



Learning Exercises for Health Training

Electronic Edition, 2008
A C Lynn Zelmer, Editor
www.zelmeroz.com/archives

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Dedicated to the memory of Sister Anne Cummins
Who encouraged the making of Govind
and created the Village of Jo-bhi-ho;
Who inspired the rest of us as we experimented
with new kinds of teaching,
with her obvious enjoyment and search for meaning;
Who loved the poor - the People whom
we want to reach and work with.

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[This image has been coloured since the original publication. Compare it with the uncoloured images in this manual and ask yourself "Does the colour

add anything useful to the image for instructional purposes?" "How does this image compare with a photograph of the same people?" LZ 2008]

Foreword

Development of the Manual

This Manual has evolved from some years of experience in workshops and short courses carried out in India by the staff members of the Voluntary Health Association of India (VHAI). Participative learning experiences, such as small group discussions, case studies, role plays, simulations and educational games were a major part of those programs.

In 1983 VHAI published **A Manual of Learning Exercises for Use in Health Training Programs In India** to meet the demand for copies of the exercises. The exercises in the Manual had been extensively tested within India and portrayed typical Indian situations. They met an Indian need for a basic set of training tools that could be adapted widely across India and the many Indian languages.

The demand for similar materials outside India prompted the writing of a new exercises that reflected a variety of cultures and settings. We added a number of drawings that illustrate people and their activities in various regions of the world.

With these additions we hope that that these materials will be equally useful to both Indian and International audiences.

The Acknowledgements give thanks to the individuals and institutions who require specific credit for major contributions. We want to also thank all the trainers and trainees who contributed their successes and failures to the development of this edition. We hope that this Manual will spread their ideas and suggestions ever more widely.

Reality in the Classroom

You have a problem. You want to involve your students more fully in the practical realities of health care and community development. However, you do not have the time or money for extensive field visits. Also, it is doubtful that a satisfactory teaching situation could be found for the many topics that you want to study.

- *Can some way be found to provide 'reality' experiences inside the classroom?*

- *Is it possible to train individuals who will be 'agents of change' in their communities?*

The authors of this Manual believe that there is a solution to part of your problem. We have successfully brought real world experiences into the classroom through the use of activities such as case studies, role playing exercises, games and simulations. These activities are sometimes known as experiential exercises or interaction exercises. For convenience we'll simply call them exercises or learning exercises.

In practical terms, reality is all around us. The places where we work and live are all part of that reality. As teachers, trainers, or instructors we sometimes describe parts of that reality in a simplified form for use in our training programs.

A case study is a good example of such a simplification. A case study describes those portions of a real situation that we want to study. The authors of this Manual have found case studies and other learning exercises particularly useful for training community change agents. They also work well as tools for mobilizing the community.

When we use an exercise we need to remember that it is a simplification, not the whole situation. Trainers should look seriously at any simplifications, a good trainer will not use a learning exercise that eliminates critical elements of reality.

How to Use this Manual

This Manual is organized into three sections. Each section can be used somewhat independently as they have been designed for a specific level of expertise.

The first section gives you the information necessary to select and use learning exercises. Read this section before you begin using learning exercises and refer to it as you begin to use your first exercises. It will provide you with the background to be successful in using the exercises.

The second section gives you suggestions on how to modify or design basic learning exercises. The first exercises that you use will

probably have been developed by your colleagues or taken from books such as this one. After using these exercises you can use the techniques suggested here to make your own simple games, role play exercises and case studies. These basic techniques can be applied to a wide variety of exercises and will allow you to prepare materials specifically for your own situation.

The third section is for a person with some experience using learning exercises. It contains a number of examples of learning exercises that have proved to be successful in health teaching. Some of the exercises have been extensively field-tested in one or more countries, other exercises are adaptations to show how they may be changed for other situations. Together they will give you a basic set of exercises to help you get started. Use them in your classroom. Adapt and change them to your own needs.

Finally, this Manual is meant to be a beginning. Use it as an aid to becoming a better trainer or teacher. Adapt the materials to fit your own situation. Share the materials and expertise that you develop with your colleagues, students, patients and the community. Learning can be fun!

A C Lynn Zelmer

Australia, March 1990

Introduction to the 2008 Electronic Edition

While I haven't been back to India since the early 1990s, I have continued to be involved in development work, most recently in Vanuatu and Fiji.

While there are newer items in print form, and thousands of items on the web, I've found that the resources we developed in the 1970s and 1980s are often still appropriate. They have a very practical approach and often emphasise principles, such as pre-testing, that seem to have been forgotten by more recent authors.

Unfortunately, many are out-of-print or otherwise difficult to find, unless they have been converted to electronic form and posted on the web.

This manual was reformatted from computer archive files that had been updated in 1990 for republication by VHAI. The electronic version was released in May 2008 and is part of the www.zelmeroz.com archives.

The manual contains all of the text and illustrations of the original. The manual has been reformatted and saved in pdf format files to minimize file sizes for downloading.

Page numbering is different from the original printed version(s). Extra footnotes [in square brackets] provide updates in some areas. Some additional minor editing has also been done for this electronic edition.

Most of the ideas and exercises in the manual remain valid today. However, the references have not been updated. Use the references as a guide for searching the web. Alternatively, check your local library for current resources.

International Communications Institute closed in 1988. Lynn Zelmer now lives in Australia and can be contacted at lynn@zelmeroz.com. VHAI is still very active in India and has a web site at www.vhai.org.

A C Lynn Zelmer

Australia, May 2008



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Section 1 Selecting and Using Learning Exercises

This section introduces you to learning exercises. The first part explains some of the basic terminology and the reasons for using learning exercises. The second part provides

techniques and questions for evaluating these exercises for your specific situation. The last part includes procedures for making effective use of some selected types of learning exercises.



The Basics of Learning Exercises

Learning activities can take many different forms. Some topics can be learned through reading. Other topics require laboratory or workshop exercises to enable the student to practice techniques. The successful training program will require a combination of techniques. This section will introduce some techniques that can bring practical experiences into the classroom.

Learning Can Be Fun

Learning occurs in many ways:

- we can sit in a classroom and listen to a lecture;
- we can read a book;
- we can practice skills under the direction of a master craftsman;
- we can experiment with new techniques and skills;
- we can think about something we have done;
- we can discuss our experiences with friends;
- etc.

We learn from everything that we do.

As children, we learn in both formal and informal educational settings. Folk tales and instructions from one's parents represent the informal setting. School represents the formal setting. Adults seem more likely to use informal learning settings. We learn from our colleagues, and from the mistakes that we make in our daily work.

Learning seems to occur best when we combine informal learning experiences and thoughtful examination of those experiences. Learning exercises are a technique to bring informal learning into the classroom. We can then reinforce these learnings with discussion and more formal instruction.

Training programs don't have to be dull, boring and serious to be useful. In our work with adults in many countries we have found that some of the best learning occurs when the learners are enjoying themselves in a learning exercise. These exercises are often boisterous and active, but they more accurately portray reality than a lecture or a reading from a book.

The learning exercises in this Manual are an attempt to make learning interesting and enjoyable.

What Are They?

Some of these learning exercises are very limited in their use, designed to reinforce one idea or technique. The cards games, board games, and 'drill' exercises fit this category.

Other exercises are open-ended and can have a variety of uses and outcomes. Role play exercises, case studies and simulations have quite specific teaching objectives; however their outcome can be quite different every time that the exercise is used.

Please note that it often requires more work to use a game or an exercise than it does to simply read lecture notes aloud. There are also some hazards involved for the unsuspecting instructor.

We firmly believe that learning should be fun for both you and your students. We also know that this will take a lot of planning and hard work. The last part of this section contains instructions for using these exercises. Section 2, *Making Learning Exercises*, contains more detailed definitions of three common types of exercise. Read on to find out how you can make your classes interesting and more useful.

The simplest exercise might involve a set of wooden cubes with the faces painted with various foods (see page 30). The student throws the cubes like dice or cowrie shells, examines the foods shown on the top, and describes a day's meals from the foods shown. The other students in the group can question the diet described, and the first student must defend his or her choices.

The children's game of snakes and ladders (see pages 30 and 43) is more complex. It has been adapted for nutrition, sanitation and public health, as well as many other health education topics. You can use illustrations (pictures or drawings) instead of words if the people using the exercise cannot read. Players are normally required to explain the health practice illustrated on the square where their token lands.

Adapting Bingo or Loto-Loto is even more complex (see page 47). Instead of calling numbers, one player calls definitions or practices which must be matched with corresponding words or abbreviations on the individual player cards. Again, pictures or drawings can be used for illiterate users.

These first three types of exercise are useful for providing drill in basic concepts, for informal use as 'fun' activities in an unmonitored situation, or as a 'reward' for completing more structured work.

The In-Basket exercise (see page 35) uses the forms, letters, memos, and other documents which someone would use in a work situation. Users are required to make decisions based upon the information provided in the documents.

Role play (32 and 6 ff) and case study (pages 32 and 6 ff) exercises are short descriptions of work situations. In a case study the description is used to guide a discussion of the events leading up to or following the event. The role play description is used as the basis of an enactment of the situation described. The participants react as if the situation was real, and the remainder of the class uses the presentation as a basis for discussion.

In-Baskets, case studies and role play exercises can be used to examine specific work or life situations. They can be used in regular classrooms with a minimum of preparation and can be focused on very specific topics.

Simulated patients are useful for training students who will have to deal with 'people' problems. The 'patients' are given a role to play and coached in their responses. The student must perform as if the patient was real.

The empathy exercise teaches communications skills. Some may be very short but many empathy exercises will take several hours to complete.

Simulations and empathy exercises often require extensive preparation and several hours to present. This Manual focuses on the simpler exercises. More complicated exercises require an experienced instructor and careful planning. Start with simple exercises in your classes. As

you gain experience you will be able to attempt more complex activities.

Teaching with Learning Exercises

Teaching styles and techniques have changed over time. Most technical and vocational areas used an apprenticeship format, the new employee learned while working. As the body of knowledge in any particular area increased it became necessary to substitute classroom instruction for work experience. Now almost all instruction is in the classroom. This makes it difficult for students to apply what they have learned in the classroom to real life.

We have found that the selective use of learning exercises can bring some of that reality back into the classroom. We have found that people learn well from being involved in these exercises. Both adults and children enjoy learning when the learning experience is familiar and based upon real-world activities.

- Exercises can be designed for individual, small group or large group use.
- They can be designed so that they can be used within the classroom timetable.
- Some exercises, like many games, can often be used by students without an instructor.
- The use of learning exercises is based upon the theory that we learn differently by doing than we do from being told.
- The exercises isolate a small piece of reality for study. The students are asked to change that reality in some way.
- People can be hurt or even die in the real world if we make a mistake. The exercises can often be very real for the participants but no one should be hurt by the exercise.

The use of these exercises depends upon the students and instructor sharing a common experience and discussing why and how the events occurred. This discussion must be followed by a discussion of how the experience applies to the real world.

The classroom where learning exercises are used in teaching or testing may be quite different from a traditional classroom. Exercises with a lot of interaction are usually noisier than

lectures because the students will be moving about and talking with each other.

Why Use Them?

Exercises can be useful in our teaching, but you make the decision whether or not to use a particular exercise based upon your knowledge of good teaching techniques. This section will list some of the advantages of using learning exercises; some of the disadvantages will be discussed later in this Manual.

Safety: The beginning student is often inept at his/her job, perhaps even dangerous. It can be unsafe for both the patient and the student, yet simple situations for student 'practice' are not always available. A well planned simulation or exercise may be the answer.

The student's first attempts at giving hypodermic injections, for example, can be painful, and dangerous, for the patient. We can provide a safe alternative by giving the student an orange which simulates the patient. The student gains basic needle-handling skills by injecting water into the orange.

Economy: Some experiences are far too costly and/or dangerous to set up solely as a teaching situation. Complex simulations are not always required. Perhaps the answer is an exercise using a dummy or a fellow student.

Time Compression or Expansion: Laboratory test results often take several days to obtain. For teaching purposes it is often necessary to have immediate results. Perhaps we might use a simulated (role playing) patient who comes briefed with the proper responses, and who has simulated test results for any required lab tests.

The exercise *Choosing a Village* described in Section 3 creates a new health centre, a health team, and four villages. The health team makes informal visits to each of the four villages to decide where to begin their work. Information is provided for each village and the team is asked to make a decision complete with the reasons for the decision. Many important principles can be brought out in a short time. Similar meetings would take many weeks in a live situation, even if they could be set up for teaching purposes.

Time expansion is also possible. For example, the students can be given time to discuss and decide what to do in a simulated emergency.

Selective: Sometimes it might be useful to concentrate on a single element of the problem. Exercises can exclude anything that would be distracting or confusing.

Synthesize: At the beginning of a unit we can use an exercise to introduce the topic. At the end of the unit an exercise can be used to show how the new learnings fit in with previous knowledge. The exercises can be used to demonstrate the ability to apply classroom knowledge.

Exercises that can be used for this purpose include the In-Basket, the Case Study and any of the memory drill activities.

Testing: Testing can be enjoyed instead of feared. Games and similar exercises can be used by students to test their mastery of the subject. More formal activities can be used by the instructor to assess the student's performance.

Repeatable: The exercises allow the students (or the instructor) to repeat a situation several times. Different (or additional) data can be presented each time, or the participants can merely try different techniques.

Variety: Most teachers want to provide some variety in their classes. Exercises can provide a break from normal classroom lectures. The differences between students also demand a variety in your class activities. The same exercise can be made simpler or more complex to allow for differences in ability among your classes. Section 2 will give you some guidelines for making such variations.

The authors have found that school children will react favourably to a learning exercise at almost any time. However, children often find it difficult to make the connection between the exercise and learning.

Older students and adults often have difficulty believing that learning can be fun. Once they are convinced that the instructor has a good reason for using an exercise they enter into it with enthusiasm. Their maturity and experience can lead to a good learning situation.

Learning By Participating

Simple learning exercises such as Spelling Bees and multiplication table drills have been with us for many years. Children and adults enjoy the interaction and involvement that these activities encourage. We all learn from participating in activities such as these.

The exercises in this Manual are not particularly new. They are extensions of the basic idea of learning by participating. Learners have already accepted interaction and participation for drill and memory work. Problem solving, looking at the causes and effects of behaviour, and situations requiring empathy are areas where we can apply some of the exercises in this Manual.

Potential users of learning exercises should participate in such exercises whenever we have a chance. As trainers we usually teach in the

same way that we were taught. Most of us were taught in a classroom using lectures. We therefore tend to use lectures and a formal classroom situation when we teach others. If we get some practice as participants in well run exercises we will feel more confident about using them in our own classrooms.

The authors have used exercises such as these in all parts of the world and with learners of all ages. Sometimes the exercises were simple and a light diversion from the regular classroom. At other times whole courses were designed using exercises such as those in this Manual. Some learners accept the idea of learning by participating immediately. Others must be shown how the techniques work. Almost always they will agree that they do learn while they are having fun.



Evaluating Materials

The use of any training material begins with the selection of an appropriate exercise for your particular use. Selection begins with an examination of your training objectives.

The wise trainer always begins by asking the following questions:

- *What are the learning objectives?*
- *Are the resource materials currently being used satisfactory?*
- *What are the students like?*
- *How much money and time do we have available for this topic?*

Remember that advertisements and guides can never give you a complete picture of how a particular exercise will work in your own specific situation. Look closely at a copy of the exercise, particularly the instructor's manual.

Conduct a trial run of the most promising exercises. Keep a record of your observations and participant comments for both trial runs and actual uses of all the exercises you use. This way you will eventually develop your own directory of useful materials.¹

Include the comments of other users when appropriate, but remember that this record is for your own personal use.

Evaluation Questions

When you are evaluating training exercises it is useful to have a number of questions in your mind. The following questions are used by the authors when evaluating training materials:

- *What knowledge is the student expected to have for this exercise?* Is the exercise too easy for your students? Too difficult? Does it fit within the course objectives?
- *Is there anything else that would do a better job of teaching the topic that this exercise attempts to teach?* What modifications will have to be made to use the exercise?
- *How expensive is this exercise?* How much time and effort will be required to use the

exercise? Does it require any special facilities for its operation?

- *Does the exercise portray the world in the way that we want?* Does the exercise depend too much upon chance? Does the exercise depend upon prejudice or stereotypes? Is the exercise fair?
- *Can we feel comfortable using the exercise?* Learning exercises seem to work best with trainers who have experienced exercises as a participant as well as a leader. Do you have enough experience to use this exercise? Is there too much of a chance of someone being hurt emotionally or physically?

Student Evaluations

The notes you make in evaluating materials will be of value for both selecting materials and for course planning. It is very easy to forget details over time, and your modifications to an exercise will make the original directions invalid. Your notes about how the exercise ran will be necessary to remind you of the changes.

Your students can help you evaluate materials too. One way to do this is to prepare a simple one-page sheet of evaluation questions for distribution after an exercise. Questions could include the following:

- *How useful was the exercise to you?*
- *How much did you learn from the simulation itself?*
- *How much did you learn from the debriefing?*
- *The specific points which I learned during this exercise were....*
- *Would you recommend this exercise to others?*
- *What were the strengths of this exercise?*
- *What were the weaknesses of this exercise?*
- *What improvements would you suggest for future use?*

The questions could require written answers or marks on a simple scale. The first question above, for example, could have a five point scale running from *Not Useful* to *Very Useful*.

¹ This would also be a good place to record your observations on the suitability of the exercises that you have participated in during your training.

Summarize the results for your notes, and use the results to make needed changes to the exercise.

For students who do not read or write well, ask some of these questions informally after the session is over. Again, make notes on their answers.

Brainstorming can be used to combine a review session and evaluation. Have the participants quickly list all of the points that they learned in the exercise. As usual with brainstorming, list all of the points without comment. Encourage everyone to participate regardless of how 'silly'

they might regard their response. The technique can be used the morning following the exercise, or perhaps every week on a longer course. It is best done in small group sessions (4 to 10 persons); the results can be shared with the larger group after the small groups are finished.

In practice we have tended to rely upon our own evaluations of an exercise in preference to those contained in the directories and advertisements. We normally use a participant evaluation of any exercise which we are using for the first time, or which we have developed or modified ourselves.

Simulation/Gaming Evaluation Card			
Name of Exercise:		Subject Area:	
Source:		Cost:	
Language & Level:	Age Level:	Skills Req'd:	
No. of Players:	Type of Activity:	Playing Time & Facilities Req'd"	
Objectives:			
Summary of Major Events of Exercise:			
Evaluation Comments (include Date and Source):			
Recommendation:			
Evaluator: (Continue comments on back)		Date:	

[A printed card similar to this was used by the editor in the 1970s and 80s to maintain a semi-permanent record of resources and their evaluation results. The completed cards were stored in a small metal file box.

Today it's more likely that we would use a computer database program, or a table in Word/Excel. In any case, we would have a record of resources, their potential utility, and where to obtain them. LZ 2008]

Procedures For Using Exercises

You have selected an exercise for your classroom. The exercise is one that fits your educational goals, and also fits the available time and experience of the participants. This section will give you guidance in actually using the exercise.

Preparation

The first step in running any exercise is to **Stop and Reread the Instructions** for the exercise you are planning to use.

- Read both the student's materials and the instructor's guide.
- Make a list of any special materials required, the amount of time needed to run the exercise, etc.
- *Mentally* go through the steps of the exercise noting again any places where you think that there might be difficulties.

Next, gather a small group of people and try out the exercise with them. Often you can enlist the help of your family, students, or friends to help with this trial run.

- Complete every step of the exercise.
- Make notes of difficulties.
- Make any required changes to the exercise and rerun with a trial group if necessary.
- Repeat the changes and trial runs until you are happy with the exercise.

Physical Facilities

Many exercises can be run in a standard classroom. However a standard classroom may be too small for some exercises, especially if the class must divide into small groups. Often the small groups need spaces for discussion away from the other participants.

Seminar rooms, hostel rooms, hallways, lunchrooms and outdoor spaces can all be used to create extra space for the exercise. Remember to coordinate with your colleagues when you will be using common spaces. It is useful to have alternate spaces as well. For example, we planned on using hostel rooms for small group meetings during one exercise. However our plans had to change when one of the rooms was required for a sick student.

Do not underestimate the space needs of a learning exercise. Often exercises are much noisier than a normal class, and small groups need quiet space for discussion and planning.

Scheduling Time

Learning exercises do not fit into the regular classroom schedule as easily as lectures. Some longer exercises can be broken into smaller units to fit the class schedule. Other exercises must be used in a single long time span. Schedule and book the physical facilities required, and make sure that the colleagues helping you will be free for the required time. Obviously student timetable conflicts must also be resolved.

We have sometimes forgotten that scheduling also involves a human factor. Learning from more than one such lapse we will no longer schedule a film immediately after a meal. The viewers often go to sleep. Participation in an active exercise requires energy and concentration. We therefore won't schedule an active exercise immediately before a meal if we can help it.

A day long exercise may require special arrangements for communal meals. This avoids a break in the continuity of the exercise. Sometimes however, we have deliberately broken for a meal (or tea) to give the participants a chance to get away from the exercise for a few minutes. Adult groups particularly appreciate light refreshments (tea and biscuits) during a long session.

Preparing Materials

Many exercises will not be available as a 'package' with all of the required materials.²

You will usually have to duplicate the required paper materials before using the exercise. You may also have to purchase extra materials to make the exercise work. For example, a board game or an adaptation of a traditional game might require dice or other materials to play the

² Notes on adapting the exercise for a different culture are provided in Section 2, Making Learning Exercises.

game. Some form of counter may also be required (seeds, stones, coins, etc.).

Look for substitutes for materials that aren't available locally. A tape recorder or even a role play could take the place of a telephone or paging system, mimeographed notes for letters, etc. Photographs or drawings might take the place of expensive equipment.

The following materials are extremely useful for making any exercise work:

- notepaper and pencils,
- carbon paper for making quick duplicate copies of last minute instructions,
- a large chalkboard (and chalk) or large sheets of paper (and markers, sketch pens or charcoal) for the instructor's use,
- a chalkboard (and chalk) or large sheets of paper (again with markers, sketch pens or charcoal) for each group if they will be reporting their activities. This is very important for large groups.
- coloured paper, cardboard, scissors, paste, etc. for making counters, game cards, and other miscellaneous materials.

Try and keep a stock of these materials on hand for classroom use, and try to use facilities that contain built-in resources such as chalkboards. You might also make a collection of locally available materials such as shells, hard seeds, etc., that can be used to substitute for the commercial materials that are specified for some exercises.

All this may seem like a lot of work for you, but once you have assembled your own package of materials it will be very easy to run the exercise again whenever you need it.

Prepare all the required materials well in advance of the exercise. Delays in distributing materials to participants, or a last minute panic to prepare materials can destroy the educational value of the exercise.

Last, but not least, remember to ensure that physical facilities will be available for personal needs. A day long exercise without toilets available will be a disaster.

Preparing the Group (Briefing)

A good learning situation requires a good introduction. The students need to know the objectives of the activity, and what is expected of them as participants. They need to know when and how they are to participate.

Keep the students well informed about schedule and other changes.

With groups which have not used games before we usually begin the introduction with a general explanation of experience-based education. This explanation would very briefly include a description of different styles of exercises and why we are using this exercise. All groups need an explanation of how this exercise fits within the instructional goals of their course.

The initial briefing provides an opportunity to explain special activities. Some exercises, for example, require the participants to keep a diary of events encountered during the activity. The use of simulated 'patients' requires the participants to 'pretend', this change from normal reality must be explained.

The timetable of activities should be explained during the briefing, even participants in a very short exercise deserve to know how long the exercise will take and what activities are expected. Anticipated discussion questions might be introduced at this time as well; this helps explain how the student should view the exercise.

Many social or empathy type exercises require 'roles' to be assigned to individual participants.

- It is usually useful to explain how you selected the persons for each role. This avoids the feeling that "*you are picking on me*".
- Assigning roles randomly ensures that every participant will have an equal opportunity to have a 'good' role.
- Sometimes you can ask for volunteers, but you must be careful that everyone takes part and that there wasn't any pressure on any individual to 'volunteer' for a particular part.

Learning exercises are usually most effective when every person present is involved. Passive observers, individuals who 'just want to watch', should probably be asked to leave for the

duration of the exercise. Alternatively it might be necessary to cancel or postpone the exercise.

Visitors who drop in during the exercise should also be discouraged unless the participants have previously given their approval for the visit.

In general, it has been our experience that non-involved observers destroy the purpose of the exercise. This is particularly true when the observers are line supervisors or other persons in a position of authority.

The method you use to assign roles and explain the purpose of the exercise will determine how the participants accept the 'reality' of the situation. You want participants to react as if the situation was real, you do not want people just 'playing games'.

Operating the Exercise

Generally speaking, let the exercise operate itself. Many of the simpler exercises will require no instructor supervision at all. The participants can carry out the directions for the exercises themselves, and can even provide their own briefing and follow-up discussion.

- Do let the participants make their own mistakes. Do not point out solutions that are obvious to you but not to them.
- Do not put a value judgment on 'correct' behaviour; people often learn more from their mistakes than from correctly performing an activity. One of the benefits of learning exercises is that it is safe to make mistakes. We often learn from our mistakes.
- Do not change the rules in the middle of the exercise without reason. Sometimes it is very tempting to make changes during the exercise. For example, it is very tempting to add information or withhold information from participants *to see what might happen if....?* Another temptation is to make changes if the exercise is not working as well as expected. Deliberate manipulation and arbitrary decisions are usually unrealistic, confusing and annoying.
- Do observe what is happening during the exercise, making notes where necessary. Be particularly aware of changes that the participants make to the rules so that you may improve the exercise for the next use.

Changing the rules sometimes changes the learnings too. Help the participants feel that it is 'OK' to change the rules if there are good reasons for the changes. Help them recognize the changes in rules and learnings.

- Be flexible with time limits. Individual groups will require differing times for the same activity. Watch for the completion of activities and operate accordingly.
- Be flexible in your personal style. Most learning exercises will benefit from a less authoritarian teacher role than is common in many classrooms.
- Do not explain events or interactions to participants. You should be more of a manager of the learning experience than a giver of information.
- The best preparation for running these exercises is to participate yourself; then assist someone else to run a number of exercises. Having the experience of participating will enable you to judge more readily the appropriate response to a particular event or question during an exercise.
- Above all, stay calm and accept events as they happen. Never assume a fixed outcome.
- Have fun.

Follow-up Activities (Debriefing)

Experience-based exercises require both an adequate introduction and follow-up. 'Debriefing' is used to describe the discussions and other activities required to bring the learner back into the normal world after a period of role-playing or similar activity.

The follow-up or debriefing activities might include a discussion immediately after the exercise. Other activities may take a longer time and resemble more usual assignments. All follow-up activities attempt to relate the activity to the real world. Good follow-up explains the importance of the exercise to the participant's normal work and helps improve performance.

The importance of the debriefing cannot be over-emphasized. The lack of follow-up often leaves the learner frustrated and unable to apply the skills taught by the exercise. Learning activities often involve the learner emotionally and psychologically in a way that a reading

assignment cannot. The learner needs help to understand feelings, both his own and those of the patient or client group under study.

For example, we can remember one exercise where the instructor neglected the debriefing. The exercise was simple; all of the participants were given a paper crown to wear. Each crown had a message which the wearer couldn't see, but the other participants could read and respond to. One girl's crown read "*I am a clown, laugh at me*". Whenever she spoke, we laughed. She was hurt by this laughter and became very quiet.

The instructors missed seeing her hurt, and didn't include this in the debriefing. Her hurt feelings affected the way she worked in the group and made it very difficult for her to learn.

In short, we feel that **if the time cannot be allotted to debrief the exercise, then there is not enough time for the use of the exercise.**

The students will likely learn as much from reflecting upon their reactions to events of the exercise as they will from doing the exercise itself.

Debriefing activities might be conducted individually, in small groups, in large groups, or some combination of all three.

- A short exercise, a crossword puzzle or similar game would require an opportunity to correct errors and discuss the corrections.
- Short exercises used for practice, drill or testing may not seem related to the course or the academic level of the student. Use the debriefing to fit these activities into the student's ongoing learning.
- For exercises with more complex goals we have often had groups begin with two or three discussion questions within the working groups of the exercise. The small groups can then report on their activities to the whole group.
- The instructor has the responsibility of keeping the discussion 'on topic', allowing as many people as possible to participate, and occasionally suggesting ideas or examples from his/her own experience.
- The total debriefing session often lasts more than an hour, even for a short exercise.

- Long simulations, such as hospital/clinic management exercises or casualty simulations, might best be debriefed by giving the participants a number of questions at the beginning of the exercise and asking them to keep a diary or series of reports on their activities. These notes then become a basis for discussion.
- Written assignments or readings can also be given to help relate the exercise to the regular classroom teaching.
- Some exercises generate a number of records about how the participants acted. For example, decisions may have to be made in writing, or charts completed showing action taken. These documents arising out of the exercise can also be examined to detect problems in the approach taken to a task.

The introduction should stress what to look for in the exercise. The debriefing checks out whether the participants did, in fact, learn what you wanted them to learn; and provides an opportunity to give feedback on performance.

- *Why did a particular activity or result occur?*
- *What else could have happened?*
- *What would happen if...?*
- *What would you do differently if you were in the same situation again?*
- *Of all the potential responses that you could have made, why did you choose the one you did?*

The Next Step

In this section we have explained the use of learning exercises. We have explained how to select and evaluate learning exercises for your own situation. We have explained how to set up and operate a learning exercise.

The next section shows you how to modify existing exercises to make them more useful. It also explains how to develop your own exercises using typical situations in your community that need studying. The third section of this book provides examples of exercises that have been used successfully in various parts of the world.

The next step is up to you. *Good Luck in your use of learning exercises.*