

# STIGMATIZING THROUGH BODY LANGUAGE

14  
EXERCISES



## OBJECTIVES

Participants will be able to:

- Show how we stigmatize through body language
- Analyze the attitudes behind this form of stigmatization



## TIME

1 hour



## MATERIALS

Picture A1—woman sitting all alone while others are giving her their backs

## ACTIVITIES

### Warmup

#### “OH JOSEPHINA!”

Ask participants to stand in circle. Explain that this game will show how we communicate through our voices and bodies. Show how to play the game. Show how you can say “Oh Josephina” in different ways—with anger, fear or humor. Then ask each participant (going round the circle) to say “Oh Josephina” in a different way, expressing a different feeling. When everyone has had a turn, ask: “What did you learn about the way we express emotions or feelings?” (loud or soft voices, confident or unconfident tones, facial expression).

### INTRODUCTION

Display picture. Ask: “What do you see in picture?” (people facing away from the women and isolating her by giving her their backs). Use this to explain **body language**—communicating feelings through bodies. Explain that this session will look at how we communicate stigma through bodies. We show through our face, hand movements, and the way we hold our bodies, often unconsciously, how we feel about other people.

### *Pairs*

#### SCULPTURING—PRACTICE 1

Explain/demonstrate **sculpturing**—using our bodies in a frozen image. Emphasize that this is not moving drama—it is a frozen or stationary image, like a picture. Ask participants to pair off and do a simple sculpture to learn the technique—a husband returns home late at night. In each pair decide who the husband is, who the wife is. After each practice session, ask a few pairs to

### EXAMPLES FROM ZAMBIA WORKSHOP (March 2002)

#### Body language

Finger pointing. Open mouth—shock! Showing our backs—shows rejection. Eyes looking down—shows sympathy. Want to hug him. Avoidance—scared he will infect me.

#### Feeling of Stigmatizers

Laughing: “How did you get this?”, “Why were you doing this?”, “You deserve it!”, “I don’t want to have anything to do with him.”, “Unbelievable.”, “She deserves it.”

#### How do PLHAs feel?

Low. Depressed. Everybody is looking at me. Center of attention. I feel judged and rejected. Some are making me feel okay. Sympathy from some lightens the situation.



demonstrate. After each demonstration, ask: “What do you see in the sculpture? What is communicated?”

### **SCULPTURING—PRACTICE 2**

Then ask pairs to make a new sculpture showing how people treat sex workers. Ask them to decide on roles—A Stigmatizer, B stigmatized and make the sculpture. Then ask a few pairs to show sculptures at the center of the circle. After each demonstration, ask: “What is communicated? What do you think are the attitudes or judgments behind this body language?” Ask the Stigmatizer: “What are you thinking? Why are you stigmatizing?” and ask the Stigmatized: “How are you feeling?”

### **SCULPTURING—PRACTICE 3**

Then ask pairs to make a new sculpture showing how people treat PLHAs. Swap roles: A stigmatized, B stigmatizer. Ask them to make the new sculpture. Then ask a few pairs to demonstrate in the center. After each demonstration, ask: “What do you see in the sculpture? What is the meaning of the body language? What are the judgments behind those feelings? How do we communicate when we isolate people?”

### **SCULPTURING IN FACING LINES**

Divide participants into two groups and ask them to face each other in two lines. Assign roles: “A are Stigmatizers and B are the Stigmatized. Now show with your bodies how you feel about the others? PLAY!” Debrief on this activity and record responses on flipchart. Then reverse the roles.

### **Summary**

We have learned that we can also stigmatize through body language—facial expressions, judging eyes, finger pointing and keeping a distance.