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## About the authors

**Paul Lee** has over 40 years experience as a facilitator and activity-based experiential learning consultant. He specialises in designing activities and programmes for a diverse range of organisations, including youth groups and charities providing support programmes for the disadvantaged and disengaged members of our society. As an outdoor activities instructor and technician, Paul has extensive experience in outdoor activities, education, youth work, youth training schemes, graduate and corporate training. Paul has acted as a training consultant and facilitator for many well-known UK companies including BT, Magnet, Powergen and GEC. Paul moved to Shetland five years ago to concentrate on designing activity-based experiential learning tools and techniques, and to develop a focus on 'Positive Images for Positive Effect' experiential learning and creative thinking. The outcome of this is a book co-authored with Louise Bishop, *Positive images – positive effect*. The book is divided into two parts, Part one has over 100 activities involving creative and team-like solutions; Part two provides detailed information and ideas to improve your own facilitation skills. Paul Lee designs programmes and activities for experiential learning involving creativity and problem-solving with inclusive and team-like behaviours. All the activities are wholly inclusive, meaning that everyone can be fully involved. These activities can and will make a difference to your work with all people, regardless of age, ability, gender, strength or agility.

**Louise Bishop** has lived in Shetland for 20 years, working as a teacher with every age group from nursery through to sixth-year. She wishes she had read this book 20 years ago!

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This book's journey has been enhanced by the professional and life experiences of my co-author, Louise, and it is unlikely to have emerged in its final form without Louise's hard work and dedication. It has been a truly joint effort.

Dedicated to my son, Matthew, and friend Ingrid.

Paul Lee September 2008

To my kids, Letty, Sandy and Robert, who have taught me so much about the joy and wonder of being with young people. To my parents, who have always believed in me, through thick and thin. And to Paul Lee, who made me look at the world from a completely different perspective, a positive one!

Louise Bishop September 2008

## Introduction

*Creativity can solve almost any problem. The creative act, the defeat of habit by originality, overcomes everything.*

George Lois

*Positive images – positive effect* contains over 100 activities; each designed to increase young peoples' positive views of themselves.

They are fun, easy to use and will make a positive difference to **your work** and in **their lives**.

It explains how to facilitate these activities and how to improve your own skills in practice.

The book encourages you throughout to focus on the positive aspects of young people and to seek to appreciate the good and the worth in them.

## About this book

The activities described in this book stem from Paul Lee's work, over a period of 40 years, with a wide variety of young people and adults from diverse backgrounds, in a variety of contexts, with individual or collective needs.

Many of these activities have their roots in traditional games and 'pursuits', although they have been adapted over many years for use in schools, youth work, voluntary organisations, outdoor activity centres and many other settings.

The activities described can be used in formal and informal settings, either by volunteers or those working in a professional context, such as teachers, youth workers, play group workers, police officers, probation officers, youth justice personnel, trainers and outdoor activity and adventure leaders.

The primary aim of this book is to provide material that can be used in work with children from aged eight upwards, young people and young adults.

However, almost all of this material can also be used in personal development, team-building and team leadership courses with adults.

For convenience, the term *young people* is used throughout the book.

There are useful suggestions for modifications that can be made to some of the activities that will allow them to be undertaken where space is at a premium.

## Addressing negative portrayals

Put yourself in the position of a young person today:

*You are surrounded by negative images of yourself in the media that claim you are frequently either a victim of crime, or a perpetrator of it. You are overweight, with a poor diet, on drugs, go binge drinking, have unsafe sex, are disrespectful and unhappy, and compare badly with your peers in other European countries. Society is either preoccupied with keeping you safe, or is over-anxious about taming what it sees as your negative behaviours.*

Such negative images of young people exist throughout society today, and are counter-productive to the personal development of young people and to their life chances. They act as self-fulfilling prophecies, further undermining the general public's confidence in young people's abilities.

There also exists a managerial and organisational culture, created by recent governments, that stresses the pursuit of a 'uniform curriculum', 'added value', and 'outcomes'. Many educational and community organisations feel compelled to devote a large part of their time and effort into ensuring that they are not laid open to criticism by some 'inspectorate' or other, which would inevitably attract further negative media scrutiny. In these circumstances, organisations not only risk becoming distracted from attending to the needs of their young people, but can also become part of the pressures that are placed upon them.

It is imperative that these negative images of young people become positive once more.

David Cooperrider et al. (2001) point to the significant benefits of positive images, and how they can transform individuals and organisations.

As a special case of the self-fulfilling prophecy, Pygmalion reminds us that from the moment of birth we each exist within a complex and dynamic field of images, a vast share of which are projected onto-us through an omnipresent environment of others.

## Building positive images

So, in our work with young people:

- How do we go about remedying this prevailing perception?
- How are we to act in order to support young people's natural aspirations to be liked, respected and responsible?

On the 16th December 1991 the UK Government ratified the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* and in doing so undertook to view young people as emerging adults (<http://www.unicef.org.uk/pages.asp?page=92>).

The principles and obligations enshrined in the Convention are highly significant and should influence all work with young people. For example, by signing the Convention, the UK Government undertook to effectively support the journey to adulthood of children and young adults – and to recognise that this transition is best aided with the support and help of committed ‘parent figures’, mentors, individuals and professionals.

Yet there is a distinct mismatch between these accepted principles and the provision of children’s services.

Take for example education, it would appear that far too often it is overly preoccupied with good order and discipline, perhaps at the cost of creativity and inclusivity. Treating the ‘parental figures’ as the principal consumers, with their rights as parents enshrined in education law, ignores the fact that it is the child who actually attends school.

More worryingly in this area, education law itself is biased in favour of adults: teaching staff have the right to physically remove a pupil from school should they be directed to do so by the head teacher.

By contrast, in other areas of services for young people, such physical intervention must be justified on each and every occasion, with the young person’s view carrying proportionate weight. Further to this, and putting oneself in the position of our pupil – what must it feel like to actually be physically restrained? Society has long since accepted that physical intervention and restraint by one person over another is indefensible and can be the basis for a criminal action.

The point here is that if we expect young people to have responsibilities, then they must be given appropriate opportunities to learn from their experiences – both the successful and the less pleasant ones.

This book provides genuine and appropriate experiential learning opportunities through creative problem-solving with a positive focus. Adults, and especially those who work with young people, must, we believe, take responsibility for being part of the solution, since just blaming this group is naïve and unworthy.

## **Inclusivity and this book**

A positive image underpins any principle of ‘inclusivity’. As part of inclusivity, it is important as part of young people’s view of themselves, that they have the experience of

everyone being involved, knowing that everyone has something to offer. It must be remembered that through film, television and in life in general, there are few positive images of people with 'differences', be they wheel chair users, the visually impaired or those people with different physical shapes or abilities.

Whilst many extraordinary achievements have been recorded by people whom society deems 'disabled' (where, incidentally, the very word carries a derogatory or negative connotation) such as scaling great mountains and other feats of endurance and exploration, it is hard to identify workers, facilitators, mentors and others who work with young people who fall into this category. However, the fact remains that inclusivity as used here recognises that removing negative images, negative portrayals or negative justifications for not including, is an overall principle of this book. Without a positive image of everyone's abilities, people will be inevitably excluded. A key part of both being and feeling positive is that it has to relate to everybody.

Thus every activity in the book provides for all group members to participate equally whatever their gender, strength, agility, intellect and ability. Being strong or agile is of no advantage in undertaking these activities, and different levels of approach are of equal value and worth. Solutions, as required throughout this book, are often the result of collective effort, with differing perspectives of problem-solving all making their unique contribution to the process and eventual outcome. Indeed, it is successful inclusivity and collaboration which provide the positive images and positive effects we strive to recognise in the young people with whom we work.

With the above in mind, the following may typify the approach that this book takes:

- Seated activities, as will be found in the Seated Circle section, will allow wheelchair users to participate on an equal basis along with other team members.
- Many of the other activities are suitable for use at floor or tabletop level. Here again, the principle of inclusivity allows for full participation by all members.
- The provision of Braille playing cards and dominos in certain activities provides both a practical answer for those visually impaired members of the group, but also provides for a powerful empathic experience for sighted people. In this instance, merely asking sighted members to voluntarily close their eyes is in accord with our ethos, see below.
- There are many other opportunities throughout the book for young people to make symbolic or empathic links. This aspect of inclusivity was illustrated by the account of an outdoor activity student who was tasked with giving a presentation on communication. He gave the presentation in sign language, and no one else was in a position to understand what was being communicated. This supplied a forceful example of what it must be like not to understand or be understood, and thus a useful illustration of experiential learning.

But examples cannot be offered to suit all of the circumstances in this field which might arise, so we must encourage anyone using this book to be constantly alert, creative and positive in the search for additional ideas and exercises for developing the inclusive nature of the activities.

**N.B.** Throughout this book we refer to group members closing their eyes in the pursuit of the idea of empathic experiences with others. It is our view this should be done voluntarily, consistent with the principle of personal choice, feeling comfortable and permissive working. This means offering genuine choices, as well as empowering participants, when a particular activity involves being unsighted, rather than by instructing a group to wear blindfolds, which entails use of power and loss of autonomy. It is also consistent with the idea of working with the permission of the group and not imposing conditions on them.

## The aims of this book

The facilitation information contained in this book, supplemented by the activities, will enhance and broaden your approach to working with young people. However, as with all programmes or sessions, it cannot supply instant solutions. The whole process can be likened to a journey.

We use this image of a journey to illustrate personal development through experience. This takes time and doesn't occur overnight. The image of a journey will have different connotations for each of us. It might be a walk with a group of friends in unfamiliar countryside, young people undertaking new learning experiences outdoors, or adults embarking on a new language course before travelling. Of course, when we look back on some of our journeys, we realise with the benefit of hindsight and the experience we gained along the way that we might well have approached them in a different way.

The following illustrates this:

- *Imagine you are in a group taking part in an adventure or a journey of discovery where, as in any group of people, everyone has a different personality, skills and tools, and each or any of which you may need along the way.*
- *Imagine that this journey will also involve learning to work and co-operate together, in order to discover which tools or skills work the best in each situation that you encounter, and how best to utilise them.*
- *Imagine that, as you undertake this journey, you must be positively focused, ready to participate, and creative when any task or obstacle appears.*
- *Imagine that, as a group, the prime focus is to work together consistently in a team-like manner using the principles of inclusivity.*

From the above, it can be seen that a group of young people on such a journey would need to help and support each other, respect each other and be open with each other if they are to achieve a successful outcome to the tasks encountered along the way.

However, as with any group of people travelling together for the first time the reality of the situation is that they will probably need both support and guidance in the early stages until they feel fully equipped and confident enough to interact together in a fruitful way. They can then hopefully undertake other journeys by themselves, confident in using their own personal and collective tools effectively.

The activities described in this book are designed to provide groups of young people with the experiences and tools to undertake such a journey, as well as the preparation for it. Used wisely, they will form an excellent platform on which to build a wide range of individual, paired and collective skills to enhance positive insights and experiences.

The book is laid out in two parts; Activities followed by Facilitation.

## **Facilitation**

*A useful rule-of-thumb distinction between facilitation and teaching is that in facilitation, the goal is usually for people to learn something that nobody knows at the beginning, whereas in teaching the goal is usually for people to learn whatever the teacher already knows.*

(Barnes and Sharp, 2004)

The second part of the book contains detailed information, suggestions and ideas for organising and running the sessions and programmes; that is, facilitation. Experienced facilitators may, of course, wish to work directly from the activity sheets, but will find many useful tips in the second section nevertheless. Whichever way you wish to use this resource, using the activities will be your journey, with its own adventure along the way.

The use of the word, and reference to, facilitators, avoids the traditional imagery and function of 'teaching', where the teacher has a clear view of their lesson or session already mapped out. Facilitation had its roots in working with formal, informal and therapeutic groups in the United States, and has consequently moved into both formal and informal groups here. Activities involving experiential learning, such as those described in Part Two of this book, are most usefully aided by a facilitator, or someone with facilitation skills.

*Positive Images – Positive Effect* activities seek to transfer the responsibility for learning experientially to the group members and the group as a whole, and the facilitator has a distinct role to play in this journey.

Please remember, all the activities in this book are wholly inclusive, meaning that literally everyone can be fully involved. These activities can and will make a difference to your work with young people, whatever their individual qualities, personalities and skills levels. For anybody who intends to use the material in this book as a vehicle for learning, the challenge is to ensure that everybody who wishes to participate can indeed do so.

## **Have fun on the journey!**

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