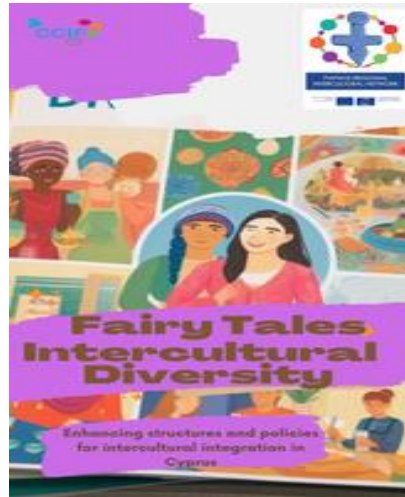


Building structures for Intercultural Integration in Cyprus “A Heroine’s Journey”

Paphos District Intercultural Network



Contents

Introduction	1
Overview	1
Objectives.....	2
Methodology.....	3
Outcomes	3
Target Group	4
Challenges Encountered	4
Suggestions for Future Workshops.....	5
Testimonials	6
Conclusion	6
Gallery	7
References	9

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Introduction

The "A Heroine's Journey" is a personal development workshop aimed at empowering women, particularly those facing cultural limitations, to enhance their self-awareness and emotional well-being. This initiative aligns with the **Intercultural Cities (ICC) Action Plan for Paphos District**, contributing to the broader goal of fostering an inclusive, intercultural community.

The report outlines the implementation, outcomes, and challenges of this pilot workshop while reflecting on its significance within the framework of the ICC's objectives, to fostering an inclusive and intercultural community in Paphos.

The ICC program advocates for cultural diversity as a catalyst for social and economic growth. A key focus of the Intercultural Cities (ICC) Action Plan for Paphos District is the promotion of "**Meaningful Interaction and Participation**", encouraging diverse groups to engage more actively in civic life and community decision-making processes. This workshop addressed these critical themes by offering a creative space for women from different cultural backgrounds to engage with one another and explore their personal development.

Overview

The Heroine's Journey was a six-session program, held over four weeks in May and June 2024. Each session lasted two hours and took place in the mornings to accommodate the schedules of the participants.

The workshop targeted 8 women, particularly mothers, from similar cultural and religious backgrounds. The goal was to provide them with the tools for personal growth, foster connections, and create a safe space for self-expression and healing.

By the end of the program, 7 women had completed all sessions, with many showing marked improvement in their self-belief and emotional resilience.

The "Heroine's Journey" provided each female participant with the opportunity to embark on a journey into a magical world - a world where anything is possible, where good and evil are clearly defined, where animals speak, and plants move. It is a world of limitless imagination, a kind of magical omnipotence that we experience as children but gradually lose as we grow older. This fairy-tale magic nurtures creativity and imagination, allowing them to flourish through symbols and archetypal forms.

Each participant created her own hero, identified with that hero, sought out helpers - both within the group and from her inner resources - faced challenges, and ultimately claimed her "treasure."

Within the safe, respectful space of the group, where confidentiality and individuality were upheld, each participant explored personal issues and concerns that might otherwise have been difficult to confront.

Using drama therapy techniques, each participant—both individually and as a member of the group—listened to a fairy tale and created own story. Through theatrical methods such as voice, movement, improvisation, role-playing, and other creative techniques (such as doll-making, play, and storytelling), the focus was on uncovering and nurturing the creative "source" and personal resources within each individual.

Objectives

The primary objective of the workshop was to empower women both personally and emotionally, with a focus on self-recognition and personal growth. The specific goals included:

- Self-recognition and building enhanced self-belief.

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- Connecting with personal potential and aspirations.
- Providing a safe space for expressing and sharing challenging emotional experiences.
- Exploring internal resources and identifying solutions to overcome obstacles.
- Using creative expression as a means of empowerment and personal transformation.

These objectives directly supported the ICC Action Plan's goal of fostering meaningful interaction and participation by giving women the confidence and tools to engage more fully in community life.

Methodology

The methodology was grounded in drama therapy techniques. These methods encourage participants to use creative expression - through activities such as improvisation, role-playing, and movement - to explore emotions, experiences, and personal aspirations. By drawing inspiration from childhood stories and fairytales, participants created heroes and heroines who embodied their desired traits and goals.

The group environment was designed to be safe, supportive, and non-judgmental, encouraging consistent participation, openness, and mutual respect. Emphasis was placed on confidentiality and acceptance without judgment, providing a space where participants could express their vulnerabilities and find solidarity.

Outcomes

The outcomes of the workshop were positive, with participants reporting significant improvements in self-awareness, emotional strength, and confidence. Key outcomes included:

- Increased self-awareness and empowerment.
- Enhanced emotional expression through creative activities such as art, movement, and storytelling.
- Development of personal narratives based on childhood stories, leading to new perspectives on personal challenges and aspirations.
- Stronger personal connections among the participants, fostering a sense of mutual support and belonging.
- Increased confidence in self-expression and recognition of personal value.

The workshop succeeded in creating a community of women who not only bonded over shared experiences but also gained the confidence to take on **leadership roles** within their families and communities.

Target group

The workshop targeted up to 8 women from similar cultural and religious backgrounds, all Arabic speaking, prioritizing mothers to extend the benefits to their children.

Challenges encountered

While the workshop achieved its objectives, some challenges were encountered during its implementation:

- Language barriers
The need for interpretation and translation posed a challenge, making communication more time-consuming. Future workshops could benefit from integrating multilingual support, such as the "Multi-language and Linguistic Café" implemented within the Paphos District Intercultural Network.
- Time constraints

The time required for translation and overcoming language barriers sometimes constrained the pacing of the sessions impacted the coordination process which could be addressed by more experienced translators and additional resources.

- Time management

Additional time needed for repeated instructions due to interpretation.

- Family dynamics

Participation of close relatives (two sisters) influenced group dynamics.

- Commitment issues

Difficulty in understanding and committing to the group's framework.

Suggestions for future workshops

To address the challenges encountered, several recommendations for future workshops have been outlined:

- Incorporate multilingual support
 - Including a multilingual approach to help overcome language barriers and ensure all participants can fully engage with the content and each other.
- Expand recruitment channels
 - Broaden the recruitment process to include more diverse sources, such as community organizations and social media to attract participants from a wider range of cultural backgrounds.
- Streamline roles and responsibilities
 - Assign clearer roles for facilitators and interpreters to ensure more effective use of time during each session.
- Increase the number of sessions
 - Given the complexity of personal development work, increasing the number of sessions or extending the workshop duration could provide

participants with more time to explore their emotions and develop their skills.

Testimonials

Participants in the Heroine's Journey, shared their experience:

I felt calm like a child.

I made a hero from a fairy tale of my childhood years. It was like something was coming out of me, something I needed to say.

With this activity, for the first time, I thought about the concept of protecting myself.

"First time I tried to make something with my hands and I'm glad I made something.

It was a beautiful experience.

I didn't imagine that the first time would be so nice.

I felt like I was doing something for me and that I was connecting with the other women. 'thanks'.

I felt that we all have the same issues to worry about.

I leave optimistic. I leave feeling like I got to know the women better and got closer to them.

My Hero is important to me. It means that I want all the dreams I've had from the past to come true easily and magically."

Conclusion

Despite some challenges, the Heroine's Journey has successfully achieved its goal of **empowering women from diverse backgrounds by providing them with a creative**

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and supportive space to explore personal growth and emotional resilience. The workshop contributed meaningfully to the ICC Action Plan's objectives of fostering meaningful interaction and participation, creating a more inclusive and supportive community in Paphos.

Moving forward, expanding the scope of such programs, refining the approach based on feedback, and addressing language barriers will be crucial to maximizing their impact and ensuring that more women in Paphos can benefit from similar initiatives. The success of this pilot program lays the groundwork for continued efforts toward building a more inclusive and intercultural society in Paphos.

Gallery



 **"A Heroine's Journey"**
Personal Development Workshop 4
Women

The "Heroine's Journey" Workshop is (addressed to) you who want to connect more with yourself, get supplies for the here and now of life, explore ways to solve difficulties, relax through creation, to share with other women on the carpet of drama therapy.

Each woman will become a fellow traveler within the safe framework of the group, with respect for her diversity and uniqueness.

By: Sofia Karavasilis, Social Worker, Drama Therapist

Dates of Meetings: 23,27,30/5&3,6,10/6 2024
Time: 2 hours from 10am - 12:00pm
Limited places for Participation: INBOX NOW
Note: comfortable clothes to sit on the carpet

 **PAPHOS REGIONAL
INTERCULTURAL NETWORK**

 **To Kresisi**
Σύγχρονα Εκπαιδευτικά
Προγράμματα
Αποστολή: Ηλικιωμένοι
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