

## Activity 14 **Follow the Leader**

**Aim:** To examine the messages people in power use to attract followers.

**Age:** 12+ **Time:** 30 mins

**Materials:** Open Space, adhesive labels, copies of stories

### **Note to leader:**

This starts as an energiser to get people moving. Good activity to do before any drama/acting game.

### **What to do: Part One:**

**Step 1:** Each person finds a partner to work with. One person becomes A, the other is B. Person A places their palm a small distance from Person B's nose. Person A is the leader. As person A moves their hand, person B must move with them to keep their nose at the same distance from person A's palm. The pair should start with small, focused movements (backwards, forwards, right, left, up and down), then move more in the space. Allow person A to lead for about 2 minutes and then swap roles. Ask if that was easy or difficult? Did you prefer to be the follower or the leader?

**Step 2:** Do the exercise again and now invite the person leading to imagine they are a powerful person, e.g. a political/religious/community leader. Ask them to come up with a message or slogan that this person might say to attract followers (one or two words). They should write this message on a sticker and put it on the palm of their hand. Repeat the game.

**Step 3:** Next tell the leaders they need to attract other people to follow them. They should use both hands, and try to get one of the other followers to leave their leader and to follow them so they are now leading two people. If it helps, the leader could start to say their message aloud to try and attract other people to follow them. Instruct all the followers that if they feel drawn to another hand or sound they should leave their leader. Continue this for a couple of minutes or until people get tired.

### **Debrief:**

What was it like to be the leader? Or the follower? Which did you prefer? Why?

Do you think people are easily led by others in the world? Do we follow the lead of people in our lives? What is it about them that makes us follow them? Can you think of any examples in the world in which people were led into dangerous situations or acted in a way that was not normal for them because they listened to the messages of their leaders?

Some celebrities can become powerful political leaders, including Ronald Regan and Arnold Schwarzenegger who both made the transition from actor to elected political leader in the USA. In August 2010, Haitian singer and songwriter Wyclef Jean wanted to run for presidency of his homeland in the November 2010 election. Do you think film stars and musicians can be good political leaders? Why do you think people follow and support them?

**Part Two:** Split the large group into smaller groups and distribute the stories. In the small groups, ask the participants to read the story and answer the following questions.

- ☆ Who is the leader/follower? What is each trying to achieve? Did they achieve their goal?
- ☆ If you were in this situation/story, what would you do? Would you follow the leader or not?
- ☆ Do we question who we follow?
- ☆ Can our choices of who we follow affect others? In Ireland? In other countries?

**Story 1** The Murambi Technical School in Rwanda was the site of a massacre during the 1994 Rwandan genocide. When the killings started, Tutsis in the region tried to hide at the local church. However, the bishop and the mayor sent them to the technical school, claiming that French troops would protect them there. On April 16, 1994, some 65,000 Tutsis went to the school, but immediately water and electricity were cut off. After defending themselves with stones for a few days, the school was attacked by Hutu militiamen and the Tutsi were overrun. Some 45,000 Tutsi were murdered at the school, and many who managed to escape were killed the next day hiding in a nearby church. The school building is now a genocide museum exhibiting the skeletons and mummified bodies of some of the thousands of people killed there. See: <http://www.kigalimemorialcentre.org/old/centre/other/murambi.html>

**Story 2** During the Sudanese Civil War in the 1980's, many children became separated from their parents and families while trying to escape the conflict. Thousands of them - mainly boys aged between 7 and 17 - escaped by walking from South Sudan across the country and into Ethiopia and Kenya. Some walked over 1,000 miles to find safety and they had to survive for weeks in desert and jungle, trying to avoid wild animals and militia attacks. The story is remarkable as the young people led themselves through such a difficult journey, even though they were frightened, alone and lost. The teenage leaders helped to ensure the survival of many of the younger ones. Of those who managed to reach Ethiopia and Kenya, many were accepted as refugees in Australia, Canada, the USA and other countries. They became known as 'The Lost Boys', see: <http://www.lostboysfilm.com/learn.html>

**Story 3** David Beckham is an English football player born in 1975 and he has played for Manchester United, Real Madrid and Los Angeles Galaxy. He was also captain of the English national football team. He is popular among football fans all over the world. He is married to Victoria Beckham (formerly a singer in the Spice Girls) and they have three sons. For many, David Beckham has become more than a sportstar; he is seen as a fashion icon, a celebrity, and a promoter of charitable work. He has his own aftershave brand and several games for computers. Beckham has been sponsored by soft-drinks company Pepsi, clothes company Adidas and is the highest-earning football player in the world according to the Guardian newspaper (2010).



**Action Idea!** The Irish Government signed up to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in September 2000, as world leaders came together to promise to do all they can to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger by 2015. In support of the MDGs, Ireland pledged to increase its overseas aid (Official Development Assistance - ODA), to reach the UN target of spending 0.7% of national income on overseas aid. This is just 70 cent from every €100 we spend. However, since 2009 cuts have been made to overseas aid. This makes it even harder to reach the goal of 0.7% of our income by 2015. The Act Now on 2015 campaign is encouraging the government to keep its aid promise.

You can write to your local TD to encourage Ireland to be a leader among other countries in achieving the MDGs and overseas aid targets. For more information visit [www.actnow2015.ie](http://www.actnow2015.ie)

To better understand the MDGs, download NYCI's activity 'The Price of Peace' from [www.youthdeved.ie/](http://www.youthdeved.ie/) resources from the activity pack 'Peace by Piece' or Oxfam's activity pack for 7-14 year olds 'Change the World in 8 Steps' for free at [http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/change\\_the\\_world\\_in\\_eight\\_steps/](http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/change_the_world_in_eight_steps/)

Activity based on 'Colombian Hypnosis' from the work of Augusto Boal 'Games for Actors and Non-Actors' (2nd edition 2002).