

Guidelines on Facilitating Co-operative Games Sessions

Purpose: (1) Games can be played simply for fun. (2) Alternatively they can be played at a particular point either to create a particular mood or to raise particular issues. (3) Some games sessions are for training people in (1) or (2).

This hand-out however is mainly about playing for fun - though the games do have an ethos of co-operation rather than competition. It is also worth thinking before you start about what the purpose of the participants is in coming to the sessions. What are their expectations and needs?

Safety: It is important when facilitating games to ensure that everybody is safe, both physically and emotionally.

- 1 Ensure before you start that the physical environment is safe for what you intend to do. What sort of games can you play there? Do you know where the first aid kit is?
- 2 Remind individuals to take care of themselves and others when playing. Know their own limits.
- 3 Have a duck quack, whistle etc. to attract attention.
- 4 Consider giving participants a word to shout if they are in danger, such as 'stop'. Ask the group to echo this if they hear it and stop immediately. Practice this before you start. Remember to use another word like 'halt' for other purposes.
- 5 Think about warming up (and down?) before you start anything too energetic
- 6 Think about safety issues for each individual game.
- 7 Emotional safety is also important - though sometimes of course games may be used for educational or therapeutic purposes to trigger uncomfortable feelings. Even here, however, it is important to ensure that participants are ultimately safe e.g. able to regain equilibrium.
- 8 Traditional games and sports - though fun - can have a downside of being too competitive, so that some people feel like losers, left out or unable to play. Try to make the games inclusive. It is easier to change the rules of the game to suit the player than to change the players to suit the game. For example, in traditional 'musical chairs' people are knocked out each round. They may feel like losers or get bored and fractious. Alter the rules. Traditionally only one person is allowed to sit on each chair. As the chairs are removed players drop out. Try allowing more than one person per chair! If this is impractical, instead of chairs have cushions on the floor which you can stand on. Can you get the whole group on the final cushion if they co-operate?
- 9 Similarly, if the only way some people can play certain games is to cheat and no-one else is hurt, this is okay if it means more fun.
- 10 If certain people have disabilities etc. either alter the game or try to find a role so that they can be included. Ask them for suggestions.
- 11 Allow people to opt in and out as they need. If you tell them what the game will involve at the beginning this gives them the power to drop out easier if they are threatened by it.
- 12 Generally, try to give your power away as much as possible. Allow other people to suggest games, introduce them or make up variations.
- 13 Try to get a sense of the group e.g. can they cope with games involving touch?

Other stuff

- 1 Where possible demonstrate rather than just talk.
- 2 A story line makes the game more fun e.g. a chase game can be about giants and elves.
- 3 If people are joining the sessions at different times, have someone ready to explain the rules to them.
- 4 Set aside space to think up new games or just to mess about without any structure.
- 5 Think about pacing the games to suit the group. Do they need energising or a bit of a breather? How do you want them to leave - hyper or calm?
- 6 Do you want to give people hand-outs or time to make notes? How will you evaluate and follow up?

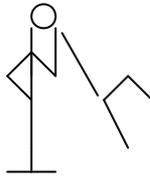
Games for Fundamentals and Support Groups

Bet Lynch's Earring (or fun with projection)

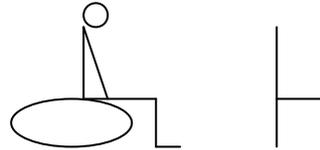
Place a chair or a similar household object in the middle of the floor. At random or in turn, rush up and demonstrate what the object is really. As well as being enjoyable, perhaps this game can also be used to introduce projection (or is it transference?) before talking about ID checks to learner co-counsellors.



A chair



An earring



A television

Huggy Bears

Somebody calls out a category - e.g. foot-wear - and then other people call out sub-categories that they belong to e.g. black shoes, trainers, bare feet. People in the same sub-group hug. Then start again with a new category. Anybody left on their own deserves a round of cheers for their uniqueness and worth as individuals. Can be used as a form of evaluation e.g.:

I love you Ermintrude, but I just can't smile

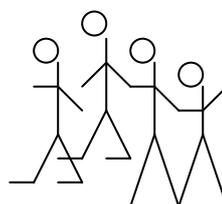
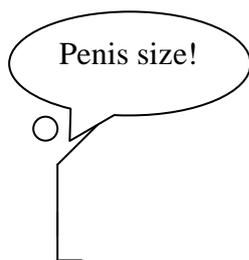
The group sits in a circle. The first person says to the one next to them "Do you love me honey?" in whatever way they want, with whatever actions they want, to try to make this second person laugh or at least smile. In reply, the second person has to try to say "I love you Ermintrude, but I just can't smile", with a straight face. When this little conversation is over, the second person then turns to the third person in the circle and asks them "Do you love me, honey?" and it all begins again. This could perhaps be an interesting way of demonstrating that tears aren't the only form of catharsis!

Robots

An old favourite. This trust exercise involves people pairing up and one - the robot - closing their eyes. The robot is then guided round the room by touch - head means stop, back means go, left and right shoulders indicate direction. In emergencies the robot will probably respond to a loud "stop". As always, switch round after a while.

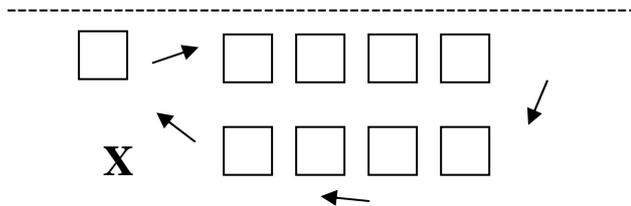
Nostalgia

This is a fun way of getting people to work together with new partners. Simply call out a category e.g. hand size, colours (in the rainbow spectrum), date born in month etc. and ask people to form a line with, for example, the largest hand at one end and the smallest at the other. Then pair up with the person next to you. Variations can include doing it on a plank of wood (very intimate if everyone is lined up first at random and then has to get into position) or doing it silently etc. Obviously some sensitivity has to be shown in choosing categories, especially in fundamentals!



Whatever you've ever wanted

This is a nice activity to do with a group who are quite comfortable with each other. If there is an uneven number of people, each person would sit or stand in the space represented by one of the squares below. If there is an equal number of people, then one person takes position **X** and doesn't move from it. **X** exchanges treats with other people as they move onto the other end space. You can have as many people facing each other as you like. It is useful if one person takes responsibility for the timing.



For an agreed time the individuals nearest the wall can ask the person opposite them for a treat e.g. a massage, a mini etc. Then it's the other person's turn. After this everyone moves to the left and the process is repeated. Carry on until everyone has worked together.

Useful for raising group energy or introducing non-verbal work:

Noise-ball throwing

Everybody sits in a circle, and individually chooses a sound to make. One person starts by making their noise and simultaneously pointing at someone else, who then makes a noise and gestures to a third person, who makes their sound



Xylophone

Groups form in lines of six or seven people. Again each person chooses their own sound. One person steps out and plays the others as if they were a human xylophone, each individual making their own noise when touched.

Eagles and doves

This is a game for around a dozen people. People pair up and decide to be either a dove or an eagle. All the pairs, except one, then distribute themselves in a wide open 'circle' around the room. The remaining pair are taken into the middle, eyes closed, are separated from each other and are turned round to become gentle disorientated. The aim of the game is for the eagles around the side to guide the eagle in the middle to the dove and the other doves to try and prevent this from happening. It is not allowed to shout out instructions. Instead, the eagles and doves agree on a noise each will make to attract their bird in the right direction.

Zen photography

One person closes their eyes and is guided round the room (or even better, the garden) by another who, when the mood takes them "snaps". This means positioning the closed-eye person before an interesting view and by word or gesture commanding them to open and close their eyes once rapidly, like the shutter of a camera. After some time, swap roles. A nice gentle exercise to do.

Blind sculpture

This can be used to develop group confidence around 'touch' but for this reason always needs to be used awarery. One person is the clay and has their eyes closed. One person is the sculptor and has their eyes closed as well. The third person is the model, who takes a pose and has their eyes open. The sculptor, by touch, has to mould the clay into the same position as the model. Can also be done in a group of five with a double model and a double clay.

Tactile caligraphy

One person turns their back to their partner, who writes on it slowly with their finger. The original person tries to guess what has been spelt out. Quite a sensuous exercise, which could almost be used instead of validation posters!

Sardines in a tin

Another touchy activity but one which is more of an energiser. Half the group lies down shoulder to shoulder. These are the sardines. The company that sells the tins, however, decides that more fish can be squeezed in. The other half of the group have to slip in beside the original sardines who remain motionless. Take care not to break any fins, flippers or fingers. Watches etc. are best taken off beforehand.

Sock shock

Another energiser. A game to let out aggression or create it. Make a defined soft area on the floor. Anyone who wants to play can only stay on this area if they are on all fours, are sitting or lying down etc. The aim is to rip everyone else's socks off whilst protecting your own. Socks are to be thrown as far away as possible when off. The "sad and sockless" can either be out, can rejoin when their treasured footwear is retrieved, or can just cause general havoc with those trying desperately to protect their tootsies, depending on how you want to play it. Useful to have a "stop" signal for the whole group and a referee / facilitator. Be aware of other people so nobody gets hurt.

Everybody who

Put a line of cushions out on the floor, one for each person. Call out a category e.g. everybody who had cornflakes for breakfast. Anyone who fits into this category moves on one. After a short while you will probably find lots of people huddled together on a small number of cushions. The chances of this happening can be increased by taking some of the cushions away. As well as an icebreaker, this exercise can also be used as a risk-taking or sharing exercise if the categories are more personal e.g. about sex, childhood etc.

Validation game

Everybody in the group must think of a quality they like about themselves. They mustn't tell the others though. Take it in turns to go in the middle and let the others try to guess your self-validation, by appreciating you. If they give a different appreciation to the one you were thinking of, acknowledge it e.g. "Yes, I am generous, but that wasn't what I was thinking of".

Who is it? Game

One person goes out of the room. The others in the group choose somebody to be the person to be identified. When the original person returns they have to try and guess this person by asking questions like "If this person was an animal, what sort of animal would they be?" Obviously, change the category each time till the person is identified. Be aware of people's feeling when giving your answers.

Dive! Dive! Dive!

This is a trust exercise for nine or more people. One stands on a secure table, the others stand in two lines opposite each other, with their arms out. When it has been checked that everyone is ready, the person on the table can safely land in the arms of the others. Obviously don't take part if you have a bad back or are particularly heavy etc. If in doubt, practice with the supporters kneeling and the faller falling from the floor rather than a table.

Knee Sit

The group needs to stand in a circle with everyone facing the back of the person in front, with a gap of about 1 ft between them. At the command "1 - 2 - 3 - SIT", assume a sitting position and guide the bottom of the person in front onto your lap. Everyone should end up sitting! For the really adventurous - now try walking! Add more people and you might beat the world record!

