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Tips for Trainers: problem hat

- **Objectives**

- To give individuals the opportunity to discuss immediate problems, anonymously and constructively.
- To emphasise equality in power and authority within the group.
- To encourage participants to share problems and actively seek experiences and suggestions from each other.
- To highlight that everyone has relevant experiences.

- **Materials**

A hat, bowl or any container
Pen and paper

- **Time**

Depends on size of group (5 minutes to think and write, 2 minutes per problem)

- **Procedure**

1. Ask everyone to sit in a circle and including yourself, to write on a slip of paper a particular problem they are facing and would like to resolve:

"I have difficulty with...."

If it concerns the behaviour of another participant, then ask them not to mention that person by name but to describe the problem in general terms.

2. Ask them to fold the paper and put it in the hat. When everyone has done this, pass around the hat and ask each person to take one slip of paper, If they draw out their own, then ask them to out it back and pick another.

3. Give the group a few minutes to reflect on the problem. Then start with anyone, perhaps yourself to set the example, and ask them to read out the problem and to say briefly how they suggest that the anonymous writer deal with it.

4. Continue around the circle, making sure that everyone just listens and does not comment on the suggestions.

- **Comments**

This is a simple but powerful way to deal with immediate problems. It can be used when tensions are running high, to air the issues publicly. This created the opportunity for those who might be responsible for some problems to reflect on their behaviour and change.

Source: Adapted from Brandes, D. and Phillips, H. 1990. Gamester's Handbook: 140 Games for Teachers and Group Leaders. Stanley Thornes, Cheltenham, UK.