

The therapeutic use of

games in groupwork

sample

when, why, and how to use them

Includes a section on training
games for mental health, welfare
and education professionals

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Contents

sample

Introduction

Foreword	6
About us The CGP	7
Introduction Using this manual	8
Using games in groupwork It's how you play the game	8
Why we play Recognising the importance of play	9

Groups

Issues to consider when running groups	10
1. Group logistics	10
Group size	
Group length	
Age of participants	
Confidentiality (and its limitations)	
Competitive games	
2. Group stages	10
Warming	
Forming	
Storming	
Norming	
Performing	
Mourning	
Transforming	
3. Dynamics of individual sessions	12
Introduction	
Warm-up	
Release of energy	
Theme	
Bringing it all together	
Closure	
4. Space considerations	13
Circle formation	
Line formation	
Cluster formation	
Dispersment formation	

Games

1. Group starters	14	Partner games	46
Name games	15	Sumo wrestlers	47
'My name is' game	16	Mirroring	47
Circle name and action	16	Movement conversation	48
Name addition	17	Tree exercise	48
Name game	17	Partners ball game	49
Name zap	18	Four corners	49
Mexican wave	19	Feelings games	50
Name tiggly	19	Character walking	51
'Getting to know you' games	20	Pump up the volume	51
Balloon game	21	Charades	52
Postcards	21	Angry animals	52
'Get to know you' action game	22	Feelings statues	53
Rolling introductions	22	Trust games	54
Who are you?	23	Trust exercise	55
Truth is stranger than fiction	23	Cat and mouse	56
Warm-up games	24	Blindfold walk	56
Clap	25	Partner balance	57
Poison ball	25	Puppet sculpture	57
Musical chairs	26	Personal space games	58
Scarecrow tiggly	26	Filling the space	59
Indians and tepees	26	Human traffic jam	59
Duck, duck goose	27	Personal space circle	59
Fruit salad	27	Relaxation games	60
2. Group games	28	Dead fish	61
Team building games	29	Body relaxation	62
Follow the leader	30	Rag dolls and tin soldiers	63
Warm-up machine	30	Group closure games	64
Chain chasey	31	Huh!	65
Footy frenzy	31	Pass the parcel	66
Ball on material	32	Dice game	66
Pass the hoop	32	Graffiti sheets	67
Taken for a ride	33	3. Training games	
Group stop/start	33	for professionals	68
Communication games	34	Ice breakers	69
Wink circle	35	Bingo bee	70
Wink murder	35	Sixty second sell	70
Wandering whispers	36	Name game	71
Group storytelling	36	Life is like a box of chocolates ...	72
Taking a stand	37	Time lines	73
Chants	37	Energy boosters	74
Problem solving games	38	Farmyard	75
Object memory	39	Streets and lanes	76
Group knot	39	Treasure chest	76
Magazine mix up	40	Exploring themes	77
Changes	40	Attunement chopsticks	78
Who am I?	41	Graffiti sheets	78
Back to back	41	House of cards	79
Impulse control games	42	Concluding comments	80
What's the time Mr/Mrs/Ms Wolf?	43	Resources	81
Spy treasure	43	Further reading	81
Ship ahoy!	44		
Shop 'til you drop!	44		
Musical statues	45		
Yoga freeze	45		

Movement conversation

Directions

- This game can be undertaken with the whole group in a circle or in pairs.
- Find a movement and 'throw' it to a partner.
- The partner 'catches' the movement, and allows it to transform in their body, then throws it back again.
- Using different body parts they can act out movements such as cradling, eating, shaking, etc.
- Participants are encouraged not to stay with traditional 'ball game' type movements of kicking and throwing but to use other body parts and other types of movements.
- Can also do this activity in a circle, passing movements around the circle.

When to use

When exploring communication, creativity, and expression. Also when group members feel safe enough to explore other forms of interacting (non-verbal) without becoming over-anxious (e.g. becoming overly silly or constrained).

Therapeutic value

This game provides a non-verbal way of exploring communication, extending movement range, giving, receiving, sharing, creativity and engaging with another through a conversation in movement. This game can generate discussion around the following:

- What happens, for example, if people 'throw us their anger'?
- What happens when people are gentle with us?
- What we do with other people's energy in our interactions?
- Some interactions may be pleasant, others difficult and challenging. How do we cope with these in real life?
- Did we transform the energy? Did we react to the energy? Did we ignore it?

Issues to be aware of

There may be some resistance to using creative and non-verbal expression. Some participants may feel embarrassed or threatened by mediums of communicating that are not language bound, so facilitators may need to build up to using activities that are more expressively playful and out of participants' comfort zones.

Tree exercise

Directions

- Participants find a partner.
- Each partner stands as strong as they can, while their partner attempts to push them just enough to see how much they will fall off-balance before they can come back to balance in their centre again.
- Swap roles.
- In the next round, the person standing is instructed to visualise they are a tree with roots going down from below their feet deep, deep into the ground.
- They keep imagining this while their partner tries to push them off-balance again.
- Swap roles.
- Talk about the differences in each stage and whether they felt stronger the second time around when they were visualising.

When to use

When participants are 'ungrounded', not present, or over-excited and all over the place. When exploring themes of how we can support others and ourselves.

Therapeutic value

This is an immediate experiential exercise that can inform participants about their experiences of whether they feel stronger with a visualisation technique. The activity itself brings participants into their bodies and into the present. It can open up discussions around how we support ourselves and nurture ourselves, where our roots are, where our sunshine and water (nurturing) comes from.

Issues to be aware of

When partners attempt to push each other over it is through their torsos only and is only a gentle push. This needs to be demonstrated by facilitators and immediately attended to if participants are observed to be too rough or inappropriate.