

BLACK HOLES AND SHIELDS

Objectives

- Students will activate the “black hole” imagery from *Clyde’s*
- Students will dramatize the image through the Augusto Boal activity “Bombs and Shields”
- Students will draw connections between the black hole metaphor in *Clyde’s* and their own lives, and will identify the shields they have to protect themselves

Materials needed

- Large open space that allows for movement
- Paper and pens

Activity

Provide the following introduction to the class:

- In Lynn Nottage’s *Clyde’s*, the character Letitia compares the hardships of life to black holes, a region in space whose gravity is so strong that nothing, not even light, can escape it. Letitia tells us that “Everything that gets sucked into it gets trapped, light, gas, mass...it sucks in and consumes everything around it.”

Step by step instructions for facilitator:

- Today, we’re going to activate “Black Holes and Shields,” an adaptation of an Augusto Boal activity.
- To start, walk around and cover the space, paying attention to your surroundings and making sure you don’t bump into one another. See if you can move at the same speed as everyone else.
- As you walk, I want you to secretly pick a person in your head to be aware of. Don’t let them know you picked them, just keep moving, and start to track where they are.
- Now, add another person to be aware of. Relax your vision and use some soft focus to see if you can keep moving but keep your awareness of two people at once.
- Next, imagine that the first person you chose is a black hole. The black hole has a strong gravitational pull, and you don’t want to get caught up in it! See if you can keep as much distance as possible between yourself and the black hole.
- I have good news. The second person you chose to be aware of is your shield. They can protect you from being pulled into the black hole. Your mission is to see if you can keep the shield between yourself and the black hole.

Ask the group to hold and pose the following questions. You may ask for feedback or make this a silent moment.

- As you were moving, how did it feel when your Black Hole got closer to you?
- Did you notice what happened to the ensemble?
- How did it feel when you found out you had a shield?

Distribute paper and pens. Ask the students to find a place to sit that feels like their own.

Read the following to the class:

- The character Letitia says that the character Clyde is her black hole, trying to rob her of her power. But she promises herself that she won't get sucked in. She and her co-workers resist by supporting each other and using their creativity to dream of new sandwiches and new lives.

Resume instructions:

- Take a moment and think about your life. Is there something that's troubling you, or is there a world issue that you worry about? Do you have a black hole? Something that sometimes pulls you down?
- Draw a circle in the center of your page and write the name of that problem. This activity is just for you, so nobody will see it, but if you'd rather not write it, you can just draw an "X".
- Now think about your shields. Who or what could help you? As Letitia says, "Resist the gravitational pull" of this problem or issue. In what way might you be a shield for this problem? Go ahead and write your shields all around the center circle.
- Is there anyone who'd like to share a shield? [Wait for responses]

Final thought:

- As you watch *Clyde's*, see if you can identify who or what in the characters' lives are their black holes, and what are the shields they use to escape the gravitational pull. And as you navigate your own life, keep in mind that there are activities, resources, and people who can help keep you on the path you want to travel. And don't forget to look for opportunities to be a shield for someone else.