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Group Games

1-2-BOOM!

Overview

This is a good energizer especially for after lunch or during a mid-afternoon lull. Physical, active, and LOUD (if you do it correctly!)

Modality Goals

- A. Feel energized and awake.
- B. Be alert, pay attention, and act quickly.
- C. Know how complex a simple action (counting!) can be!

Materials Needed

None except your voice and room to move.

Room Set Up

Space to stand all together in one large circle, in a space where loud voices will not bother others nearby.

Total Time Needed:

5-10 minutes

The Flow

The group stands in a circle.

The purpose is to go around the circle and count in consecutive order from 1 – 30.

The trick is that **any number that contains “3” or is a multiple of “3” cannot be voiced** out loud – **instead** you must say BOOM (loud voice with emphasis).

The goal is to count rhythmically as fast as possible.

You can play a practice round, or two, and then move into the game let people know that if they make a mistake they're out of the circle.

If the entire group gets “out” before reaching 30, the whole group must start again from number 1.

The rhythm sounds like:

1-2-BOOM-4-5-BOOM-7-8-BOOM-10-11-BOOM-BOOM-14-BOOM (etc.)

ROCK-PAPER-SCISSORS COMPETITION-CELEBRATION

Overview

This energizing break takes the classic zero-sum kid's competition and gives the group the chance to create a supportive encouraging team environment.

Modality Goals

- A. Feel supported and excited.
- B. Behave competitively and supportively at the same time.
- C. Know how to balance helping and winning.

Materials Needed

None except your voice and room to move, far enough away from others to not disturb them with your cheering!

Room Set Up

Divide the group into standing pairs, be close enough to other pairs to morph into groups of 4 and then ever-larger groups.

Total Time Needed:

5-15 minutes, depending on total size of group

The Flow

Divide the group into pairs.

Each pair has a "Rock Paper Scissor" competition – three games, best of 3 wins

- rock crushes scissor; scissor cuts paper; paper traps rock

Whoever loses then becomes the biggest cheerleader for the winner in that pair ... then two winners, cheered by the people they have just beaten, play one another.

The winner of that round now has 3 cheerleaders, and looks for another winner to play.

The cheering gets louder and louder, until the last two winners, with crowds of cheerleaders, play each other; the final winner gets celebrated by the whole group.

Counting to 20

Overview

A group of 15-20 participants stand together with the shared goal of counting to 20. This game is harder than it appears and raises interesting questions about group collaboration, who has authority, how a group accomplishes its goals, and how the group handles frustration.

Modality Goals

- Build trust and a deeper sense of community within the group
- Raise important questions about group dynamics: how the group handles frustration, the desire for immediate success, lack of clear authority, and risk-taking
- Position participants to be more willing to take risks, make mistakes, and collaborate
- Help participants notice their own behaviors and tendencies within the group

Materials Needed

This game requires no materials.

Room Set Up

This game requires an open space in which participants can stand in a large circle.

Total Time: 15-25 minutes

The Flow

The goal of the game is for the group to count together, in consecutive order, to the number 20. Each participant has to say at least one number. Anyone can start and anyone can throw out the next number in consecutive order. No talking is allowed other than saying numbers. The group cannot point or do anything else that creates a structured way for each member to have a turn saying a particular number; the numbers need to be randomly thrown out by the various group members.

The “rub” is that if two people say the same number at the same time, the entire group is “out” and must start again from number one. The group succeeds if it gets to the number 20 without two people saying the same number at the same time.

Variation: Play the game with eyes closed.

Additional Considerations

Explain to the group how to play and give them 10-15 minutes to play. If they succeed quickly, play a version with eyes closed. If they’re unable to get to 20, let them try for a full 15 minutes but then stop them so that you have time to debrief.

Do not be the one to always start the counting - but do make sure to throw out at least one number so that you are participating in the game.

Debrief – Core Learnings

After the game, spend 5 minutes reflecting on the actual experience, with question prompts like:

1. What did it feel like to play this game? Why? (participants often get exceedingly frustrated if the group is not successful in reaching 20)
2. Did you like this game? Why/why not?
3. Was it easy/hard for you to play? Why/why not?
4. Did you have a particular strategy? What was it? Did the group? Did everyone pick up on it?
5. (If you played an “eyes-closed” version, ask about the difference between the two rounds)

Then, share some of the core concepts about how groups function in general/how this group worked, that might be beneficial for the group’s learning and self-awareness:

1. **Balcony/Dance Floor:** In order to successfully play this game, you have to simultaneously be on the “dance floor,” participating, throwing out a number, “intervening” in the system; but you also need to be on the “balcony,” noticing the patterns of the group, being sensitive to others, so that you don’t say a number at the same time as someone else.
2. **Authority/Leadership:** The facilitator of this game is modeling exerting leadership from a position of authority. She has given a clear directive and established a shared group purpose, but is not spelling out each step of how the group can achieve this purpose, and has handed the work over to the group. Even the symbolism of the facilitator specifically *not* starting off the counting is a metaphor for this – sometimes even this detail is a powerful illustration of how space is created for leadership when the authority figure steps back.
3. **Pacing the Work:** This game helps build sensitivity to how fast you can push a group, and to building tolerance for discomfort. The more tolerance each individual has for the process, the less frustrated the group as a whole becomes, and the more likely the group is to succeed.
4. **Collaboration:** This game is a powerful metaphor that leadership cannot be done alone. One person cannot get the group to where it needs to get. But one person can model an emotional/physical stance that helps the group achieve its goal. One person can model a strategy (jumping in with a number relatively quickly after the previous number; or the opposite, pausing, looking around, smiling, then saying a number) that other group members can learn from.
5. **Risk:** Finally, this game models how risky the work of leadership is. It is risky *not* to say a number – because if the group gets to 20 without each individual having participated, it doesn’t count. But it is just as risky *to* say a number, for then you run the risk of derailing the group. The game therefore models the tension and sense of risk that arises when one is striving to exert leadership.

ZIP-ZAP-ZOP

Overview

Energy-creating quick choice for after lunch or during a mid-afternoon lull. Physical, active, and FUNNY.

Modality Goals

- A. Feel energized and awake.
- B. Watch each other, be mindful, and act quickly.
- C. Know how important body language can be!

Materials Needed

None except your voice and room to move.

Room Set Up

Space to stand all together in one large circle, in a space where laughing will not bother others nearby.

Total Time Needed: 5-10 minutes

The Flow

With everyone standing in a circle, the facilitator begins the pattern of “Zip, Zap, Zop” by clapping their hands at someone and saying “Zip.” The person that they indicated will then clap at someone and say “Zap.” Then the third person will do the same but say “Zop.” After this, the next person starts back over with “Zip.”

Every time that you clap and send the zip, zap, or zop to another player, try to make eye contact. Whenever someone makes a mistake and says the wrong word in the series – or when someone who was NOT the indicated target jumps in - celebrate the mistake by clapping together and **then start the pattern over.**

The group should begin at a comfortable pace and gradually speed up during the pattern.

This will run perpetually until the facilitator stops it.

Additional Considerations

Another way to run this is to eliminate each person who makes the mistake, making the circle smaller and smaller each round until finally you’re left with 3 people – one Zip + one Zap + one Zop = DONE!

THE DOLPHIN TRAINING GAME

It's just like the hot/cold game you used to play as a little kid, but without the cold and with clapping sounds instead of hot. It's the same concept as the one you use to train dolphins to jump through hoops and stuff. You send a person out of the room and decide on a single simple task for them to do: Sit on the chair; put their hand on their head; draw on the whiteboard; lift the chair off the ground; etc. Try and keep the tasks to single activities when you start out. Putting on a jacket is a couple of activities, not just one.

When they get closer to doing the activity everyone in the audience claps. The further they get from the task, the quieter the room gets. The closer, the louder the applause. When they get it you erupt in applause, and someone else gets to try. People tend to think in categories, so if you try to think outside of the same category for the next person, everyone will get more out of the game. So if the first person had to sit on the chair, the next person will be thinking about moving around the room. If you have the second person put their hand on their head, you're giving them a chance to discover something they weren't thinking about.

This is a great game for learning that it's ok to be wrong about stuff, not to get stuck on your ideas, and how to learn from mistakes. As the person going, the more you cycle through incorrect activities and have it be ok that you tried something that didn't work, the closer you can get to discovering what the right activity is.

This game can be really satisfying to finally succeed after struggling, but you also want to keep the game fun. If people aren't happy make it ok to give up and try again. If the game isn't fun, no one will want to learn from it.

CIRCLE OF LIFE

Everyone sits together on chairs in a large circle. One person stands in the middle. Note: There must be exactly the number of chairs around the circle as there are people. The person in the middle does not have a chair. She starts the game by saying her name, and something unique about herself (where she's from, favorite color, etc.) Everyone who shares that unique fact with her must get up, and quickly find another chair. The person in the middle has the chance to sit down, and someone new is left standing in the middle. She says her name, something about herself, and so it goes. Choose to end the game when most people have had a chance to share their name and something unique. This game builds feelings of connection in the group, hi-lights what is unique and what is shared amongst the group members, helps people learn each other's names, and builds trust and fun!