

Learning activity

Theories of Change Spectrum lines

TIME: 30-60 mins

LEARNING AIMS:

- Supporting dialogue within the group
- Making visible diverse experience and views on how social change happens
- Enabling reflection on experience of how change happens
- Supporting discussion in a more animated way

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS: 10-20

PREPARATION AND MATERIALS: Write text

Suitable for use in peer led sessions, with minimal facilitation or nature connection experience required – however, the level will also depend on what the Spectrum Line is used for.

This can be done with groups of almost any size, but obviously larger groups will mean fewer voices can be heard. Most commonly we use it with groups of between 10-20 people. This can be a very useful exercise for drawing people out and balancing the speaking time offered to all of the participants. Be aware of any mobility issues or physical constraints such as back injuries. Not all groups will be comfortable standing for long periods, so have a few chairs positioned in the room, in case people need to sit during the discussion. The risk involved will depend entirely on the subject you are exploring!

FRAMING:

Framing can be relatively minimal, simply explaining that it will be used to explore the range of views on how social change happens within the group.

FACILITATION:

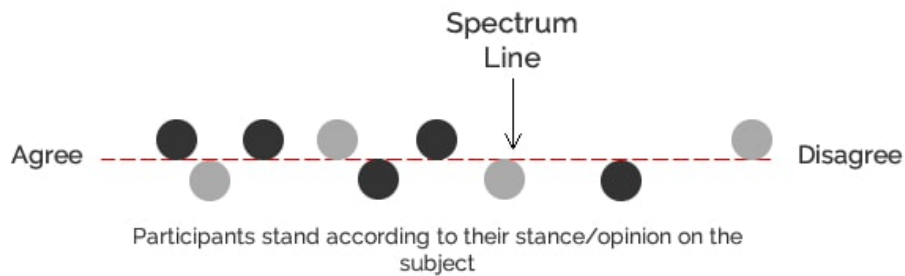
Step 1. Setting up the activity

Framing will depend on the context in which you are using the activity. In general it's unlikely to need much framing – just explain the task:

- I'm going to give you a statement or question which you will reflect on and then answer by positioning yourself on a 'spectrum line'.
- Where you place yourself on the line will represent your 'answer'.
- The spectrum line is an imaginary line between these two points in the training room or space (e.g. this could be two walls facing each other, or between two markers you have placed on the floor. Show them clearly, ideally demonstrating with your body!)

- This end of the line represents... and this end of the line represents... (For example: 'Chocolate is the best food in the world.' One end of the room represents the position 'I agree 100%', the other end of the room represents 'I completely disagree'). Place yourself somewhere on the line, between the two extremes, to represent your response.

It will be something like this (although depending on the size of the group, you may have a lot more crowding, clumping and clustering than is showed here!):



Step 2. Facilitating the activity

Give the group each question one at a time. Allow people to place themselves on the spectrum line in response. Once they are positioned on the line a number of different methods can be used to stimulate discussion. These can also be used in various combinations. e.g:

- Pairs discussion: Ask people to 'turn to someone next to you and explain why are you standing where you are...'
- Small clusters: Ask people to 'gather in small groups of three or four and explain why you are standing where you are...'
- Asking individuals to talk about their response to the whole group. While people stay in position, invite different people to share about their decision. Invite input from people across the spectrum to get a diverse range of views.

The spectrum line questions we have found useful include:

- **How does social change happen: from the top down or from the bottom up?**
- **Does social change happen gradually or suddenly?**
- **What drives social change: changes in material conditions or shifts in consciousness?**
- **Do you consider yourself to be creating alternatives inside the system or building alternatives outside the system?**
- **Is your approach more related to dismantling the old or constructing the new?**

Clearly there is a lot of scope for the ways these questions are interpreted. It is not uncommon for people to ask for further clarification on the questions, for example: What is 'the system'? or 'what is the top or bottom'? However, the facilitator should resist answering these questions and tell the participants that interpreting the question is part of the task.

Step 3. Debriefing the activity

Either as a whole group or in smaller groups, encourage some reflection on what has been observed and learnt.

Conclusion and takeaways

This is a really great tool for uncovering hidden dynamics, views, shifts in perspectives around difficult topics. It is less about opening up debate and more concerned with creating a space for different views to be heard. When opening up the views expressed, it can be useful as a facilitator to be able to refer to a wide range of different social change processes that offer examples of different types of process (rapid change and gradual change, material drivers and cultural changes, etc).

SOURCE: Ulex Project

IMAGES:

