

'I could do that if ...'

Purpose: *to help people become aware of their fear boundaries and to think of ways of edging over them. More important than the things they can do easily or cannot do at all, are the 'ifs' - ie clarifying what would help them to do something difficult. And how can they get them?*

Time: 30 minutes

Preparation: Photocopy the handout grid, or list some in advance on a flipsheet. Or, depending on the group (and time), you could get them to call out possible actions for their campaign.

Description: Ask people to work in pairs and, when you have described an action, to turn to their partner and say instinctively either "I could do that" or "I couldn't do that" or "I could do that if ...". Stress that it is a quick exercise, and only give them a minute or two to talk.

After each one, get feedback on the 'ifs', things that would help them to do a difficult action and list these on the flip chart. How would they get the things listed in the "if" column? When enough have been done (5-7), look at what is on the flip chart, encourage general discussion, and draw together similar items.

Sample actions (make up according to the group):

1. Give a talk to 200 people
2. Go on a march that could turn violent
3. Write a letter to the press or MP
4. Be interviewed on television
5. Leaflet in the street for an unpopular cause
6. Take part in an arrestable action
7. Trolley action - load boycotted goods into a supermarket trolley, go through the check-out, then refuse to pay because of the wicked deeds of the country/company they come from.

Notes: Try to ensure that the actions cover a range so that everyone can say yes to at least one of them. Emphasise that no one should be pushed beyond their capabilities, things we can do in one part of our lives we cannot do in another, there are perfectly good reasons why we cannot do some things. On the other hand we should not rule some activities out forever, we are all on a journey ... In other words, this exercise should not leave people feeling inadequate; balance a lot of reassurance with a bit of challenge.

This tool is also valuable in helping a group decide what actions it's able to do. A longer perhaps more valuable variation, would be for each participant to put a dot in the appropriate column against each action listed on a flipsheet and for the whole group to look at where the clusters are. This will tell the group where its strengths and weaknesses are – and also if they can do more radical action based on the knowledge that, say, two of them would be up for it with the rest in supporting roles.