

Responsibility



DUJ DŽSÉNE ONLINE

1. In the first role play, a Roma grandmother takes her teenaged granddaughter to the doctor. The granddaughter is pregnant. The doctor's assistant is a young Roma woman. The four participants of the scene face the dilemmas concerning the fate of the pregnancy and of the young mother-to-be.

2. The second role play takes place in the office administering the state-sponsored public works scheme. A middle-aged bilingual Roma woman from the Széles út segregate would like to find a solution to her difficult situation by asking for work. Her insistence holds up the queue and the Roma woman behind her, who is from a different segregate, intervenes.

The power of understanding

Krisztina Rézműves

During the session, we took part in a role-playing exercise in which Roma and non-Roma participants swapped roles. The Hungarian participants played the roles of Roma, while we, the Roma, were assigned the roles of Hungarians. In one scene, a 16-year-old pregnant Roma girl arrived at the

gynecologist's surgery with her grandmother. A Roma woman played the doctor, and I was assigned the role of the assistant. My character was a woman of mixed Hungarian and Roma heritage who had graduated from high school. My task was to speak condescendingly to the girl and her grandmother and try to persuade them to have an abortion. The doctor supported this as well, but the girl wanted to keep the baby, and her grandmother stood by her side. By the end of the scene, the girl was completely overwhelmed by the pressure being put on her. She stood up, started yelling, and said she did not care what anyone else thought; she was going to keep her child. The goal of the exercise was to help us better understand prejudices, social roles, and what it might feel like to be in such a difficult situation.

I learned a lot during this exercise. I realized that we should not judge others based on their circumstances or decisions. I also learned that if I want to help someone, I need to do so kindly and tactfully, not condescendingly. The role-play helped me understand a higher level of education does not make me any better or more valuable than others. I also learned that I should not force my own opinions on others, or what I consider to be right. Instead, I should try to understand the other person's perspective and the reasons behind their decision, and support them in what they want.

I think the situation could have been resolved more peacefully. It would have been better if the assistant and the doctor did not speak to the girl in a hurtful or condescending manner, but tried instead to approach her calmly and with understanding. Instead of trying to force her to have an abortion, they could have offered her support and help. For example, they could have told her that if she decided to keep the baby, she could count on help with her studies or with tasks related to caring for the child. I think the whole issue could have been partially prevented with proper education. In many families, especially in Roma communities, it is difficult to talk openly about sexuality, so young people often do not receive enough information about contraception or about making responsible decisions. If an adult had spoken with the girl honestly and supportively about these topics in a timely manner, she might have been better prepared and could have more easily avoided this difficult situation.

If I were to find myself in a similar situation, I know it would be very difficult to face people's opinions, the challenges at school, and the disappointment that those close to me might feel—people who believe in me and support me. Fortunately, I am not in that situation right now, and I hope I will not be in the near future either.

My opinion has changed so much because I have come to realize that not everyone is given the same circumstances or the same opportunities in life. We often do not stop to think about how painful our own words can be to others. When I imagine the difficult emotions someone might have to live through when making such a decision, it touches me deeply.

I believe that the people we love live on within us in some form. That is why one of my favourite quotes from the book *A Little Life* is particularly close to my heart: "Maybe he is that cloud, that wave, that rain, that fog. It's not just that he died and how he died, but also what he believed when he died. That's why I try to be kind to everything I see, and in everything I see, I see him." [Quote translated back into English; not checked against the original; E.T.]