

Simulation of a Stressful Situation: “Imagine...”

Source: Stover, H., Trautmann, F. (2001). *Risk reduction for drug users in prisons*. Trimbos Institute, The Netherlands.

In this exercise, a stressful situation in which different injecting equipment is used is simulated in a role play. The situation should be as realistic as possible. The given situation is always the same, no matter if prison staff is trained or if drug users are educated about drug-related risks.

Objectives:

1. To experience a stressful situation that is as realistic as possible and to feel its impact - to get an idea of the readiness to take bigger risks
2. To exhaust the participant's creative abilities to identify safer solutions
3. To prevent infections, despite continued drug consumption - to develop behavioral patterns which reduce the risks involved in drug consumption

Duration: 45 - 60 minutes

No. of participants: Minimum 4, maximum 20, split up in groups of 4 people

Material needed: Overhead projector, flipchart and pens, injecting equipment (see Chapter 4 in course “Harm reduction in prison) and a soluble, heroin-like powder, e.g. sugar

If injecting equipment is not available or allowed, you should use materials that can replace the equipment (a pen for a syringe, etc.)

Exercise outline:

The participants are asked to imagine the following situation:

Imagine...

You are in jail. You have been provided with fresh stuff of the best quality - 1 gram for 4 people. Three of you have not consumed heroin for a long time, one of you is priggish. The score is his. You are running out of time because locking of the cell doors is imminent. You are determined to use the drug, however in the least damaging way.



The only items you have available to consume the heroin are:

- 1 unused syringe
- 1 used syringe
- 3 used needles
- 1 small bottle of water
- 1 lighter
- 1 lemon, not entirely fresh

And now all of you start to consume the drug as quickly as possible because - as mentioned above - time is running out. Please try to think of realistic but meaningful ways in which the drug can be consumed in the least damaging way under the given conditions and put the solutions you have developed to the test, i.e. pretend to prepare a drug injection with the equipment available.

One of your group keeps a record of all solutions suggested, those accepted and those rejected; these notes can then be used in the discussion to be held in the plenary session later on.

- Divide the group into small groups of 4/5 participants
- Give 30 minutes time to 'imagine' and discuss
- Give 20/30 minutes for short presentations of the results from the small groups and discussion of these results.

