



EXERCISE: GLASS COBRA

Subject(s): Theatre

Goals: Students will be able to:

- Use self-evaluation as a tool for growth as a theatre artist.
- Explore theatre as an individual and ensemble art form through group interaction.
- Create and strengthen trust and expand listening skills through theatre games and improvisations.

Show Connection: Often the characters, both historical and otherwise in *Failureland!* feel like they are floating in a sea of failure all on their own. In actuality, they are and have long been a part of an interconnected web of shared successes and failures in their community. Through this exercise students will better comprehend the strength that can be found in leaning on those around them when they feel like they are scrambling in the dark when failing, rather than striking it out alone.

Materials: Blindfolds

Set Up: Clear as much open space in the classroom space as possible. Desks and chairs should be pushed to the side and any other obstructions in the open space should be minimized to promote open space to move and work for the students.

Description:

- Everyone stands in a circle (or in two or more lines if the group is very large), with their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them.
- With their eyes closed (or blindfolded!), they use their hands to investigate the back of the head, the neck and the shoulders of the person in front. This is the glass cobra in one piece.
- Then, on an instruction from the teacher, the cobra is broken into pieces and each person sets off around the room, still with their eyes closed or covered.
- Tell the students the following legend:
 - In the legend of the Chilean *araucanos* Indians, this 'glass cobra' shattered into a thousand pieces when their nation was invaded by the Spaniards; but one day the pieces will find each other again, and these small fragments, harmless on their own, will become dangerous the moment they are reunited, because then they will turn into the steel cobra and expel the invaders.
 - The cobra in the legend is the people, obviously!
- In the game is the participants, who, after a few minutes of blind locomotion around the space, on a signal

from the Joker must find their way back to the person who was in front of them before the cobra broke up. The circle must be recreated. They must reconstitute the cobra(s). As in the legend, this may take time...

Variation: The same thing except that the whole exercise is done with the participants lying on the ground and dragging themselves around like snakes.

Notes:

- We strongly encourage blindfolds. It's too easy to cheat!
- This game only succeeds if performed silently. Voices are not what we are looking for! Physical observation and focus are the name of the game.

Discussion:

- What was your experience of searching for the person you started with? Difficulties with this? What skills were needed to be successful at this exercise? Why should we aim to use our other senses more?
- How did the glass cobra become a steel cobra in the story? What's the message here? Why is unity important? How can unity with others help you gain perspective on successes and failures in your life?
- What may be some good ways to foster unity in class? How can you encourage it to flourish? Why is it important and how does it affect the work you do, the life you live?

Source: *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (Augusto Boal)