**Title: Understanding Power – I Can, You Can, We Can**

**Introduction to the Lesson**

This is the first in a series of 6 one-hour lessons written by consultant, Lucy Holbrook, which explore the concept of “power” – power over, power to, power with and power within. The aim is to give learners a comprehensive Power Toolkit that includes an understanding of how to use their internal body resources to support that external process of non-violent social change. Please see the supporting document written by Lucy explaining the rationale for the lessons (Resource Sheet 72).

In this lesson learners are introduced to the four types of power.

**Curriculum links:** RSHE, Citizenship, English, Drama, Expressive arts

**Learning Outcomes:**

* To understand four different TYPES of Power and how they link to non-violent action.
* To start to reflect on what power looks like (behaviours)? Sound like? Feel like?

**Concepts:**

**TYPES** of Power

Power Over – one or group dominates or controls another

Power To – individual ability to act, linked to idea of capability

Power With – collective action, the ability to act together

Power Within – individual or collective self-worth and dignity

**Key Vocabulary**:

Power

Power Over/To/With/Within

Powerful

Powerless

**Resources:**

Poem: ‘Power’ by Edwina Matthews <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/power-2/>

Story Cubes <https://www.storycubes.com/en/>

Resource sheet 70: Types of power activity sheet

Resource sheet 71: Types of power examples sheet  
PowerPoint (optional)

**a. Starter activity**

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| --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Time** |
| 1. Start by introducing “Power” as the topic for this lesson; explain that you will be exploring 4 different types of power.   Either read, or have learners read, the poem “Power” by Edwina Matthews: <https://www.poemhunter.com/poem/power-2/> | 3 mins. |
| 2. Invite learners in pairs/table groups to have a discussion about what they think power is. How might each of the different descriptions of power in the poem look? sound? feel?  N.B**.** Another option here is to allocate each pair/group 1 or 2 sections of the poem to focus on. | 5 mins. |
| 3. Gather verbal feedback from the groups on their thoughts and feelings; summarise their input and introduce the definition of power as “the ability to act or do”. | 7 mins. |

**b. Main activities**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Activity** | **Time** |
| 1. **Introduce the four different types of power**[[1]](#footnote-1)  * **Power Over** (most common understanding of power -control or domination by one person/group over others; power of strong over the weak; associated with coercion, force, corruption and abuse.) * **Power To** (refers to each person’s unique ability to make a decision & take action to bring about change; to shape our own lives. Where there is mutual support between individuals, **power to** opens up possibilities for collective action or **power with.)** * **Power With** (others – collective power of speaking out and acting jointly… collaboration & collective support and organisation, we are more powerful as a group than as a series of individuals.) * **Power Within** (the power to imagine, hope, dream; similar toself-confidence and linked with sense of awareness & self-worth & belief they can make changes - also “empowered”.)   Ask learners in pairs/table groups to discuss what they think the difference between these types of power is? Can they think of an example for each type of power? This could be recorded on RS70 (some examples are on RS71). | 5 mins.  15 mins. |
| 2. Using the Story Cubes ask each pair or group to create a story about one of the four different types of power. Ask them to pick one of the four randomly from folded bits of paper | 25 mins. |

**c. Reflection**

Have a class discussion on what role each of these four types of power plays in non-violent action. Work through them one at a time. It may be helpful to offer a reminder of one of the case studies already explored in other NVAFC lessons.

**d.** **Suggested follow-up activities[[2]](#footnote-2)**

**1. Feeling Power – reflection, creative writing or drawing (10-15 mins)**

Ask learners to think about “a personal experience in which you felt powerful, powerless or

empowered”. This exercise can be done as a moment of quiet recollection, without writing, or

as a writing exercise. Drawing can also be used. Some guidelines to learners:

* Choose one particular incident or event, rather than a broad experience over time.
* Choose an experience that you feel comfortable sharing with other learners; not

something that will be traumatic to explore in this setting.

* Use a creative, rich narrative and imagery to bring the event to life. Think about the

Following aspects of the event:

• What is the setting? • Who are the characters? • What is happening with the senses (sight, sound, touch, smell, etc.)? • What is the action or dialogue? • What feelings and emotions did you or other characters experience (anger, confusion, sadness, elation)?

Ask learners to use “rich description” in their recollection, writing or drawing, and keep their

focus on the above dimensions of the story, rather than creating a summary or analysis of

what happened. Ask them to think about it like a scene in a movie or book, in a way that

allows someone else to experience the moment.

**If using writing...** you can invite learners to use a “freefall” method... and offer these

guidelines: [credit Barbara Turner here]

• Let the writing lead and see where it takes you.

• Do not censor yourself or correct your language.

• Go “fearwards” (to areas that may be sensitive).

• Bring the event to life: senses, feelings, actions, dialogue.

• Avoid shifting into analysis, summary mode, or generalisations.

Allow 6-10 minutes for writing. Encourage learners to write in whatever language they are

most comfortable writing in.

**If using drawing**... for those interested in visual images, and with learners who are less

literate, drawing or painting is an option. Provide paper, coloured pens or pastels, or paints.

Encourage learners to be free with colours, shapes, symbols and stick figures, and reassure

them that it doesn’t have to be pretty or realistic.

**If just reflecting...** If time is short, and with less literate learners, as for a 4-5 minute period

of silent reflection, during which learners can write or draw if they wish. Ask them to focus on

evoking the image and feeling of the moment, as if they were there.

**Other creative media...** Those who would like to explore movement, poetry or song can also

do so, but as with the writing and drawing, encourage them to do this in a spontaneous and

improvised way, rather than creating a polished product.

**2. Telling Power (storytelling)** (15-20 minutes)

In small groups of 3 or 4 people, ask learners to take turns sharing their stories (reflection,

writing, drawing, poems, pictures, songs, etc.), allowing about 3-5 minutes per person. Ask

each group to have a timekeeper, or use a bell or signal to indicate when to change. Invite

learners to either read their writing or tell the story (show drawing, etc.), or if it is too sensitive, to talk about what it was like to recollect the story. Pictures and narrative stories can work well together.

Suggest to the groups that after each story or sharing, the other two members should

respond and acknowledge what they have heard very briefly, sharing one or two words about

how they feel in response, but without getting into questions, discussion or analysis.

(Note: if using the following exercise it is important to ask learners to refrain from moving into

interpretation or analysis of their stories. Keep it at the tacit and emotional level for now, in

order to get the most out of these exercises.)

**3. Enacting Power (drama and body sculpting)** (30-60 minutes depending on group size)

**Preparation**

In the same groups of 3 or 4, choose one story that you will ‘enact’ with a brief body sculpture

or acted scene (skit/sketch). A body sculpture means positioning group members in relation

to each other in a symbolic, abstract configuration, or like a snapshot of one moment (or a

couple of moments). This may be frozen and silent or could include a repetitive movement

and sounds. A short sketch or skit acting out the scene is also OK, but should be kept to one

or two key moments, not the whole story. The moment can also be transposed into a fantasy,

myth, or fairy tale or use animals or fictional characters instead of the actual people.

**Guidelines for groups**

* Choose the story or scene you want to represent, or make a combination of more than one

story if there is a common theme.

* If a body sculpture or tableau, decide what image you want to make, how the group

members will be positioned in relation to each other and if any/all are to make a movement and/or sound and how these movements and sounds will connect.

* If a skit/sketch, decide roles, dialogue and action; keep your scene to a brief and critically

important moment, not the whole story.

* Practice briefly to ensure that it ‘works’ for you.

**Important safety tips for facilitators**

* Give permission for anyone not comfortable with acting or body work to observe rather

than participate in the enactment.

* Ask participants to be self-aware of their actions and movements and how others in their

scene might experience them.

* Suggest that any physical contact be imitated, leaving spaces between actors (unless

learners are experienced with theatre and are confident and comfortable with each other).

* Be aware of any cultural and gender norms in what is acceptable for physical contact in a

public setting.

**Performances**

Designate a stage on one side of the room. Ask the groups to present their scenes.

Following each brief presentation, ask the audience (other participants) to share their

initial reactions (one or two words) on how they feel after seeing the sculpture/tableau.

Then the group who presented can briefly explain what the tableau/sculpture was about.

**Discussion**

After all the presentations are done, a discussion can be facilitated to draw out the

different experiences of power, powerlessness, empowerment (or themes related to citizenship, moments of contradiction, ethical dilemmas, depending on the theme being explored) that were represented, and to begin to analyse their meaning.

Participants should be encouraged to develop their own theories and explanations and

to share any concepts they may already be familiar with from readings, prior experience, etc.

1. **\*Acknowledgement**

   This information comes from “Powercube.net” (expressions of power) – the online resource for understanding power relations in efforts to bring about social change which is well worth reading. With thanks to John Gaventa and his team at The Participation, Power and Social Change team at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex <https://www.powercube.net/> <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. These activities were adapted from Jethro Petit [**https://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/sample\_workshop1.pdf**](https://www.powercube.net/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/sample_workshop1.pdf)

   https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/3.0/ [↑](#footnote-ref-2)