

Power Hassle Line

Purpose: to explore experiences of power and powerlessness.

Time: 20 minutes per scenario including debrief

Preparation: clear a reasonable space for the group to form a hassle line and to move around in.

Description: Form two groups of equal numbers and have them face each other in a hassle line so that everyone is opposite one person with reasonable 360° space between each pair. One line are parents, and each partner in the opposite line is their child. Describe the following scenario: the child is engrossed in an activity of their choice. The parent approaches them to say it's time to go home and they must catch the bus now. Explain that this is the last bus available and it's a long way home and they absolutely must catch it. Ask everyone to think themselves into their roles then start the role play. You can add urgency as the scenario plays out by saying that the bus has turned the corner, is stopping, doors are opening etc. The child wants to continue what s/he is involved in and doesn't want to go.

Stop the role play when it seems right and de-role by asking everyone to look their partner in the eye, shake their hand or hug and say their name.

Follow-up: Spend some time unpicking emotional/physical responses. With each line in turn: How did it feel? Where was the power? What did it feel like to be powerful/powerless? What kind of power – coercive, persuasive, manipulative?

Possible additional scenarios:

- boss firing worker
- mafia demanding protection money from shopkeeper
- campaigner lobbying unsympathetic MP
- police and protester

A further session could be held by small groups identifying what the power strengths and weaknesses were of each of the pairings and then sharing in the whole group.