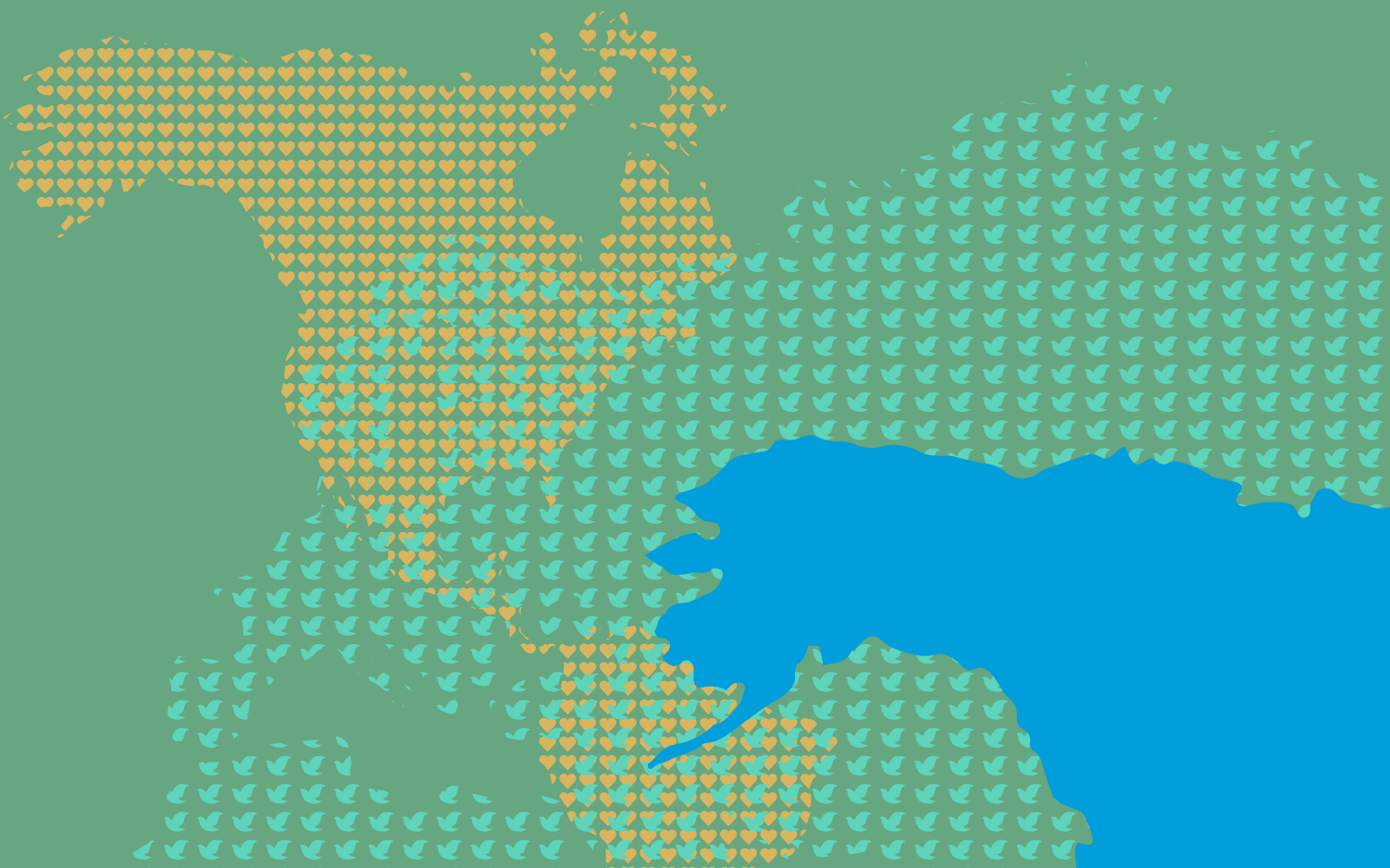




# Me and you – building peace through communication





## Mirroring

This team-building exercise suits groups that already have some experience working together. This exercise can build trust among participants. In this exercise, participants point out what they appreciate about the group and share some needs that they have for group work.

1. Ask the group to form a circle.
2. Share the purpose of the exercise, which is to share what everyone appreciates about the group and to understand some needs that participants have.
3. Ask each person to think individually about what they appreciate about the group. What makes them feel comfortable in this group? They can write notes if they wish to.
4. Ask participants to form pairs.
5. Ask pairs to share something about their thoughts to the other person. One does not have to share everything they thought. One person is telling first and the other is listening without interrupting or sharing their own ideas while it is the other's turn. Then pairs change turns and the second person is telling what makes them feel comfortable in the group and the first person is listening without interrupting.
6. Ask every pair to choose one or two elements that make them feel comfortable in the group, that they wish to share to the whole group.
7. Ask pairs to discuss, which one is feeling more comfortable with sharing their thoughts to the whole group.
8. Each pair tells 1–2 things that they appreciate about the group. You can choose to go one pair at a time around the circle or you can use "pop-corn-method" and ask the pairs to "pop when they are hot" and share their thoughts when they feel like it. Tell the others not to comment in any way, when one pair is sharing their thoughts. The other's role is to listen and concentrate on what is being said. Note that what people say may vary considerably and that's ok. The aim is to be open and listen without judgement.

After each pair's turn, ask that if anyone has the same thing that they appreciate about this group, raise their hands.

9. The process continues with the next pair sharing their thoughts until everyone has had their turn.
10. Once the exercise is complete, thank all the participants and ask them how it was like to listen to others without making comments and how it was to share their thoughts if they knew that no one would interrupt or make comments.
11. You can continue the exercise further, and ask participants to think and discuss what kind of changes in group dynamics would make them feel even more comfortable in the group than they do now. You can use a similar structure in the second round of thinking and sharing or use different group work methods. This exercise can be used as a tool in making agreements for safer space for your group.



## Group exercise with the youth and with your colleagues

This exercise is from Hilary Cremin and Terence Bevington's book "Positive peace in schools".

What is your perspective?

1. Start by reading the story "The blind men and the elephant". This is a traditional tale that originated in the Indian subcontinent. It has made its way into many world religions; a link to the Jain version is given below.

After reading, discuss the moral of the tale.

2. Stand in the middle of a circle of chairs and ask the participants to describe you, but only on the basis of what they can actually see. They can describe your clothes, hair or anything they actually see from where they are looking at you.

Discuss the fact that each person sees something different depending on where they are looking from.

Discuss the ways that this might happen in everyday life.

3. Show a picture of a place to the group. You can show any picture of any place, but something with many details might make this exercise more interesting.

Ask the participants to write down in secret what is the most important or interesting thing about the picture.

When they have finished, discuss what they wrote down.

Follow this up with a discussion about people seeing things differently, even when they are looking at the same thing.



## The Blind Men and the Elephant

James Baldwin

The Blind Men and the Elephant is a parable from India that has been adapted by many religions and published in various stories for adults and children. It is about a group of blind men who attempt to learn what an elephant is, each touching a different part, and disagreeing on their findings. Their collective wisdom leads to the truth.

*There were once six blind men who stood by the road-side every day, and begged from the people who passed. They had often heard of elephants, but they had never seen one; for, being blind, how could they?*

*It so happened one morning that an elephant was driven down the road where they stood. When they were told that the great beast was before them, they asked the driver to let him stop so that they might see him.*

*Of course they could not see him with their eyes; but they thought that by touching him they could learn just what kind of animal he was.*

*The first one happened to put his hand on the elephant's side. "Well, well!" he said, "now I know all about this beast. He is exactly like a wall."*

*The second felt only of the elephant's tusk. "My brother," he said, "you are mistaken. He is not at all like a wall. He is round and smooth and sharp. He is more like a spear than anything else."*

*The third happened to take hold of the elephant's trunk. "Both of you are wrong," he said. "Anybody who knows anything can see that this elephant is like a snake."*

*The fourth reached out his arms, and grasped one of the elephant's legs. "Oh, how blind you are!" he said. "It is very plain to me that he is round and tall like a tree."*

*The fifth was a very tall man, and he chanced to take hold of the elephant's ear. "The blindest man ought to know that this beast is not like any of the things that you name," he said. "He is exactly like a huge fan."*

*The sixth was very blind indeed, and it was some time before he could find the elephant at all. At last he seized the animal's tail. "O foolish fellows!" he cried. "You surely have lost your senses. This elephant is not like a wall, or a spear, or a snake, or a tree; neither is he like a fan. But any man with a par-ti-cle of sense can see that he is exactly like a rope."*

*Then the elephant moved on, and the six blind men sat by the roadside all day, and quarrelled about him. Each believed that he knew just how the animal looked; and each called the others hard names because they did not agree with him. People who have eyes sometimes act foolishly.*



## Group exercise with the youth

Ask the young people you are working with to answer the same questions that you answered in the previous exercise.

First work individually for 10 minutes and reflect on the questions below. Depending on the group, you can ask everyone to write down notes or just to reflect silently. You can have the questions visible to everyone on paper or on white board:

1. What do I need to feel comfortable participating in a group?
2. What do I need to feel respected?
3. What kind of behaviour makes me feel safe?
4. What kind of agreements make me feel safe?
5. How can I maintain safer space by my own actions?

Once everyone has reflected on these questions, form groups of three and ask young people to tell other members of their small group how they answered the questions. It is important to tell the young people that they can share as little as they wish to. We advise to ask one person of the group of three to tell about their thoughts at a time and the others just listen without commenting on the answers. You can be the timekeeper and tell when it is time to change turns. Once everyone has had their turn to tell about their reflections in their small group, the group can discuss what similarities and differences they had in their answers.

Collect answers to the questions from the group in the manner that suits you. For instance, you can write all the above questions on paper and stick them to a wall and ask young people to write their answers to post-it's and collect them under each question. Once you have answers to all questions visible to the group, you can start facilitating the process of creating your own guidelines for safer space for this group, taking into account all the answers that you collected from the group. The youth worker can facilitate actively at this point to really support the group in writing meaningful, realistic and achievable rules for safer space. Youth workers can also suggest new topics to the list, if it happens that some important aspects of safety are not addressed.

Once you have the first version of the guidelines for your rules for safer space written, start the work of maintaining the safer space. This includes evaluating and revising the rules every now and then and taking action if someone acts against the rules of safer space. It is important to re-establish safer space if and when it is broken. Constant work towards common goals will make the safer space more reliable and convincing for the participants.