

Puppets

HOW TO MAKE AND USE THEM

WHEN A HEALTH WORKER or animator tells people that they are ignorant or wrong in their way of life, their natural reaction is to disagree. They become defensive about their way of life. A barrier to learning is created. But what if the same problems are raised in a story, drama or puppet play? Hearing a story about a similar person or community with the same problems as the audience, helps the listeners to identify with the characters – and with the solutions they find for their problems. When people listen to a story, they discover the truth for themselves. Stories and plays are usually more interesting than lectures!

Stories and plays can be shared with groups of people in hospitals, clinic waiting rooms, market places, churches and schools. They are a useful way too, of teaching about sensitive issues such as AIDS, family spacing or drug abuse. Anyone with simple health or farming knowledge can make up stories and dramas. Decide what the main messages are that you want to pass on. Then make up a story in which the characters discover these messages. Include lots of local interest and maybe some amusing situations. Don't try and pass on too much information in one play. If you do it well, people will always come back for more another time.

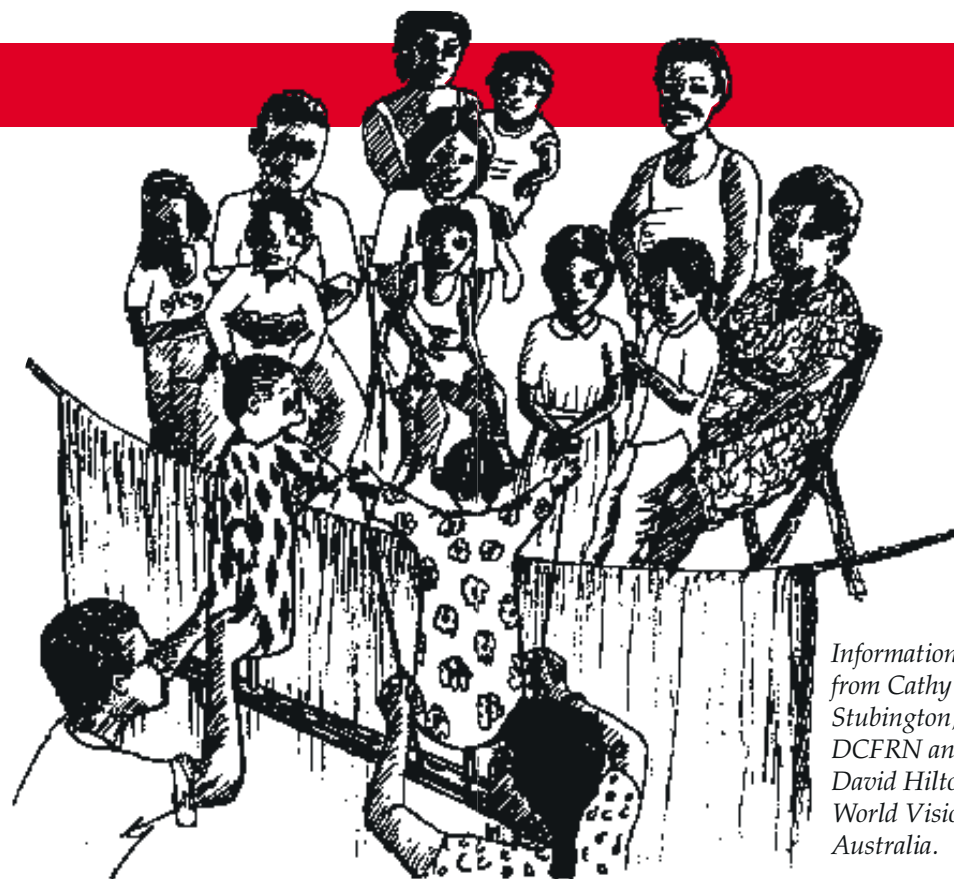
A puppet show attracts more people than a speech or a discussion. Recently a group of rural health promoters in Chiapas, South Mexico, were trained in puppet making and puppet shows. Whenever they arrived in a community with a puppet show, a crowd of all ages gathered. This is ideal for trainers from outside the community who find it difficult to win people's trust. If you become known as a puppeteer, people will look forward to your arrival!

Some things are told better by puppets than by a person. They can help adults to look at difficult social issues. Some issues people may find too

embarrassing even as drama. But when puppets talk about these issues, people relax and laugh.

Puppets are practical. You can make them with cheap and simple materials. The show can be light and easy to transport. One person can play many characters in the same story. There are so many possibilities in puppet theatre. And the best part is that while they are learning, the audience are having a good time!

Here are some ideas for making simple puppets to tell stories. Let us know how you get on!

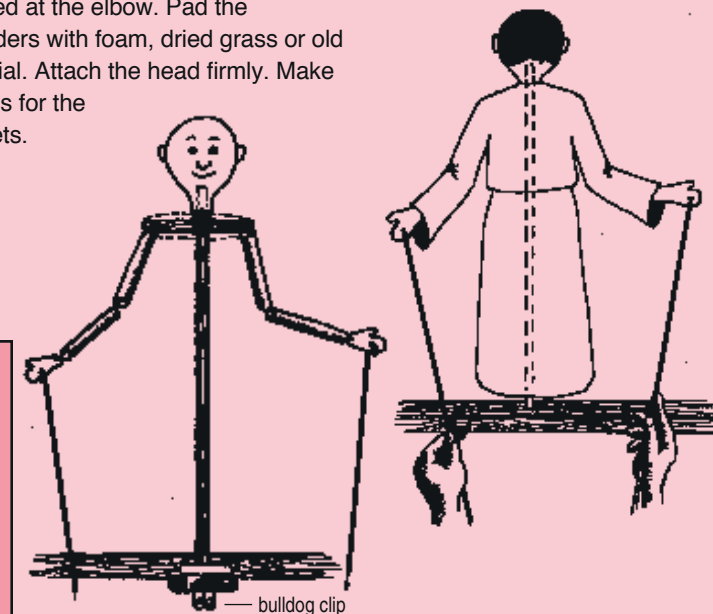


Information from Cathy Stubington, DCFRN and David Hilton, World Vision, Australia.

Rod puppets

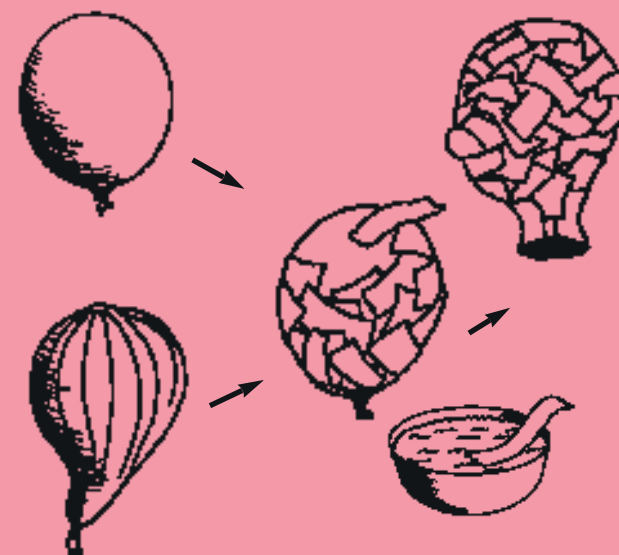
Make the head in just the same way. Rod puppets can be made much larger than hand puppets. The body frame is made out of two pieces of wood tied firmly together. Make the arms out of thin pieces of bamboo, cardboard tubes or rolled up newspaper and tie them together with string. Or you could use a cloth tube, stitched at the elbow. Pad the shoulders with foam, dried grass or old material. Attach the head firmly. Make clothes for the puppets.

When performing, it may be helpful to fasten a piece of wood just behind the theatre. Then you can either clip the puppet with a bulldog clip or place the rod into ready-made holes when the puppet is not moving about. Both hands are then free to move the hands.



Making the head

Use a small balloon, a gourd (cut off the end) or tied up grass to get the shape of the head. Make a paste of flour and water or use paper glue. Tear up strips of newspaper and dip them in the paste and then shape the head with lots of paper strips. Leave to dry and then paint the head. Stick on fur, wool or straw to make hair.



Making glove puppets

Make a pattern out of newspaper first. Use your hand as a rough guide to size, but allow plenty of room for your hand to move about. Cut out two pieces of material and sew them together. If you are using a gourd, you can stick the head straight onto the body. Otherwise, make a small tube of cardboard to help stick the head onto the body.

You can add hands if you like (see below). Make a small tube of card. Glue one end together and cut out the hand shape.



Building the theatre

The simplest theatre is simply a piece of cloth tied up to chairs, trees or furniture to hide the puppeteers. Portable wooden theatres can be built. Keep the puppets in a strong box or suitcase to protect them.

