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Have Fun while Forming Relationships! Communication and Teambuilding Skills for Healthy Programs

ACTIVITIES AND GAMES

A few of the many benefits and/or skills practiced during these activities include: communication, listening, teambuilding, brainstorming, cooperation, stress reduction, centering, goal-setting, self-awareness (emotional and physical), coordination/motor skills, bonding, creative expression, and doing creative activities in limited space with no extra materials. Doing the activities and developing these skills can help create a more cohesive and communicative as well as a less stressful, more relaxed environment for the staff, teachers, children and parents. The activities and games can also be used for parent groups and adapted for younger children. Adaptations will be discussed at training.

1. Name Game:

- **Ball Toss:** Group gathers in a circle. Person with ball (or other soft object) says their own name and the name of another person in the circle, and tosses the ball to that person (if you don't know the name of the person you are tossing to, ask "what's your name?"). The person who catches the ball says their own name, then the name of somebody in the circle who has not yet caught the ball, and tosses it to them. Repeat until everyone has tossed and caught the ball. Then toss the ball around the circle in the same order, but this time only saying the name of the person you are tossing to.
- **Timed Ball Toss:** Ask the group how quickly they think they can toss the ball all the way around. After timing them, ask if they think they can toss it any faster. Repeat as many times as you/the group wishes, continuing to set timing goals. Optional: Tell the group you will give them some time to discuss strategies. Remind them they have to toss it in the same order and everyone has to touch the ball. Again, ask how quickly they think they can toss the ball all the way around.

2. Find Something in Common:

Participants walk around the room and find somebody to pair up with. They must find something in common. If you want, you can ask them to turn back to back and try to feel each other breathing, once they find something. This helps them bond, puts them in touch with their breathing, and also signals to the leader that they found something. Once everybody finds something in common, each pair shares what they

found. Repeat, by finding somebody else to pair up with, but each time, the new pair must find something in common that has not already been mentioned. Repeat as many times as you wish.

3. **Pass the Pulse (or Pass the Squeeze):** Group gathers in a circle, holding hands. The designated leader squeezes the person's hand next to her/him, that person squeezes the next person's hand, and so on, until it reaches the leader who then raises his/her arm indicating the squeeze has gone all the way around. Ask the group how quickly they think they can pass the pulse. Time it. Repeat as many times as desired, checking back in on time goal. Alternative: Try passing the pulse with eyes closed. Ask the group if they think they will pass it more quickly or more slowly. The person timing can tap the person who is starting the pulse on the shoulder, to signal the person should begin.
4. **Count to Ten:** The group tries to count to ten (or twenty). Anybody can start, saying "one". Somebody else says "two", somebody else "three", etc. If two or more people say a number at the same time, the group has to start over. Participants can only use their voice and can only speak numbers.
5. **Human Orchestra:** Split into approximately three - five groups, depending on number of participants. The leader is the conductor. Each group has a few minutes to create a group sound/instrument, using only their voice and/or bodies. The conductor explains the signals/hand motions: pointing at the group means it's time to "play their instrument" (make their agreed on music/sound); raising hands up means to raise the volume and lowering hands means to lower the volume. Make up a signal to indicate the group should stop making the sound. The conductor can have more than one "instrument" playing at a time. Ask for a volunteer to be the next conductor, and have the groups come up with new sounds/instruments.
6. **Do You Know Your Neighbor/Colleague?:** Place chairs in a circle, with one less chair than the number of participants. One person stands in the middle, then approaches somebody in the circle and asks "_____ (person's name), do you know your neighbors (or colleagues)?" The person responds with "Yes, my neighbors are _____ and _____" (names the person on each of their sides, asking their names if needed). The person in the middle then asks "Is there anything you would like to know about your neighbor (or colleague)?" The person being asked then asks something that must also be true of themselves. This can be something very superficial (for example, "is anyone wearing blue socks?") or something very serious ("did anyone lose someone close to them this last year?") or anything in between. Then the person who asked the question and everybody else that this is true for, must go to another chair, and it cannot be a chair directly next to them. The person left without a chair remains in the middle and asks the next person "Do you know your neighbors (or colleagues)?" and so on...
7. **Pass it On:** A person stands in the middle of the circle and develops/improvises a sound and a movement. When they have the sound/movement, they go up to another person in the circle, doing their sound and movement. The person they approach then starts mimicking the sound and movement. When the person who made up the sound/movement feels the other person has correctly copied their

sound/movement, they “pass it on” and the two people trade places. The other person goes into the circle with the sound/movement, improvising a new sound/movement. When they have the new sound/movement, they go up to another person in the circle, who then starts mimicking the sound and movement. When the person who made up the sound/movement feels the other person has correctly copied their sound/movement, they “pass it on”. And so on...

8. **Sculpt an Emotion:** Break into pairs. One person in each pair is the artist (sculptor) and the other is the sculpture. The artist chooses an emotion to sculpt, using the other person as their sculpting material. The artist asks “is it ok to touch you?” If the answer is yes, they place the other person's face, body, arms, legs, etc., how and where they think they should be to demonstrate the emotion. If the answer is no, they tell the person who is the sculpture how to position their body and what kind of facial expression to make. When each artist finishes, they walk around the “gallery” to view the other sculptures, trying to guess their emotion. When the emotion is guessed, the sculpture can come out of the pose. Before the activity starts, ask the person who is the sculpture to notice how they feel (emotionally and physically) during the activity. After the activity is completed, ask the “sculptures” to share anything they noticed.
9. **Walk and Freeze**
 - a) The entire group begins by walking around the open space in the room. They are not touching or talking to one another.
 - b) Step Two is about adding emotions. Call freeze, and then have participants freeze in a particular “emotion statue”, ie, shy, mad, sad, hopeless, joyful, lonely, embarrassed, – or even the feeling of “You just won a million dollars,” etc . Always end with positive emotions.

This activity helps the participants identify how different people show emotions differently and learn how to read different emotional states.

10. **Debrief:** It can be very helpful to debrief the different activities, by checking in with the participants afterwards, asking questions such as: “What did you like? Not like? Why? What did you learn? About yourself? About others? What did you feel (emotionally/physically?). How can you use what you learned/practiced/observed in this game, in other parts of your life?” Asking such questions increases the learning experience.

You may want to tailor the questions to the age you are working with. However, you might also be surprised at what even younger children can come up with as answers.

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For further instruction and training on teambuilding/communication or mindfulness, relaxation, self-care and stress reduction techniques, or to order Deep Relaxation CDs for individual and group centering, please contact Zoe Sameth at 415-279-9573 or zoe@sameth.com.

Have Fun!