PUSHING PAIRS

Conflicts or arguments cannot be solved unless all those involved genuinely want to find a common, peaceful solution that all can accept. A desire by each party to stop defending only their own interest opens up possible paths towards innovative, inclusive and mutually satisfactory solutions.

WHAT THE EXERCISE IS ABOUT

- Time: 5-10 minutes, plus time at the end for discussion
- This is simple: the students stand in pairs and push each other.
- When the pushing stops, the students are likely to feel relieved and relaxed.

THE GOALS OF THE EXERCISE

This exercise is a vivid demonstration of how people often behave in conflicts. It is fairly typical, in the heat of the moment, for one person to try to push through his or her own message on the other. But once we stop pushing, there is usually relief and a sense of liberation. At the same time it becomes more likely that the conflict can actually be solved.

HOW THE EXERCISE SHOULD PROCEED

Care should be taken to ensure that nobody could get hurt during the exercise; for instance, the floor should be clear of bags, etc. The class divides into pairs. The students stand face to face with their forearms vertical and touching each other. Then they start to push each other.

When the pairs have been pushing each other for some time, let them give one last push before stopping. At that moment ask: how do you feel right now? Isn't it a relief when the pushing stops?

This is what so often happens when we have a disagreement or conflict with someone.

THINGS TO DISCUSS AT THE END OF THE EXERCISE

Ask the students to answer these questions (either orally or in writing):

- How did it feel to push another person?
- How did you feel right after the pushing stopped?

- What effect do you think that this exercise might how you behave in disagreements from now on?
- Have any of you had personal experience of this kind of situation (either of pushing, or of an abrupt end to pushing)? What kinds of effects has this had?