

Tips for Serious Play: facilitators' preparation

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Introduction

As those facilitators among you will know, advance preparation is everything. Then, on the day, you have to arrive early enough to check the space (if you haven't been able to do this beforehand) and make any changes you need.

The next thing is how you prepare yourself. It's natural to feel tense: adrenaline helps you to stay alert and focussed in the early part of the session. It's important to channel this energy in a way that helps you prepare for the session, rather than try to ignore your anxiety.

Different things work for different people: e.g. breathing exercises or physical relaxation or a physical energiser. Other things that help are rehearsing lines, going through what you're going to say, visualising the process, walking around the space.

Next is the preparation of the group. On arrival for some kind of training session, most people will enter the room and behave in stereotyped ways designed to keep themselves safe: e.g. sitting beside people they know, sitting on the edge of the space. The preparation process enables the facilitator to create, with the group, a relaxed, welcoming and focussed environment in which people are ready to participate and learn. Taking the time to prepare properly at this point will bear fruits through the rest of the session.

Preparation exercises

Over the last three years we've added various exercises to our *Tips for Serious Play* section of the website. You can look these up:

Ice Breaker, Shark Attack, Vegetarian Breakfast, People to People, Power Circle, Electric Fence, Count to Ten, Ball Toss.

In addition, the following books provide useful references:

- Boal, A** (1992) "Games for Actors and Non-Actors" Routledge, London.
- Chambers, R** (2002) "Participatory Workshops: a sourcebook of 21 sets of ideas and activities" Earthscan, London.
- Johnston, C** (1998) "House of Games: making theatre from everyday life" Nick Hern Book, London.

What works for you? What preparation exercises do you use? Share ideas with us on our blog:

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