

BASIC STATUS EXERCISES

Adapted from *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* by Augusto Boal

WALKABOUT (or “Flow”)

- Stop in front of another student and high five, then move on to another student. After a while, add a second high five to the greeting. Later add a spin jump, hip check, etc. etc.
- Add imaginative scenarios for ways of moving through the space: e.g. underwater, late for class, floor covered in peanut butter, floor covered in ping pong balls, etc. etc.
- Segue into moving through the space with varying levels of status —
 - everybody high status
 - everybody low status
 - split the room high and low (using birthday months or alphabetical by first name)
- encourage students to observe how their relationships to others in the group change when their status shifts. What feelings, thoughts, or impulses arise? Switch status and see what you notice.

THE CROWD MAKES THE KING Continuing in the walkabout structure, instruct students to move through the space in neutral status. One student will be chosen at random and named the highest status person in the room. They are instructed not to do anything special with this status, but that everyone else in the room will have to adjust the way they move and interact with this person in order to GIVE them status. Periodically change the character that is the highest status. (Improvisation variant: encourage students to begin adding text to their relationships to see what arises.)

STATUS SWITCH Split the group in half, and have each half line up on one side of the room. Using a drum to set a beat, instruct the first person in each line to walk to the center of the room, meet their partner in the middle (from the line on the opposite side), and then continue to the other side. Do this several times with different instructions, sometimes with the whole group moving at once, and also one at a time to observe the encounters in the middle of the room:

- Everybody is high status / everybody is low.
- One side is high status, the other is low.
- One side is high status, the other is low, but during the encounter in the middle *something happens that causes them to switch*. See what develops.
- Switch often enough so each student gets a chance to try each way of moving across the space.