

17

Tips for Trainers: dominance and submission

• Objective

To enhance awareness of verbal and non-verbal expressions of dominance and submissiveness.



• Time

15 - 20 minutes

• Procedure

1. Ask participants to form groups of three. Choose one person to be dominant, one to be submissive and one to observe.
2. Explain that the dominant person can lecture or otherwise be assertive on any subject and in any way (excluding physical violence and nastiness!!).
3. If people are sitting on chairs, the submissive person can be asked to sit on the floor either throughout, or halfway through, the exercise. An interesting variation is for the dominant person to sit

on the floor half way through the exercise and the submissive person to take the chair.

4. Brief the observers to look out for verbal and non-verbal expressions of dominance and submission (such as tone and volume of voice, body position, posture, eye contact, awareness of other people, communication, interrupting or ignoring etc.) This can be done quickly by asking all the others to look away and showing a large sheet of paper with brief instructions and cues or indicators of dominance or submissiveness.
5. Allow five minutes for the talking and dominating phase, then ask the observers to give feedback to their groups. Ask the observer to particularly note changes in roles that accompany moving from the chair to the floor and *vice versa*.
6. To add interest and a range of learning, feedback from the different groups of three can be merged by combining into groups of six people.
7. Conclude with a plenary discussion eliciting key points.

• Comments

This exercise can be repeated with changes of roles for different people, but not to the extent that participants get bored! Those who have been most expressive could later be asked to role play in other exercises.

Source: Robert Chambers, Institute of Development Studies, UK.