CULTIVATE CQ

MODULE 6

Building Trust in Diverse Communities

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Module Overview

Building trust in diverse communities does not happen through grand gestures. It happens in small, everyday moments — a shared language, an acknowledgement, an apology, an invitation. When those moments are missing, even well-intentioned groups can leave some members feeling invisible. Trust is not automatic, especially across cultural and linguistic boundaries. This module helps youth workers build on the skills of trust-building in culturally diverse group settings.

Key skills and why this topic matters in youth work

In diverse groups, exclusion is often unintentional. People switch to their native language, share an in-joke, or assume a shared context — without realizing someone in the room is quietly losing the thread of belonging. For young migrants and newcomers, these small moments accumulate and erode trust.

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When youth workers develop trust-building as a CQ skill, it: 1) Helps them notice the small moments where trust is built, broken, or repaired; 2) Equips them to model inclusive communication; 3) Strengthens their ability to respond to exclusion with calm, constructive action rather than blame; 4) Deepens their capacity to help groups repair trust after it has been damaged.

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When youth workers develop intercultural understanding, it:

1. Encourages curiosity and engagement with new perspectives
2. Strengthens problem-solving and decision-making skills
3. Promotes creative thinking and discovery
4. Builds stronger relationships and collaboration.

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Learning outcomes

This module focuses on the full life cycle of trust: how it is built, how it breaks, and how it can be repaired. The central insight is that trust is not a state but a practice — maintained, damaged, and restored through small, concrete actions.



Through creative group work, participants will be able to: 1) Identify the concrete moments that build trust in diverse groups; 2) Recognise how trust breaks — often without bad intention; 3) Design realistic repair responses; 4) Reflect honestly on which part of trust work they personally need to strengthen.

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Activity title:

Three Rooms: Build, Break, Repair what lives in the gap between cultures

A Rotating Creative Exploration of How Trust Is Built, Broken, and Restored in Diverse Groups

Example real-life scenario:

PERSONAL SPACE

In this video, we explore cultural awareness through a real-life situation connected to cultural intelligence in youth work.



Key message: What feels friendly in one culture may feel uncomfortable in another. Understanding begins with respect.

WATCH HERE

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Description

The room is divided into three stations — BUILD, BREAK, and REPAIR. Groups rotate through all three, and at each station they work on top of what the previous group created: trust-building moments are realistically broken, broken moments are repaired, and the whole chain is finally read aloud as one continuous trust story.

Target Group

YOUTH WORKERS, VOLUNTEERS, TRAINERS, AND EDUCATORS WORKING WITH CULTURALLY DIVERSE GROUPS. SUITABLE FOR GROUPS OF 9–18 PARTICIPANTS (THREE GROUPS OF 3–6).



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As a result of the participation in this activity, participants will be able to:

- Identify the small, concrete moments that build trust in culturally diverse groups
- Recognise how trust breaks — often without bad intention
- Design realistic repair responses to moments of broken trust
- Analyse where the build-break-repair chain is weakest in real practice
- Reflect honestly on which part of trust work they personally need to strengthen

Learning Outcomes

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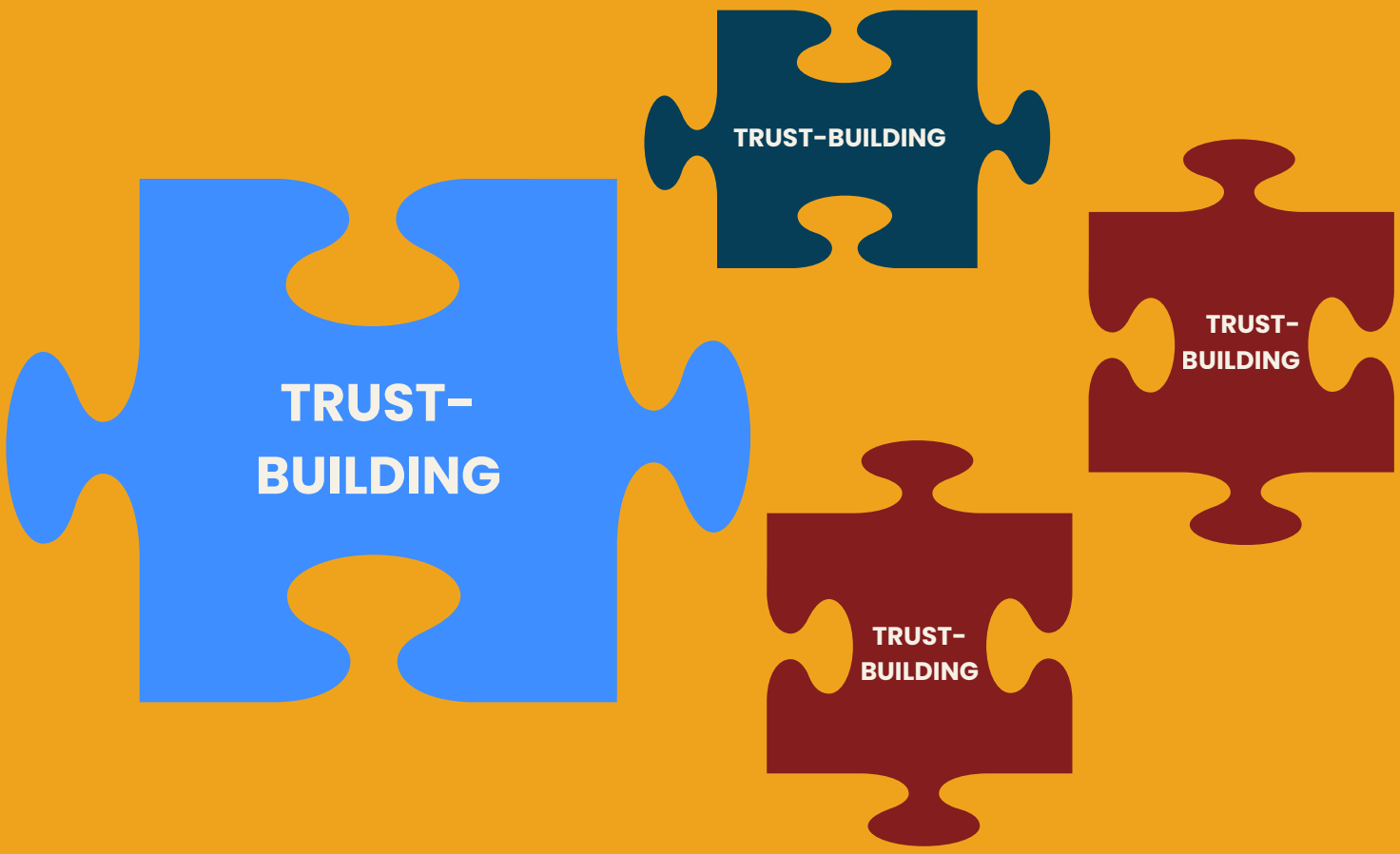
Skills Addressed



Materials Needed

- Three large sheets of paper or flip charts;
- Three station cards: BUILD, BREAK, REPAIR (printed or handwritten);
- Coloured markers at each station;
- Sticky notes

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Step-by-Step Implementation

SETUP

Before the Session

Arrange three stations in different corners of the room. Each station has a large sheet of paper, markers, and a station card:

- BUILD Room — “Trust is built here”
- BREAK Room — “Trust is broken here”
- REPAIR Room — “Trust is repaired here”

STEP 1

Opening and Safe Space Agreement

10 min

Welcome participants and co-create a short Safe Space Agreement.

Opening question — quick round, one sentence each:

Think of a person you trust deeply. Without naming them, what is ONE small thing they do — or never do — that earned that trust?

The facilitator points out the pattern: almost every answer is a small, repeated action — not a grand gesture. That is exactly what this session is about.

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STEP 2
Round 1: Create

12 min

Divide participants into three groups. Each group goes to one station and creates the foundation layer:

BUILD group:
Write or draw 5 small, concrete moments that build trust in a culturally diverse group. Not big things — small ones: switching to a language everyone understands in a meeting, replying when you said you would, remembering something someone told you.

BREAK group:
Write or draw 5 small moments that break trust — without bad intention: two people laughing in a language others don't speak, moving past someone's idea without acknowledging it, forgetting a promise that was small to you but big to them.

REPAIR group:
Write or draw 5 things that make a repair actually work: a simple apology plus a concrete step, listening before defending, asking 'what would help?' instead of explaining yourself.

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STEP 3
Round 2: The Chain Begins

12 min

Groups rotate clockwise. Now each group works ON TOP of what the previous group created:

Group arriving at BUILD:
Read the BREAK list created earlier (the facilitator brings a copy or photo). Choose ONE breaking moment — and design a trust foundation that would have prevented it. Add it to the BUILD sheet.

Group arriving at BREAK:
Read the BUILD sheet in front of you. Choose ONE trust-building moment — and write how it could realistically break. Not dramatically: realistically. Add it to the sheet with an arrow from the original.

Group arriving at REPAIR:
Read the BREAK sheet (facilitator brings a copy or photo). Choose ONE broken moment — and write the repair scenario: What is the first sentence? What is the first action? What should NOT be said?

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STEP 4

Round 3: The Weak Link

10 min

Final rotation. Each group arrives at the third station — one they have not worked at yet. Their task: *Read the entire chain on this sheet — what was built, how it broke, how it was repaired. Then mark the weakest point in the chain with a star and add ONE suggestion to strengthen it.*

STEP 5

The Chain Reading

15 min

All participants gather. Each station's full chain is read aloud by the group that finished there — like one continuous trust story: how it was built, how it broke, how it was repaired, and where the weak link is.

After each reading, the facilitator asks the full group:

- Does this chain feel real? Where have you seen it happen in your own work?
- Is the repair believable — would it actually work?

Final discussion question:
In real life, where does this chain most often stop? Is repair always possible — and what happens when it doesn't come?

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STEP 6

Which Room Am I?

10 min

Closing reflection. Each participant writes on a sticky note:

I am the person who most needs to work in the _____ room, because _____.

Participants stick their note on the station they named — a quiet, honest act of self-placement. 2–3 participants share voluntarily. The facilitator closes with the debrief questions below.

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Debrief

Reflection Questions

- What surprised you about how easily a trust-building moment could be broken — realistically, without bad intention?

- Which was hardest to write: building, breaking, or repairing? What does that tell you?

- In the chain readings, which repair felt genuinely believable — and what made it work?

- Think of the young people you work with. Where in their lives does the build-break-repair chain most often stop?

- You placed yourself in one of the three rooms. What is the first concrete thing you will do there?

Tips for Learners

Trust is built in small moments — a message answered on time, a promise kept, a language everyone understands. It is lost in the same small moments.

When writing breaking moments, resist drama. The most instructive breaks are the quiet, unintentional ones — because those are the ones we actually cause.

A good repair has two parts: a simple acknowledgement and a concrete next step. An explanation is not an apology.

Working on top of another group's ideas is itself a trust exercise. Treat their work with the care you would want for yours.

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Resources

CULTIVATE CQ Video — Module 6: Trust Takes Time: Building Bridges Inside a Team
https://www.instagram.com/danaker.community/reel/DYSItXMMbQF/

Molinsky, A., & Gundling, E. (2016). How to Build Trust on Your Cross-Cultural Team. Harvard Business Review.
https://hbr.org/2016/06/how-to-build-trust-on-your-cross-cultural-team

Aperian (2024). How to Earn Trust in Cross-Cultural Work Relationships.
https://aperian.com/blog/how-is-trust-established-in-cross-cultural-work-relationships/

T-Kit 4: Intercultural Learning — Council of Europe / European Commission
https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/youth-partnership/t-kit-4-intercultural-learning



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