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| <b>Lesson Title</b>           | <b>THE WEIGHT OF WORDS</b>   |
| <b>Group</b>                  | <b>Mixed group</b>   |
| <b>Target group</b>           | <b>Adults with mixed disabilities (mainly intellectual disability and down syndrome)</b>   |
| <b>Number of participants</b> | <b>18-22</b>   |
| <b>Duration</b>               | <b>1.5 hours</b>   |
| <b>Vocabulary</b>             | <b>movement with resistance, balancing with an object, point of contact with another body, letting go of weight, translating the movement of an object or another body</b> |
| <b>Materials</b>              | <b>A number of books of the same small size and of different color.</b>  |

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### **Objectives - Aims - Inquiry questions:**

*This lesson's objective is to explore the book as an object through our movement and at the same time play with its contents through exercises with the words and the sound of reading.*

- 1. How does our movement change when we are holding or balancing an object on our body? What are the distinct characteristics of this book regarding the movements it causes us to make? How is improvisation affected by the existence of an object on stage?*
  - 2. How can I use one word as a cause for movement? Can reading turn into music and cause movement? What effect can one word or phrase have on an improvisation?*
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## PROCEDURE

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### Group warm up following the educator's instructions (20 minutes)

We form a circle and hold hands so that we all feel part of the same shape. With our eyes closed we feel the hands of the people next to us until we reach their shoulders and at the same time we move a bit closer to the centre of the circle. Then we do the opposite opening up the circle and we repeat the process. This time our hands reach the back of the person next to us which we explore with our palm for a few minutes. We stop holding hands, we softly shake them and stretch them upwards. First with one hand, then with the other we make a spiral movement as if we are holding something and are pulling it downwards. Our movement is slow and steady, as if we are moving through a dense atmosphere. We feel the stretch throughout our body, allowing our hips and knees to move slightly.

Everyone is free to imagine what the object they are holding is. A flower, a snowflake, a pine cone, a chocolate! Very slowly our hands start moving in different directions around the body. I stretch, I hold, I pull, without moving the soles of my feet from where they are. We emphasize that we are stretching our hand away from ourselves, and then we bring it near us, passing it close to the centre of our body. Our whole body moves as needed to reach our object so the torso is alive and the knees soft.

Then we slowly look around and everyone imagines their object in different parts of the room. In the dense atmosphere, our hand leads the rest of our body so that we move through space and get our object. Everyone repeats this on their own pace.

While the group does the above the educator brings and places in the centre of the room a pile of small books and tells the students to continue the movement "stretch, hold, pull" until they are in the centre of the room. Then they get a book and form a circle again. All this without crowding the centre and without rushing.

When everyone is back in the circle, they all open the books at a random page and choose a word they like. If necessary, they choose with the help of the person next to them. We then take a few moments to find a movement to accompany the word that suits its sound. After that, taking turns in the circle everyone says their word along with their movement and everyone repeats the movement and the word twice. We try to make the transition from one person to the next smooth, without unnecessary talking. In the end, going from one person to the next in the circle we perform all together all the movements in a flow.

## Transition (10 minutes)

We spread in the room walking and the educator sets a range of speeds from zero to five. Zero is standing still and five is the fastest speed of each person (so, one is slow walking, two is a little bit faster, three is slow running, four is actual running). The educator says the number out loud and the students follow changing their speed as smoothly and as naturally for the body as possible.

It's best if in the beginning the educator says numbers in the correct order and then changes in a more random order so that students can work on smooth transitions. The educator can also play with the duration of each number so as to avoid creating an easily anticipated monotonous pace.

**Demonstration:** A common mistake during stopping or slowing down is what is known as “breaking with the chest” which is usually accompanied by a momentary pause in breathing. It is best if the educator demonstrated a smooth stopping with a grounding of the body, emphasizing the role of the knees and the position of the torso.

## 1st Activity | in group (20 minutes)

In continuation of the walking we ask students to remember the movement that resulted from their word. Then they repeat the movement trying to move, at the same time, through space and to constantly change it. To help them vary the movement we can, while they are moving, ask for changes in level (low, medium, high), speed and rhythm, shape, body parts, breaking of the symmetry etc.

Subsequently one student, who continues their movement, is placed in the centre of the room. The rest of the class, moving at first clockwise like a vortex, “take” the central student's movement and pass it on to their bodies in any way they want and changing it freely. It is important that they don't blindly imitate the central student's movement so that we won't have a homogeneous group but a group that works freely around a basic pattern of movement. What is difficult here is moving at the same time in a circle and reproducing the central student's movement. The central student changes.

A possible extension of this exercise is to have three people in the centre. This means that the people around can choose whose movement they will follow. Also, the three central students can change the direction of the circular movement around them by shouting the word “change”.

## 2nd Activity | playing in pairs (20 minutes)

1<sup>st</sup> version: we split in pairs and take one book per pair. All pairs place themselves on one side of the room. One member of the pair places the book on a part of their body so that it is balanced and tries to cross the room without the book falling. The other tries to catch the book if it falls, so that it doesn't touch the floor. If the book touches the floor then the pair goes back to the start! We try again, balancing the book on other body parts and we switch roles.

2<sup>nd</sup> version: The pairs again go to one side of the room and place the books between them so that the book stays in place due to the pressure applied by both of them. Again the aim of the exercise is to cross

the room without the book falling and without touching the book with their hands. After every crossing of the room they change the book's placement point. This point doesn't have to be the same for both people. For example the book can be placed between one's hip and the other's back. Also, they don't both have to be moving standing up, they can move in any position or level is easier regarding the placement of the book between them.

3<sup>rd</sup> version: Again the pairs all go to one side of the room and one person from each pair has to transport the book to the other side focusing on the book's trajectory through space. [e.g they slide the book for one meter on the floor, then they throw it in the air and it lands on their back and they transport it that way, then it slips and falls to the floor and then they open it and move it in the air like a butterfly until it reaches the other wall]. The other half of the pair must render with their body the book's movement, observing as much as possible the special way of the book's movement (e.g the book doesn't simply fall but it falls on its spine and quavers until it falls on one side or it falls straight in a clean and absolute way).

### 3rd Activity | exercise in two groups (20 minutes)

The group is divided into a group of sound and words and a group of viewers-observers.

The sound and words group has the books in front of them and improvises with the reading of words or paragraphs from the books. In this exercise we listen to the sound of reading as if it were music, where each person is a member of the orchestra. One "instrument" can play a solo or they can all play together. We play with tone, volume and speed. We listen to the rest of the team very carefully and enter when we feel there is space for us in the composition. We can repeat other people's words, we can imitate timbres. In general, in order for this improvisation to work a lot of time sometimes a short discussions necessary, so as to see what it means to create a musical composition as a group.

After the second group has listened-observed carefully the first one, they switch roles. We switch roles again so that the first group is the group of sound and words and the other group becomes the group of movement. This group must now follow with movement the sound-music improvisation of the first group.

### 4th Activity | Group improvisation (30 minutes)

Using all the elements we have worked on, that is our word and the movement that accompanies it, the various ways of movement and transportation with the book, and the reading orchestra, we start a free improvisation like the ones in the previous lessons.

The only difference here is that this improvisation starts with one person who enters and "stages" the space, placing the book any way they want on "stage". Subsequently the improvisation develops inside and around this "setting".

## END OF PROCEDURE

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### **Common form of lessons:**

Since we are two educators at this particular class we wanted to have a common form as a base for all lessons, so as for the workshop to be consistent. For this reason, every lesson will be permeated or governed by one word, one theme or one object. Also, it will include at least one exercise that works on an individual level, one exercise in pairs or in small groups, and one for large groups or for all the participants as a whole. Before each lesson we will discuss what one of us has planned, we will suggest changes or alternatives and we will make sure there is continuity between this lesson and the one before it. During the lesson the second educator will participate either as a student or will undertake an assisting role intervening when needed.