








# Whole Body Portrait – Your Personal Gender History

 <b>TIME</b>	45-60 minutes
 <b>No.</b>	Adaptable for any number of participants
 <b>MATERIALS</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Big (body-sized) sheets of paper or A3 papers</li> <li>• Markers, crayons or paint</li> </ul>
 <b>OBJECTIVES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration of how the participants feel about their gender history, how it has affected their body, bodily sensations, memories in the body.</li> <li>• This exercise is supposed to create a link between activities; participants are encouraged to work on their portraits as homework, also in the coming days after non-verbal activities.</li> </ul>
 <b>INSTRUCTIONS STEP BY STEP</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Invite participants to draw an outline of their body on a big sheet of paper and then indicate their personal gender history within their body by noting it on their body portrait. They can use colours or words in the drawing or any creative means to express their thoughts and feelings on the paper.</li> <li>2. Tell them not to think too much, and to just follow their feelings.</li> <li>3. After 10-15 minutes of individual work, create small groups of 3 or 4 and invite participants to take 10- 15 minutes to share their portraits with each other.</li> </ol>

	<p>Come back to plenary and invite participants to share something from their small group work.</p>
 <p><b>DISCUSSIONS</b></p>	<p>To debrief, you may want to connect this exercise with the map of intimate relationships – asking participants for their impressions, what connections they see. Keep the focus on body sensations and discuss with participants how our everyday life experiences or our relational situations are all embodied experiences as well. You may want to explain a little bit about embodied self-awareness which exists prior to language and does not require language for its expression.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are we aware of how we notice our body at school, work or during leisure activities?</li> <li>• Does it make a difference if we talk or think about a situation or if we try to describe it with body sensations like pain, warmth, tingling, etc.?</li> <li>• Are we aware of stress or tension in our hands, arms, back, belly, neck, legs or anywhere else as we work, or when we're with a friend or a family member?</li> <li>• What kind of body sensations do we remember from our past?</li> </ul> <p>Invite participants to explore their body portraits – play a bit with the possible interpretations of colours, shapes and symbols in their portraits</p>
 <p><b>HINTS</b></p>	<p>You may want to work with issues such as diversity (age, gender, nationality, social status, skin colour, etc.) or power positions. You can invite participants to indicate on their body map where the following are located: vulnerability, sensitivity, strength, power (empowerment or oppression), and how those are connected to intimacy / sexuality. You can invite participants to experiment with what happens if they try to indicate with colours where in their body they feel their strength? Or their skin colour? Embodied self-awareness is based in sensing, feeling and acting. Through drawing, we can access these qualities without feeling forced to think or talk about them. Drawing, just like any movement, is spontaneous, creative and open to change.</p> <p>There might be participants reluctant or shy to draw, and who say that they are not good at drawing. Encourage participants by saying that there are no artistic requirements, no expectations and no competition – the aim of this exercise is to express yourself in another way. Drawing the body outline first can help to get less experienced or shy participants started. It is also encouraging to say that they can continue drawing later, completing their portraits at home or during the rest of the training days.</p> <p>If some participants question the aim of this method, saying that it is “too childish”, you can say a few words about the importance of embodied self-awareness. Encourage participants to get in contact with their inner child.</p>



THIS ACTIVITY  
ONLINE

You can do the activity online by asking participants to make their drawings on paper and then, after the individual work, have them first share in small breakout rooms and then share with the whole group back in plenary.



THEORY

You can read more on the concept of “embodied self-awareness” proposed by Alan Fogel: “The psychophysiology of self-awareness: Rediscovering the lost art of body sense” (2009).



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the world is only one creature