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Description:

Role-playing is an affective technique in which students assume roles in a well-articulated scenario in which the purpose is clearly defined.

Uses:

Role-playing is useful when students need to explore an experience or a new perspective, practice new skills, or prepare for a new or difficult situation. It works well in a training program in which people are learning new skills.

Materials:

Well-defined scenarios with clear role-player and observer instructions.

Instructions:

1. Design a role-play scenario that will address the issue/concern/skills you want students to explore.
2. Write role-play instructions clearly, providing enough information so students have a sense of the characters they are playing. However, give the students enough freedom to improvise. (i.e. it is not a play with a script)
3. Explain the purpose of the role-play clearly since students are often self-conscious and uncomfortable doing this type of exercise.
4. Be sensitive when casting students into roles.
5. Provide clear instructions to observers regarding what they should be looking for and how they can provide feedback in a positive manner.
6. Allow plenty of time for debriefing for role players as well as observers. The debriefing session should include reflection and analysis, enabling people to not only explore what happened and what people felt, but how people's perspectives varied and why.

Tips:

Role-playing can be emotional or stressful for some people. Be sure to provide clear guidelines in the design and set-up of the exercise. Keep the initial role-playing scenarios simple and non-threatening. Demonstrate appropriate feedback responses so that the debriefing session can provide helpful and positive criticism.

References:

Brookfield, S.D. *The Skillful Teacher*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990.
www.stevefinkel.com/role_playing.htm