

WARNING: This exercise can be dangerous and the leader has to give very clear guidance.



ACROBALANCE EXERCISES

THE FLOWER

- Two person seat on the floor as shown.
- Two other sit down and hold their legs together.
- The fifth one steps up on the legs. The middle person holds the flyer a little above the knee.
- Come down the opposite way you came up.



PURPOSE: To realize a simple, visually attractive pyramid.

THE FAN WITH THREE PEOPLE

- The three persons stand next to each other and hold each other's elbows (first figure).
- They slowly lean sideways their arms are stretched (second picture).



PURPOSE: The importance of coordination, sense of balance.



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THE FAN WITH 5 PEOPLE

- Two persons kneel together.
- Another one climbs on their pelvis.
- All the other stand close and hold hands.
- They slowly lean sideways their arms are stretched so they can reach the persons extremely left and extremely right.



PURPOSE: The importance of coordination, sense of balance, upgrade from the fan with three people.

PREPARATION EXERCISE FOR THE PLANE

Lifting boards:

- One partner lies on the floor face up and keep his body as hard as a board, back muscles tight.
- The others grab him/her by the ankles and lifts him/her into the air.
- You can do the same exercise lying on the side.

PURPOSE: Body tension (the tension of all body muscles is very important in acrobatics). These exercises give a sense of what it means to have means to have the whole body tensed.

Exercise for stability on the ground:

- Lying on the floor with your back touching the floor.
- Tighten the pectoral muscles and the muscles under your arm so that you feel the bones on the back that assist in stability.
- Raise your hands in the air to form the letter O
- Ask your partner to lean on your hands to test the stability.

PURPOSE: Obtaining stability on the ground.



THE PLANE

- One person is lying on the ground.
- The second stand close and they hold hands (left image).
- The flyer leans down while the base pushes his/her leg straight (right).
- The flyer must keep his/her body tension all the way through.

PURPOSE: Obtaining stability on the ground and maintaining physical tension.



THE AIRPORT

- This is a combination of three or four pairs doing the plane.
- The pairs set up facing head against each other in the form of a cross (if there are four), or in the form of "peace" sign (if there are three).



PURPOSE: Encourage the group to creativity



THE GALION PYRAMID

- The lower three persons stand in a circle, in a slightly squatting position, with the torso bent slightly forward and holding each other by the shoulders.
- The flyers put their right foot on the right thigh of the base standing in front of them, close to the hip.
- Together, the flyers step up stabilizing by holding their base shoulders (second image).
- The flyers straighten and take their neighbour's hand and lean slowly back (third image).

PURPOSE: Feel the balance and be coordinated.



THE WALL

- The bases stand next to each other and slightly bend their knees.
- The flyers put their right foot on the thigh of the base standing on their right side, close to the hip.
- The flyers stand up simultaneously while the base holds them just above the knee.



PURPOSE: To promote coordination and collective creation.



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UPGRADE



THE WATERFALL

- Two persons assume the cat position facing each other.
- Two other stand facing each other, put their hand on the shoulders of the 'cat people' and maintain a straight back.
- Other two do the same but climbing on the 'cat person' and so on...
- The top persons are brought into position by first sitting or standing on the shoulders of someone.

NOTE: There is a need for at least two spotters for this pyramid.
PURPOSE: To develop a sense of responsibility to the whole group.



THE MIXED PYRAMID

- Two persons on their back.
- Two other sit down on their knees.
- Two persons climb up in a sailor pose.
- Two other make a hand stand.
- The last one lie down on the base's hands.



PURPOSE: Encourage cooperation and coordination between the participants.

IMPORTANT Do not force participant to do hand stand.

CLOSING EXERCISE

THE GORDIAN KNOT

- Everybody stands in a circle. Everybody close their eyes and stretch their arm in front of them. The participants have to each grab someone's hand, right and left so that every hand is linked to someone else's. They should not cross their arms and grab their neighbours' hand.
- With open eyes the group has to try to undo the 'knot' without letting go of the hands.

PURPOSE: Group dynamic, cooperation, physical contact.



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BALANCE AND EQUILIBRISM

BASIC EXERCISES

STICK ON THE HEAD

The participant move around the space holding a stick balanced on their head.

What do you need?

- Enough space to move around freely without bumping in each other
- Enough sticks for every participant

Instructions :

- Every participant get a stick and try first to balance it horizontally on his finger so as to find the centre of gravity
- Then the participants put the stick on their head and try to find the balance point. They must concentrate on what they feel on their skull because they do not see the object.
- When they are comfortable, the participants try to move around the space and can try harder and harder moves, like sitting down, turning around stepping up and down a chair...

BALANCING ON ONE FOOT

- The participants stand straight and hold their hand in front of them. They have to imagine that they are holding a ball, a pole or any object, and that this object is stabilizing them. They can close the eyes to visualize what they are holding. They breathe deeply to calm down
- Eyes open, they try to hold their balance on one foot, still imagining their object as an aid to achieving equilibrium. Try on both feet.
- Once they feel comfortable they should try, to do this again but with eyes closed. It is much harder than it seems!



WALKING ON A ROPE SLACK LINE

Walking on a sack line is a safe and fun activity if supervised properly and is relatively easy to organize. There should be two fixed point that are very strong to be able to attach the line (in a gym the metal pole holding the volleyball net are very good).



PREPARATORY EXERCISE

This exercise helps beginners to gain confidence for walking on a rope.

- Draw a line on the ground
- Stand on your toes and walk the line. Make small steps and keep your balance with both hands and foot.

BASICS OF WALKING ON A ROPE

Safety rules

- It is easier and better to start with a short line (3 to 4 m). Always set up the line **as low as possible** (a little above the knee is good). **Don't be tempted to put it higher!!!** If you do, the risk will be significantly increased if you have to jump and catch yourself from a high point.
- When teaching beginners, the trainer should make sure that **there is a 'safety' person at all time** next to the one trying, **ready to hold and catch in case of a fall!!!** This is very important!! It doesn't need to be the trainer, but the rules are strict: **No fooling around** when being the 'safety' person, stay focused. If not, change the person or stop the activity.

First steps

- Climb on the line holding hands with your safety person and try to get a feel for it. You will be tempted to look at your feet to see where you step but instead you should look straight and focus on a spot in the distance that you will always look.



- Take a few small steps while your assistant follows you. You will notice that when you get to the middle it starts to shake. This is the reason why **you should go slowly and not try to run** across. If you do, this middle section will shake a lot and you will miss a step. Running across is for experienced people...
- Try several times and when you feel more confident, you can try to slowly let go of the hand of your assistant.
- Don't forget to relax!!! It is a concentration exercise so you should breathe deeply and keep cool. If you are too tense, the rope will start shaking and it will be impossible to keep your balance.
- Keep your hands on the side and slightly bend the knees.

Walking alone

Walking on a line is actually a series of standing position more than a succession of steps. Walking is easy, but standing is hard. So before you walk on your own you have to learn the correct way of standing balanced on the rope:

- Remember the balancing on one foot exercise? This is it. You have to be able to do just that on the line. So get on the line (with your safety man next to you) and try to stay balanced on one foot. You will notice that one is easier than the other. Keep your knees slightly bent, keep your hands on the side and move your arm sideways over your head when comes the need to catch the balance. Use your free leg too, it is very important.
- Try to stay for 10 second like this then change foot.
- If you manage that, you will be able to walk the line alone: first step on one foot as you have practised before, then slowly transfer your weight on the other foot and assume the standing position. Keep exchanging foot until you get really comfortable and you can walk the whole line.

Walking alone across a slack line is not so easy and demand a lot of practice, so it can be a bit discouraging. But it is doable, and when you start to get it is a very nice activity. For the beginners, it doesn't matter if they can manage alone, the pleasure to go across even assisted is enough. Even during a performance.



DIABOLO



Diabolo is not such an easy prop to handle at first because there are so many things to think and do at the same time. But once you understand the basic principle it is so much fun! It is very popular, especially with boys and simple tricks can be very impressive.

PASS THE DIABOLO

- All the participants have a pair of sticks and form a line. Only the trainer has a diabolo. The trainer explains that everybody will be passing the one rotating diabolo between each other and of course that the diabolo should not stop or drop.
- The trainer then spins the diabolo passes it on to his neighbour. It is then passed on until it reaches back to the end of the line.
- The exercise finishes after a whole round is successfully completed without the diabolo dropping or stopping.
- For a bit more fun, the trainer can add more diabolos to the game.

BASIC EXERCISE WITH A DIABOLO

A diabolo set is composed of a pair of sticks connected with a string and a yo-yo looking object. The goal is to spin the diabolo using the stick and the string. Once the diabolo spins fast enough, it becomes stable and the player can make a lot of tricks.

- To start if you are right-handed, follow the instructions. For left-handed do the opposite. First hold one stick in each hand, place the diabolo on the string and on the ground in front of your right leg. Gently roll it to your left to start the rotation but if you pull too fast, the diabolo will not roll but only slide and it will not work.



- Once the diabolo rolls past your left leg, lift up the stick to pick up the diabolo from the ground. Now the diabolo is spinning slowly in front of your tibia. It is important to always maintain such a position when you play. If the diabolo moves from this position you have to rotate your body to follow its movement. In any case, the axis of the diabolo must be perpendicular to your knees.
- At this point you have to know that there is an active stick and a passive stick. Basically, the active stick is used to spin the diabolo and the passive one doesn't move. So to keep the momentum of the diabolo, you have to repeatedly move the active stick (right one for right-handed) up and down while you just hold the passive one steady. The active stick movement should look as if you would be gently drumming.
- The next step is to keep the diabolo spinning straight on its horizontal axis. Sometimes one side of the diabolo tilts up or down. When this happens, the diabolo lose its balance and falls down from the string. To keep the diabolo straight, push the active stick in front of you or pull it towards you.

THROWING AND CATCHING A DIABOLO

- The first trick you can learn is to throw and catch the diabolo: when it is spinning fast enough, stop moving the active stick and pull the sticks quickly apart until the string is fully stretched. This will catapult the diabolo in the air. Do not try to just lift your hands up because this will most likely end up with the diabolo tangled in the string and flying towards your head faster than you think ...
- To catch the diabolo keep the string stretched and lift the end of the active stick, aiming at the middle of the diabolo. As soon as it falls back on the string, bring your hand together to cushion the catch.

OTHER TRICKS

There are many tricks you can do with a diabolo. They all have colourful names like the lift, the Eiffel Tower...

Click on the video on the right to learn more about beginners' diabolo tricks:



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POIS



BASICS OF POIS

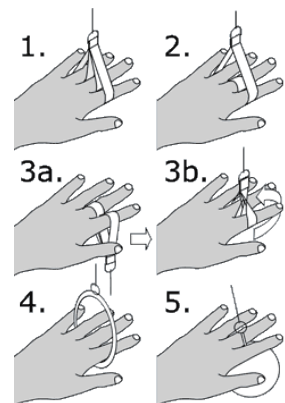
Length of poi:

Poi should be the length of your arm. Hold the handle of the poi and put your arm out. Hold on to the Poi with the other hand. The Poi should only just reach the side of your arm pit. It can be shorter, or you can have it longer, but if longer, then this can limit the number of the moves you will be able to do. If it is too long you can wrap in around your hand.

Holding the poi:

There are many ways of holding onto poi. Here are just a few of them.

Typically, you put one finger through each loop. It really does not matter which two fingers. Use the fingers that give you the most comfort and control.



TRICKS

Keep in mind that most of the moves you make from the wrist. So be relaxed put your elbows close to your waist put the lower part of the arm up (like you would be holding a plate or a book). Hold the poi and try to make the moves from your wrist not with the whole arm.

Forward swing - Hold poi in each hand facing the palms down and forward. Just spin both pois in front



Backward swing - Hold poi in each hand facing the palms up and forward. Just spin both pois backwards.



Split time swing in front - Start swinging the Poi forward. Now increase the speed slightly on one of the Poi until it swings around the top when the other Poi is swinging at the bottom. This is "split timing".



Split time swing backwards - Start swinging the Poi backward. Now increase the speed slightly on one of the Poi until it swings around the top when the other Poi is swinging at the bottom.



Turn forward-Spin pois forward once they are above your head and start to fall down put both of them on the right side of your hips let them both pass your body and follow them so that you turn around and start spinning them backwards.

Turn backward – spin pois backwards and once they start to come from down towards the top of your head put both of them on the right side of your head so they both pass your head and follow them so that you turn around and start spinning them forward.



Butterfly – Put hands apart start spinning each poi towards each other (so you spin your left poi towards right and your right poi towards left). Important is that you hold one hand above the other. When pois are up (in front of your head) you put both hand on top of each other and keep on spinning.



Giant butterfly – Make a normal butterfly once your pois start to come down stretch your arms and make a big circle in front of you and then join them in a normal butterfly.



YOU WILL FIND LOTS OF TUTORIALS ON <http://www.homeofpoi.com>



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CHINESE PLATE



Spinning a Chinese plate is a relatively easy thing to do provided you get the right technique. A few exercises can help participants to get to know this fun prop.

PASS THE PLATE

- The participants form a circle. Only the trainer has a plate and a stick. The trainer explains that everybody will be passing the one rotating plate between each other and of course that the plate should not stop or drop.
- The trainer then spins the plate with his stick and passes it on to his neighbour. The plate is then passed on until it reaches back to the trainer.
- Then, each of the participants gets his/her own stick. This time the participants will be passing only the plate to their neighbour.
- The exercise finishes after a whole round is successfully completed without the plate dropping or stopping.
- -For a bit more fun, the trainer can add more plate to the game.



BASIC EXERCISE WITH A CHINESE PLATE

Spinning a Chinese plate is not difficult but it is very important for success that the participant has a very relaxed wrist.

- Grab the stick so that the pointy end looks upwards. It is important to keep the stick strictly vertical and not to tilt it forward.
- Place the plate on the stick
- Gently begin to rotate the wrist so that the plate starts to spin and slowly rise to an almost horizontal position. It is important that the stick follows the plate (as if drawing a circle with the pointy end), and not that the plate rotates around the stick.
- Spin the plate as fast as you can and if you stop abruptly, the centre of the plate should slide on top of the stick and the plate will start rotating freely without any further action of the participant. This is it! Congratulations!



OTHER TRICKS

- Instead of spinning the plate on the stick you can start it and when it is ready, that is spinning fast on the point of the stick you can replace the stick by your index finger. Gently raise your straight finger toward the middle of the plate and quickly move the stick away.
- It is possible when the plate is spinning freely to balance the whole thing on a finger or chin
- 2 people can exchange their plate
- Throw the plate in the air and flip the stick upside down



BALLOON TWISTING

HOW TO CREATE A BALLOON TWISTING WORKSHOP

Organizing and leading a balloon twisting workshop can present a certain challenge.

A balloon twisting workshop obviously involves a public but that public can either be active or passive. In the first case the public just look and collect the sculpture once it is done. In the other, the public are participants, they learn actively to create the sculptures.

In the first case you would not be exactly leading a workshop but more doing a performance.

But for the second case you should know that in general, a balloon twisting workshop doesn't work well for big and open groups but is very nice if you have a smaller, closed group.

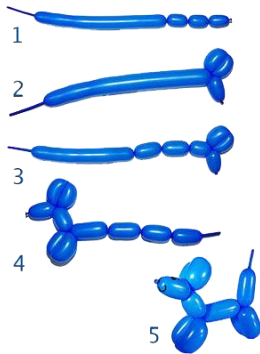
WARNIUNG: In any case don't let children take the balloons unsupervised. Have a bag of balloons with you and you give the balloons to the children.

- It is very hard to blow the balloons with your mouth. Trying to do it without knowing the right technique can occasionally lead to fainting so tell the participants **not to blow the balloon with their mouth.**
- Show them **how to use the pump correctly** (not press it on anything as it blocks the air, hold on to the balloon when pumping...)
- **Never pump the balloon until the end**, always leave little space, so the air can move to it when you twist. If you do have to pump it until the end do it but then just let some air out.
- **Start twisting the balloon on the part where is the knot**, so the air can move to the empty part.
- When you twist **hold the part of the balloon where is the knot** (otherwise it will all untwist) and keep on **turning the not twisted part toward you.**
- Tell people not to be afraid to **grab the balloon** and turn it- they are made for it. Sometimes **they do burst and that is ok** so they should not be afraid of that.
- Long nails can be a problem as they make the balloon burst.
- It is good to be **two leaders**, so one can show the figure and the other goes around and helps people. Especially with tightening the knot.
- You can also prepare in advance and **blow some balloons in advance.**

The four following animals are all based on the dog shape. There are only variations in the length of the twists.



DOG



GIRAFFE



ELEPHANT

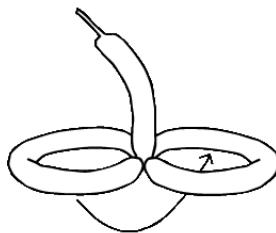
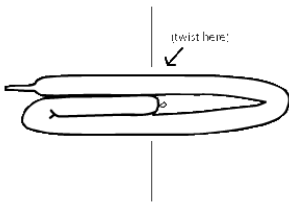


RABBIT

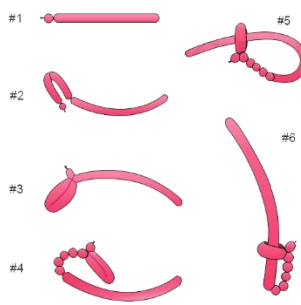
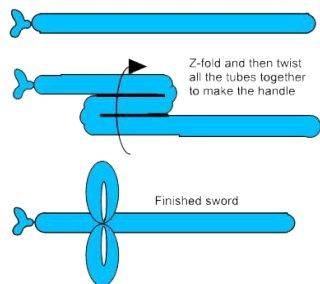


These next two are other easy sculptures with one balloon:

SWAN

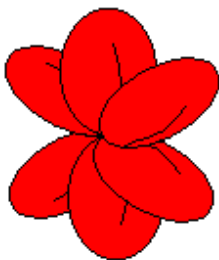


SWORD



And here are some sculptures with two balloons:

FLOWER



VIKING HAT



BIRDS IN A HEART



CREATING A SHOW

HOW TO PREPARE A PERFORMANCE



Preparing a performance at the end of a circus project is always a special experience for children, young people and adult. In our case, we are talking about a very simple presentation that can be assembled in a short time. It is a critical part of the project and managing it is not always easy. The trainer assumes then the role of an artistic director and must manage and combine the skills, personality and wishes of the participants and his own wishes, goal and material requirement. The performance must be treated as a part of the pedagogical process and therefore the outcome should be positive for the participants.

Here are some tips to help in the preparation of such performance.

- The group should first decide what will be shown: who knows what, who wants to show something... We should not set our goals too high! It is better to choose something that we can do well than something that we are not so confident to do!
- We should encourage voluntarism. Nobody should be forced!
- And of course we should practice many time the thing we intend to show...

Some people are confident by nature, some are shyer and for them performing in front of an audience can be a traumatic experience if not prepared properly! Therefore, we must take care that nobody is ever "thrown" onto the stage unprepared because it can do more harm than good.

Knowing how to do tricks and performing them are two different things and just as learning juggling and other disciplines, there are steps that will get you use to perform on stage.

- The participants should first create a short presentation in small groups and show them to other participants (safe environment). Everybody will be in turn the audience and the performer.
- If it is possible, the next step could be performing short acts in front of outsiders, for example, another class, but in a familiar environment.
- Solo appearances are difficult for many, and only those who wish, may try it in a safe environment.

- The role of the trainer is to create a pleasant atmosphere. He must ensure that the participants don't find themselves in an embarrassing situation (feeling ridiculous) in front of a group. The trainer is actively involved in creating the show and he is the ultimate decision maker: he must sometimes be firm and impose his decision. So for him there is a fine line between too much control and not enough.

Concretely, the performance itself will most likely look like that: A series of acts performed in small group (or solo) and a few acts involving all the participants.

Apart from their hard skills, the participants should think about their character (costumes?), eventually a story for their act or the whole show and a way to present it (visual effects like juggling with giant balls, music...)

There are many expression games that can give ideas for the creation of a small act (for example: <http://www.bbbpress.com/dramagames/>).

The trainer can let the participant free or give them special request to help them. For example: all the act should start by a roll entry show some juggling trick and finish with a group acrobatic...



DIDACTICS AND CREATIVITY





HOW TO BUILD A SOCIAL CIRCUS PROJECT

INTRODUCTION

The NAOMIE framework can help you plan a social circus program. Each part of the English acronym NAOMIE represents a design element. The planning of a program can be done using six steps, these are: needs, aims, objectives, methods, implementation and evaluation.

More information about NAOMIE in the Planning & Evaluation Methodology Handbook [Planning & Evaluation Methodology Handbook \(cwwys.org.uk\)](http://cwwys.org.uk)

NEEDS

Who are the actors and beneficiaries of the program and which needs can our circus education program meet?

Prepare a needs assessment so that the program is well-founded and that we can later set goals that respond to needs. Identify the needs that define the program. Define the circle of actors, the profile of the target group.

SUGGESTIONS

- The range of actors is larger than the participants of the session!
- There are always hidden actors, hidden needs, some actors have different needs for the program,
- Let's specifically focus on the development of the following, which is the most important for the target group defined here - young adults: self-confidence, dignity and respect of self (taking care of oneself in basic daily level) respect to the others and environment, self-regulation skills, to be accepted as individual by the other, trust to the adults, experiences of success. Also emotional skills, skills to live independently - make decisions independently, and to understand the meaning of life were mentioned





AIMS AND INTENTION

What are our activities aimed at and what do we want to achieve in the long term?

By intentions we mean the direction in which we are going. It is not always easy to separate intentions from goals – intentions set a more general, long-term direction and relate to the wider environment, while goals refer to the results of a specific process.

Identify the determining circumstances:

- group composition: number of employees, gender ratio, age, fixed or variable group
- human resources: pedagogical/circus skills of trainers, number of volunteers, number of trainers
- time frame: session length, process length
- nature of the process: occasional session(s), course, workshop
- location: own location, occasional location, storage option
- available circus equipment: portability, room layout
- logistics: who delivers the equipment and with what
- awareness of other resources

To determine the intentions, match the needs of the actors with the determining circumstances.

SUGGESTIONS, EXAMPLES

- we include the circus activity in the programs of the youth center and use it as a tool to increase self-confidence
- the theme of our summer camp is to create a circus performance, because we want to encourage young people to be independent and take responsibility.





OBJECTIVES

In the light of needs, intentions and circumstances, what concrete and realistic objectives do we have that we would like to achieve during the given program?

Define specifically what you want to achieve during the process. What development do you want to achieve in terms of social skills, circus skill, creative skills in the development of the actors?

Set a limited number of goals (max. 10) that can be grouped into one larger goal.

The goals should be specific and we should always keep them in mind when planning tasks, activities and sessions.

SUGGESTIONS, EXAMPLES

During our many years of work with different target groups, we have accumulated a lot of experience regarding goals that can have a serious positive effect in the given context and with which we can work effectively with the circus tool. However, the examples given here are not universal arguments and cannot be transferred one-to-one to other similar target groups, they only serve as inspiration and can be adapted taking into account the complexity of the given context.

- young people belonging to minority groups (e.g. Roma young people)

The feeling of social exclusion often leads to self-esteem problems, which leads to aimlessness, denial of one's own learning abilities or possible success. With the circus, both learning and success can become tangible, with the help of the instructor, you can learn to set the right goals and fight for them. In addition, heterogeneous circus groups of young people from different backgrounds can actively contribute to the elimination of segregation.

- young people with learning difficulties (school failures, risk of early school leaving):

The circus, and juggling in particular, can provide participants with tangible, spectacular learning experiences, which they can then show to their wider environment. Persisting practice, i.e. the





energy invested in learning and its return in terms of learning results, is very vivid and experiential, which can be a boost to the self-image of young people in relation to their own learning abilities. Many young people do not believe that they can learn new things. This can be refuted in the short term in circus practice.

- Unaccompanied minor refugees (at an asylum)

The world of the circus is a good tool to temporarily forget the certainties and problems of life, to relax from the all-consuming worries of everyday life. The non-verbal nature of the circus also helps to overcome the constant communication difficulties caused by language differences. In the trusted games and practices of the circus group, one can experience the feeling of safety and belonging to a trusted community, which is so rare in the lives of these young people.

- young people with psychiatric problems (sessions among people staying in child and adolescent psychiatric institutions):

Creating a community for these young people is difficult, because everyone is present in difficult times and with serious problems. The circus can help create a community feeling of camaraderie by strengthening the fact that here our quirks, our personality traits that deviate from social norms and stand out from the majority are accepted and can even be valuable.

- children in state care, raised by foster parents (residents of residential homes):

Cohesive communities are often formed in closed institutions, but some participants may be excluded or marginalized. Joint circus games, learning, and performances can integrate marginalized members into the community. The circus can also be a break from the boring, monotonous world of closed institutions, and individual practice can also channel the free time of young people in a good direction.





METHOD

PART 1: Principles of the social circus method

PART 2: Categories of teaching methods

PART 3: Basic pillars: Accessibility

PART 4: Basic pillars: Games

PART 5: Basic pillars: Presentation, performance

PART 1 PRINCIPLES OF THE SOCIAL CIRCUS METHOD

The methodology of social circus conveys knowledge of circus art in a creative and innovative pedagogical framework.

The success of the social circus is due to the complexity of circus art, since the circus is simultaneously: movement/sport + art + special world/miracle. The circus...

... creative and performance art at the same time.

.. it is a versatile art form, because it encompasses many accompanying arts: movement art, performance art, theater art, dance art, fine art, with visual arts

... is made up of unusual forms of movement and body positions. Due to the colorful nature of the knowledge material, the student can choose what suits him according to nature, habitus and preference.

...an unusual world, a world of wonder enchants you, gives you a unique atmosphere, a sense of specialness.

The success of the social circus is due to the established pedagogical framework and the methods used, because:

... because this is how we create inclusive, accepting, encouraging, differentiated and responsive forms and curriculum that take individual needs into account (obliquity)





... this can be achieved by making learning circus skills a means of the occupation and not the goal

... "Innovative" because the session leader can freely use the innovative pedagogical tools and views that have spread throughout the world in recent decades. Student-centered, progressive forms of education, methods and approaches can be freely adapted. (e.g. drama pedagogy, gamification)

... is "creative" because the instructor freely adapts or creatively uses methods in order to achieve his goals, i.e. to 'circusize' pedagogical tools and methods from elsewhere, adapt them to a circus theme, to teach forms of movement.

... creative use in the social circus definitely means a general, comprehensive pedagogy for the occupations, ideally also in the teaching of tricks and forms of movement.

SUGGESTION

- Find out about circus genres! International literature and general practice typically classify circus skills/genres/disciplines into five groups: ground acrobatics, aerial acrobatics, juggling, clowning, balance
- If possible, let's watch circus videos with the group, we can also analyze the stunts - the breathtaking scenes and fantastic skills create the circus atmosphere. If the young people like a certain performer, he can have a very inspiring effect on them, he can also become their role model.
-





PART 2 CATEGORIES OF TEACHING METHODS

In the following, we present circus methods grouped according to didactic categories

Methods regarding actors

- Based on the work of the instructor, the instructor provides the framework for learning, BUT standing or sitting in a circle, the participants comment and give and receive individual, personalized answers.
- Based on the joint work of the student and teacher, we help, encourage and facilitate
- When the student(s) work independently, we encourage a high number of repetitions with well-directed, personalized tasks. We break it down into levels of difficulty and practice the same thing. We prepare tasks for practice at home, without equipment and in compliance with safety regulations.

Methods according to their role in the educational process

New knowledge acquisition method

- Discovery: The trick or acrobatic movement is broken down into subtasks and learned at stations where, with the help of various figures, cards, newspaper clippings, and short films
- You can research: movements, range of feelings, forms of expression, musical influence, etc. The instructor's task is to provide a framework and model for this, to motivate. Feel free to experiment!
- Small performance in individual or group form: circus history, genres, performers, or analysis/criticism of individual performances, etc.

Application support methods - the aim is to achieve a high number of repetitions in an exciting and interesting way





- Pair and group practice with changing pairs and practicing the same exercises in small groups
- Independent practice with mentoring at a differentiated level and individual feedback
- In rotating 8-20 minute shifts, the stations are designed according to age group, knowledge level, interest and ability to concentrate.
- We show/introduce the sequence of movements in contexts of explanation and broken down from several directions.
- We arrange the tasks in the form of routes, tracks, and board games, even adding color with task cards, accessories, and tools. - even the participants can design it themselves, e.g.: escape room

Methods for organizing and recording:

- connecting tricks, creating own sequences from learned elements
- organizing into a few minute presentations and then into larger community performances

Methods by type of information

involving verbal - illustrative - technique

- We should also be able to explain, discuss and jointly analyze a pattern or topic using verbal methods. Discussions help to create a safe environment, lay down the rules, receive and give feedback, as well as a tool for raising awareness and a form of discussing aesthetic and artistic issues.
- We help the copying process with illustrative methods. we can put the focus on the development of non-verbal communication, we can put the emphasis on body sensations and emotions
- we can make it more interesting by involving technology - Internet collection work, video recording, VR technology, simulations





Inductive and deductive methods

A deductive method is the execution of the movement by copying, and how we then understand some of its parts. It is also deductive when, for example, in the case of a somersault or rollover, we teach it assisted by a helper, and then we gradually introduce the assistance.

In the case of an inductive procedure, the trick is built up step by step by gradually practicing its parts.

We use an inductive method when building a presentation, if we build the presentation based on tricks. Deductive procedure, when we break down the topic of the presentation down to the tricks.

According to the nature of control

- directive - responsive - letting go
- the question is the way of leadership during the instructor's leadership role.
- educational forms based on cooperation, facilitated, assisted, often based on independent discovery, which strengthen the student's proactive attitude, put the student in a decision-making role and respond to their needs.

SUGGESTION

- Our basic premise is that one of the biggest advantages of circus is that it provides a form of expression where verblivity and academic knowledge do not come to the fore. The instructor should prepare the material for the session accordingly!
- As much as possible, let's create the rules and roles together, raise awareness and interpret them!





- Let's strengthen the cooperative, proactive attitude! In the case of longer-term programs and groups, we can develop common habits and rituals that strengthen the feeling of belonging to the community.
- Circus pedagogy is an organically and dynamically developing field, with an open approach. The methods presented in this chapter are not set in stone. The approach is important and we encourage everyone to continue thinking about the above examples according to this approach.

PART 3 BASIC PILLARS ACCESSIBILITY

The basis for the continuous renewal of circus art is research, discovery, experimentation with new tools, and open thinking. During the use of circus art for social and recreational purposes, many circus tools and forms of movement are transformed, appear in a new form adapted to some functional movement development, and have become and will be more accessible to the general public. It can attract a wide audience because a

... the handling of used tools is simplified and leads to a faster experience of success, e.g. flower stick vs devil's stick, hammock vs tissue

... the tools used create a safe environment, e.g. reducing the physical risk, because they are mounted lower, extra grips

... can be used even at a low fitness level and lead to a sense of success, e.g. due to the structural transformation of the device, extra grips, modified material

... the renewed form of movement and tricks do not mean such a physical load

... a more portable version appears. For example: its assembly form is simplified, it can be folded, taken apart, stored in a smaller place, and transported more easily.

At the same time, they are able to create and evoke the 'circus experience'.





PART 4 BASIC PILLARS GAMES

Not only circus pedagogy, but general pedagogic experience, that playful learning is more effective and enjoyable, with much less stress. The methodology of circus pedagogy should therefore have a special attention on playfulness and games, with 3 basic approaches:

Gamification.

- Whenever possible, we gamify every part of the class, from the introduction and warm-up to the closing and evaluation. It is especially important to gamify the teaching of circus technique, introducing tricks, teaching and raising the skill level is also good if it is done through games. This simultaneously serves to make practice more enjoyable, to motivate as many repetitions as possible, and to move on from failures more easily. (see the chapter dealing with circus technique for details.)

Group games

- Community play, rule game as a pedagogical method is a central element of circus education. It can be aimed at short-term goals that serve the goals of the given session - arriving physically and mentally, energizing, learning names, getting to know each other, creating and strengthening concentration, moving around, introducing certain tools/tricks, creating a good atmosphere, etc. - and long-term goals: building trust, acceptance, learning empathy, development of community dynamics, improvement of self-esteem, self-confidence, etc.

Creative tasks

- It helps to develop creative arts and performing arts skills at the same time. Playfulness helps bring out the creativity inherent in students and helps them stand up bravely. They are provided with patterns along which, by reproducing and rethinking them, they can also create independently. Many games are suitable for generating even simpler stage presentations and performances. Especially for this target group - young





adults during their growing up period - these tasks strongly contribute to the development of assertiveness skills.

SUGGESTIONS, EXAMPLES:

- Examples of group games, by different aims:

To build confidence:

- **Running blindfolded.** At one end of the room, we blindfold one of the participants, and at the other end, we make the rest of the group stand in a semicircle. The blindfolded participant must run towards them, and when he reaches his companions, they catch him with their hands and stop the runner. It is important to play with a familiar group and that only those who want to try it voluntarily.

To build community:

- **Running through a jump rope.** The participants line up one by one in one half of the room, and two referees rotate a 6-8 m long rope in the middle of the room (in the correct direction, so that the rope is away from the participants near the ground). The participants have to walk under the rope one by one or run to the far end of the room, catching the right rhythm, so as not to touch the rope. If you succeeded alone, try in pairs, then 3, 4, 5, etc. in teams, and finally the whole team at once.

To pay attention to each other:

- **The looking gate:** The group (max. 10 people) stands in a circle, and one volunteer goes out of the room. The group chooses 2 people standing next to each other around them, they will be the gate. The volunteer comes back, goes into the middle of the circle and has to figure out which two people the gate is between, where he can leave the circle. To do this, he looks into everyone's eyes one by one, and those who score must express with their bare eyes, "yes, come, here is the gate", those who do not score, must





suggest with their eyes that "no, don't come, here" there is no gate". Winking, smiling, nodding at him is not worth it.

To be strong, still and solid, preparing for acrobatics, putting the participants in new roles.

- **Stay still:** The participants stand in two separate circles, holding their palms to the sides and touching each other with the two people next to them. Legs splayed, stable on the ground. The goal is to push the people next to us with our palms, to knock them off balance and make them move. The one who is eliminated moves to the next round, where the task is the same. - The game puts not only the teacher in a new situation when he starts, but also the students, because the more physically active participants tend to be more successful in this game. Do not play in a group with aggression problems.

To focus, to foster creative thinking

- **This is not a diablo:** The participants sit in a circle, we place different tools in the middle of the circle, they can be juggling tools, e.g. a diablo. The referee goes to the center of the circle, holds the diablo and pretends to drink from it, as if it were a glass. The participants have to guess that it is, in this case, a glass. Now they come, whoever has an idea can show in the middle of the circle what else the given object could be (a tie, an hourglass, etc., but also a tram, a dog, a car, whatever) and the others have to guess it.

Examples for creative games

- **Visualization games** strengthen the visual imagination. Participants can imagine a circus and themselves as performers in it, with costumes or even specific choreography. We can even include this in the framework of a fairy tale. It is also worth playing with your eyes closed, because the ability to relax and build trust is an area that needs to be developed separately for many children.





- **Gesture games** provide an opportunity to express and experience emotions. We can build a repertoire of them for the stage presentation of an event, atmosphere, or internal process. Looking at your watch nervously is not the only way to express, for example, that someone is late. Gesture games can be used when we are jointly looking for means of expression for a topic or mood, but it can also be a sculpting game, in which we shape the gestures on the other person. A simple gesture game perfect for getting to know each other, learning names or starting the day. If you stand in a circle, someone enters the circle, says their name and shows a gesture, while the others step forward and repeat their name and gesture. They can also express their mood of the day in the movement, but we can also give this game any other theme.
- **Copying games**, you can copy a body position, gesture, or scene from each other or from a photo. This must be presented by moving it in space, or perhaps connected by the use of devices, even on a trapeze or curtain. A copy game can also be a simple pincer, where you can free someone with the pose in which they were caught and frozen. In the simple mirroring game, you have to mirror what the partner shows, or even the whole group imitates the movements of a partner. The point is that new and new ideas are needed, poses that strengthen body awareness and broaden the repertoire of their movements. Here you can also observe the typical movements of each student.
- **Parody and caricature** is a fun task, but you have to be careful that no one gets hurt in the process. It is similar to the booster game where we exaggerate the given character. We can parody ourselves, famous people, or our peers. In such cases, another student should parody or caricature a scene performed by him, not himself. This game is not only funny, but also develops improvisational skills.
- **The "Yes, and..." game** is a shared story or dialogue creation. Someone starts, and then a partner continues with a sentence beginning with "Yes, and...". This can also be varied with movement. For example, one student suggests that we sunbathe, to which everyone pretends to sunbathe, then shouts out the following: "Yes, and let's have ice cream!" - and everyone acts as if they are sunbathe... This game increases the willingness to take action, helps and fosters a positive attitude and a cooperative discourse that accepts the opinions of others. The game also prepares the students to be creative and receptive during brainstorming.





- **Enhancing games** are primarily exciting in relation to emotions and play an important role in the preparation of stage work. On stage, everything has a different intensity, and it's often only really visible when it's amplified. Take for example a basic emotion, joy, anger, sadness. The student must take seven steps and at each step display the given emotion one degree more intensely. In the basic situation, he is a little happy, and at the last step, he bursts with overwhelming, bursting joy. At first we progress step by step, but with a little practice we can even go from level two to level seven, or from six to one, etc.

PART 5. BASIC PILLARS PRESENTATION PERFORMANCE

Everything where the student shows himself to others is called a presentation. It can be a trick, a series of tricks, a movement, an idea or even a complete choreography, a complete performance. The concept of audience is also flexible, even a spectator is an audience, a presentation in front of friends or family, while a greater challenge is in front of strangers.

Performances and presentations are one of the important tools of the social circus, because

... the artistic nature of the circus is revealed here

... an opportunity to educate through art

... an opportunity to repeat and practice the learned circus tricks and knowledge

....provides space for the development of social skills and joint work

...a great model for building processes

... an opportunity to develop creative skills, the ability to use imagination, improvisation and problem solving

... an opportunity for the participants to become stronger in taking on and showing themselves

... because it is possible to change the roles of the performers





... BECAUSE IT GIVES SUCCESS

Structure of choreographies and performances

Preparation

- Prepare with lots and lots of games so that students can freely use their imagination, express themselves boldly and share their ideas
- Let's prepare with games how they say yes to an idea and add their own suggestions.
- Let's prepare them with games so that they can lead/suggest/initiate and at other times follow/be led.
- Let's prepare them with games so that they can perform and connect the tricks in different postures, environments, and rhythms.

Grading: We proceed step by step from the following aspects

- amount of presented tricks, circus knowledge: one trick, combination of 2-3 tricks, variation, series of tricks, 1-minute, 2-3-minute line
- in framing the tricks: combining movement, dance with speech, inclusion in a story
- number of participants in a scene/show - but let's start with two or three people and move towards a larger group performance consisting of several songs
- profile and number of planned viewers

Toolbox - we should have many tools that give students a framework, a starting point, a starting point, and an opportunity to change

- fairy tales, fables, stories, movie characters
- music selection
- character/location/season cards, which indicate where the given scene takes place
- costumes, props
- makeup, face painting
- stage master sentences





ATTENTION

- the journey is as important as the destination. The lecture is (only) fully developed, what we teach through it develops on the way there.
- You don't have to perform! You can help the performance in many other roles: stagehand, sound technician, videographer, etc. let's find the corresponding function
- creating protection is particularly important in emotional, cognitive, social and physical terms
- presented tricks, they should be simple, safe tricks, something that the student can do at least 8/10 times
- the planned presentation should be of a volume that you, as an instructor, are able to facilitate and that you can solve the situations of

SUGGESTIONS

- practice the presentation yourself in front of others in order to feel its difficulties and solution possibilities, to have a personal experience
- pay attention to the distribution of roles and cause the roles to change within the group dynamics
- your support is needed so that the students can go beyond their comfort zone, prevent/treat their feelings of shame and fears empathetically





IMPLEMENTATION

PART 1: Principles for planning

PART 2: Implementation of a social circus project.

PART 3.: Implementation of a social circus workshop

PART 1 PRINCIPLES FOR PLANNING

- **Designing methods according to goals.** Let's think about which elements of the toolbox of circus pedagogy (community games, teaching circus techniques, making performances, etc.) we plan to use in order to achieve our goals?
- **The use of all main components:** movement, art, the miracle of the circus, creative and innovative pedagogy are all very important in circus pedagogy. Let this formula pervade our intentions, the setting of goals, and when planning the sessions, we should preferably bring exercises to unfold all four components.

Flexibility: In addition to careful planning, be prepared for the fact that you often have to react spontaneously and creatively to new situations that arise. These situations can be seen as opportunities, not just problems to be overcome. Maybe a new participant or guest instructor will appear, there will be an opportunity to watch a circus performance, and we can also take advantage of an explosive discussion or conflict. If few people come to the session, that can also set a different direction for the meeting. Let's try to avoid that the sessions consist of continuous situational solutions and reactions - this can also indicate a planning or preparation problem.

Repetitions: Circus education is very repetitive. It is important to understand and accept this with the students, to increase the tolerance of monotony, and at the same time to diversify the tasks aimed at repetition.

Frames, stability, rhythm: The blocks give the student a kind of frame. He knows when to follow and when he has the opportunity to practice, create and explore at his own pace. Working in blocks gives a kind of rhythm to which the student can adapt.

Safe environment: We need to create safety for the participants in many ways.





The physical, emotional and cognitive safety of the participants must also be taken into account during the implementation phase. (It means cognitive security if we make the processes comprehensible for the student, so he will be able to make decisions on issues that concern him.)

ATTENTION:

Whether it's a child or an adult, a recreational circus or a social circus group, we all face a lot of uncertainty and fear in our lives, even more so in the circus environment. In a social circus context, it is particularly typical that we deal with participants who have received little protection and care during their lives, or who may have experienced trauma. The instructor cannot solve these problems, but he must take them into account. We have many tools at our disposal to give students positive experiences in terms of safety as well.

In a trusting environment, the participant can express himself boldly and without fear, express his opinion, try and make mistakes. You don't have to fear embarrassment. As adults, we develop a lot of fear and shame about our bodies, and this hinders the learning process. In an emotionally safe environment, we dare to take more risks, even at the level of tricks, because we know that there are people who will catch us and keep us if we make a mistake. If the student can believe in himself and feels that we believe in him, then his performance will be much better in all respects.

PART 2 IMPLEMENTATION OF A SOCIAL CIRCUS PROJECT.

Tasks for the implementation of the entire project

- **organization of resources:** availability of tools, instructors, necessary financial resources, logistical tasks related to the location
- **performance of administrative tasks:** instructor contracts, employment announcements, participant attendance sheets, instructor diary, notes, keeping data necessary for statistics, location-related permits, contracts, GDPR tasks
- **communication tasks:** visibility of the program in social media, contact with partners and participating institutions, information sharing within own institution, involvement and dissemination of results





Planning of a series of workshops:

The course is a comprehensive plan for a series of sessions. All factors play a role in the planning, the needs, aims, and objectives that we explored in advance. The course contains a series of steps, that is, what methods, in what order, what we want to do during the process in order to achieve the goals.

Widespread model, dividing the planned period into 5 parts. The five parts put different pedagogical goals in the focus of the sessions.

- **Stage 1: Team building.** In such cases, many joint games dominate to develop group dynamics. At this stage, the main goal is to create an atmosphere of trust and a framework for cooperation.
- **Stage 2: Trying out. Learning different circus techniques.** It is important to display as many circus equipment as possible so that everyone can find the one closest to them.
- **Stage 3: Choice.** Participants choose one or two genres and delve into them, developing their knowledge only by dealing with them. At this point, it is very important to encourage persistence, so that the student takes his choice and himself seriously, and deepens in the technique of the given genre.
- **Stage 4: Dream.** Creating a presentation together. The focus is on joint dreaming and joint creative work, based on the knowledge that each person has acquired so far.
- **Section 5: Performance.** Presentation, evaluation, conclusion. To show others our science, bringing maximum performance out of the team. This stage includes the joint evaluation of the presentation, the closing of the process, and in some cases, the farewell.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The set goals can be achieved with the series of activities planned for the sessions. It is worth including the goals in a kind of matrix and connecting them with the activities of the sessions, this helps in more conscious session management. (The template from the [CARAVAN NETWORK: Circus Trans Formation - A Guidebook For Social Circus Trainers](#) publication on pages 131-133 can help with this)





If we are talking about a complex series of circus sessions, teaching many different genres, it is also necessary to consider the order in which these are taught. There are instructors around the world who go linearly through the genres in their courses. In such cases, juggling usually comes first, followed by acrobatics, then balance and aerial acrobatics; the clown technique can be inserted as desired. This logic starts with the least accident-prone vehicle in the getting-to-know-you phase. When the group is more used to it, rule-following, a disciplined atmosphere and trust have been established, it is easier to include acrobatics, and then the elements that require physical and attentional/disciplinary preparation come interchangeably.

PART 3. IMPLEMENTATION OF A SOCIAL CIRCUS WORKSHOP

Workshop planning

We recommend the matrix method for planning the session, where we plan the sequence of the activities of the given session so that they directly respond to our set goals. ([CATE Circus for Adults Handbook \(eyco.org\)](#) template on pages 67-68 or the [CARAVAN NETWORK: Circus Trans Formation - A Guidebook For Social Circus Trainers](#) publication, which contains four templates on pages 138-142, can help.

Sessions can be tailored in many individual ways. In the following example, the activities taking place in the session were classified into blocks according to their purpose. The order can be changed as needed.

1. Meeting, tuning in
2. Warm-up, preparatory games
3. Learning circus techniques
4. Creative tasks - creation, application
5. Performance

1. Meeting, tuning in

It is important that the session has an introduction and a conclusion, and that the meeting is given a framework. We like to drive these blocks standing/sitting in a circle.





This is therefore a block of arrival, attunement and at the same time community goals. We ask who happened to whom, we tell them what will happen today. We can formulate overarching ideas that we come back to during the session or at the end of the session.

2. Warm-up, preparatory games

Games also play a big role in this block, we use them to bring the participants to the community, to direct their attention here, to create a safe and friendly atmosphere, to get them excited, to bring joy, laughter and energy. These are not necessarily and directly related to circus skills.

As in all other cases, we also progress step by step towards our pedagogical goals with games. This also manifests itself in the form of starting a game simply, then the initially simple instructions are colored and developed step by step, and the task becomes more and more complex with additional instructions.

We can develop the games ourselves, and we can also circusize well-known games according to what we want to achieve with it.

The physical warm-up starts with the games. This is followed - especially if acrobatic movements are also planned - by a more intense warm-up to move the muscles and joints, as well as the warm-up, moving and practicing the basic movements typical of the circus genre of the day.

3. Learning circus techniques

When planning, we decide which genre(s) we will teach in the given session, how we will structure them, and what tasks and methods we will follow. There are sessions where the students specifically follow one genre, for example they only learn aerial acrobatics, and within that they only work with one tool.

It is possible to imagine a session where this block takes up the majority of the time, and social goals and artistic goals appear less, i.e. the session is more movement-focused. But we can enrich the session so that full artistic and social complexity is realized.





4. Creative tasks - creation, application

The creative task:

- can be a tool for developing circus techniques or creative and performing skills. We can give a task where the students have to think about variations of tricks.
- can also be a way to create a mini choreography. This number can only be played for the given hour, so many different ideas can be tried from hour to hour. It is not necessary to build a single track or performance, since as much as the performance can be motivating, it can also be a limitation.
- can be the presentation of one or more already learned tricks in a new position, moving in space.
- can be some kind of conversation, sharing of opinions, analysis of a presentation, joint story writing, storytelling, brainstorming. Guided visualization can also be a good method, so we also work with the inner world of imagination.
- can be any other task, game, exercise that requires creative skills.

5. Performance

The form of the presentation at the end of the session and its place in the session as a whole should be considered during the planning phase. Based on this, the presentation can be

- summarizing and repeating what was learned that day
- sharing ideas found during creative tasks, trying out new mini-scenes
- improvisation. The performance in itself is a role play, an important part of which is laughter, applause, paying attention to each other, and having fun together.
- a simple "jam", where we stand in a circle and someone else always comes in the middle to show a trick
- a more serious session summary presentation, where the students also give feedback to each other.

There may be a pre-agreed order of the performers, which places more importance on the individual numbers, but the line of performers can also be formed on the spot according to the students' willingness.





SUGGESTIONS:

- It is worth creating a kind of circus atmosphere for the presentation. This can happen with surprisingly little effort. We often stand up using the juggling mace as a microphone and greet the lovely spectators with a loud voice and stage gestures and encourage them to applaud. We even announce the name of our circus, which was chosen by the group itself.
- You can imagine it is possible that some block misses a session, and their ratio is also a matter of decision. If, for example, two or three people participate in the session, the games play a smaller role, but it also happens that we do not hold a presentation at the end of the session that day.
- It is important that the individual blocks are organically connected to each other, serve each other and move in the direction of the set goals.
- From a dynamic point of view, it is worth considering the ratio of conversation to physical exercises. It is important to have enough time to warm up before physical exertion! Let's take care of mental and physical preparation before the participants are given an independent task! When we ask their opinion, there should be time for them to react, but the conversations should not drag on, rather we use the rest time for this!
- Let's get the adrenaline level up, but don't let the participants spin too much, especially the groups that are sensitive to it!

EVALUATION

Which aspects should we consider during the evaluation? How can evaluation complete the process and serve as feedback?

In the case of social circus classes and circus pedagogy for therapeutic purposes, the assessment may focus on the following:

- effectiveness of needs assessment
- definition and implementation of goals
- the participation of individual actors in the activities
- the involvement, commitment and motivation level of each actor
- extent and quality of cooperation





- the development of the participants and the members of the target group along the individual skills and the set goals
- the impact of the activity on the environment
- evaluation effectiveness

So we can evaluate the process itself, not just the changes in the target group and the individual participants. Every evaluation is of great importance, if it is correct, it has a positive effect on the process and our further work, so it is worth incorporating it into the process as much as possible.

Process evaluation methods and indicators

Even in the case of the simplest type of evaluation, it is important to determine what the indicators are - numbers, data, feedback, signs - and evaluation methods that provide information about the development of the process, the changes experienced by the target group, and the success of a given session. The indicators should be determined before the activity begins and the data should be collected consistently. The answers can be obtained by observation, following the results measured for yourself, and inferring from their statements. An important method is to ask the people involved, i.e. the students, their peers, parents, teachers and assistants participating in the session.

Indicators can be:

- How many young people participated in the session?
- How active were the participants?
- How long were they able to concentrate on a single tool or task?
- With how many tools, in what genre, how many tricks can the student perform?
- How many did the diligence task recommended on the previous occasion?
- Did the participants practice outside of the session, and if so, how many hours?
- How many presented something new at the given session?
- Did the student participate in a presentation, did he present his own creative work?

ATTENTION:

It is especially important to evaluate the student's efforts and aspirations and not their performance.

SUGGESTIONS:





- When interviewing the participants and students, it is often worth using non-verbal and playful tools and methods. An example of such a playful way is the exercise called 'Hyde Park'. There is a chair in the middle of the room, and whoever has something to say about the given topic can say it freely by standing on the chair. Those who agree move closer to the chair, those who disagree move away from it. The distance from the chair indicates the degree of agreement. Many children come up with a feedback phrase just to get up on the chair, otherwise they might not have spoken. A non-verbal method can be drawing, an opinion expressed with the help of movement tasks, for example, representation in proportions or the dynamics of movement.
- Evaluation is possible at any point in a program. There are times when regular end-of-session evaluations are a more effective method. In such cases, the students evaluate themselves, the instructors, and the session, and the instructors also give feedback to the students.
- Evaluation between group leaders is also essential during and after a series of programs. This can be based on the notes written after each session and the summation of the results of each evaluation method. It is necessary to refer back to previous project phases: was the initial problem assessment and goal formulation correct, was it possible to reflect on the given problems, and what goals were realized, and which tools proved to be effective and which were not.

In social circus work, evaluation sessions are ideally led by a professional supervisor as part of a dedicated supervision process.





EVALUATION OF THE E-HANDBOOK

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