

Experiential/Adventure Therapy Workshop Activity List (June 14, 2010)

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“Few things are impossible to diligence and skill. Great works are performed not by strength, but perseverance.” Samuel Johnson (1709-1784)

Check In: 2-3 person check-in we shared how we got to our current job (or a defining moment) and what we wanted to get from the workshop. A small group or pair check-in allows for more intimacy as well as an assessment to see how people follow directions, the level that they share with each other, and comfort level (e.g., did they choose the person they know or someone they didn't know?) Modeling the response with your own story helps to set expectations.

Perspective Circle/Cross the Arms: A simple experiential activity helps to create your group and individual expectations. The perspective circle is where you point your index finger at the ceiling and “draw” in a clockwise direction. While still pointing at the ceiling, move the circle down to about waist high. Notice what direction the circle is moving now. Counter Clockwise!! Why? A change in your perspective! Now, cross your arms. Notice which one is on top. Switch Arms. How does this feel? Awkward? Uncomfortable? This workshop is an opportunity to change your perspective. Sometimes the activities we do may feel awkward or uncomfortable. Your invitation is to participate as fully as possible, know that the more fully you participate the more that you will get from the workshop, to suspend your certainty, and to play safely - both emotionally and physically.

Speed Greeting: Greet everyone in the room by name in less than (figure 2 seconds/person). Note afterwards how many people greeted the facilitator! A great opportunity to talk about limits we set on ourselves, how we leave people out, responsibilities for both the group and the person on the outside, etc.

Sample Session Sequence 1 (integrates check-in, warm up, main activity, and closing)

Full Value Contract Balloon Toss: Give each participant a small slip of paper and invite them to write one strength or characteristic that they bring to the group that will benefit the group. Share what people wrote and roll up the papers and slip them inside a balloon. Blow up the balloon to a normal size (not too big!) and invite the group to write on the balloon with a permanent marker things that the group needs to do to be able to get the full value of this experience (e.g., group agreements such as sharing, listening, respecting each other, etc). Then challenge the group to keep the balloon in the air - everyone must hit the balloon at least once, no one can hit it twice in a row. You can give a variety of challenges, e.g., get through the alphabet, no hands allowed, only feet, someone with their eyes closed, etc. Discuss what aspects they demonstrated on their full value contract and anything that they need to add to this. Ended with sharing an appreciation (and explaining the difference between an appreciation and compliment).

Sample Session Sequence 2

Weather Check In: Invite participants to check in with a weather report, what the weather has been, what it is right now, and what it will be. If desired, share what the weather report actually means. Discuss how weather changes, hope, what you can and can't control, etc.

Brain Gym: A few brain teasers to get us thinking. With hands in front of you, stick one finger out and one thumb up then switch! Try another! Stick one leg out and move in clockwise direction with the same hand in a counter clockwise direction. Ready for one more! Show the 6-count. With your right arm going up and down and the left arm going up middle and down, to the count of six! Great for energizers or discussion about strategies and strengths and practice.

Key Exchange (ref Karl Rhonke): Place two small carpet squares (or wash clothes or paper) on the floor within arms reach of each other. Under each square, place a key. Invite your client to stand on one square and you stand on the other. The challenge is for you to get your key (under your client's feet) and your client to get his/her key (from under your feet) at the same time without touching the ground! Discuss relationship, problem solving, communication, support, etc.

Closing: Share one thing you learned (or were reminded of) that you are going to take to the next activity or event in your life.

Sample Session Sequence 3

Radio Check In: Invite participants to check in with what song would be playing on their radio, then ask participants to share what song would they like to be playing and what they would need in order to be able to change the station.

Foam Foiling: Give each participant one half-length noodle and a noodle slice. Invite them to hold the longer noodle in their non-dominant hand and the slice on the back of their other hand. See if you can knock off the slice! You can adapt this by changing partners and increasing the group size. Discuss aggression, how strategies change in different situations, different ways we deal with conflict, etc.

Play Doh Reflection: Give participants play-doh and invite them to create something that represents how they felt or behaved during the activity. Share what they have created. Then invite the participants to add to or change what they created to reflect something that they learned (or remembered) that they want to take with them after this session.

Sample Session Sequence 4

Nature Check in: During a walk or just being outside, invite your clients to find an object (without hurting that object) in nature that represents something positive about themselves.

Math Slap: Facing your partner, have one person hold both hands out palms up, while the other person holds both hands out palms down (over the palms up of the other person). The challenge is to slap the hands of the other person before they can pull away while ALSO giving that person easy math problems. Discuss doing two things at once, how paying attention to safety makes it difficult to perform, etc.

Human Camera: In pairs, one person is the camera (with eyes closed) and one person is the photographer. Take three pictures (e.g., something that is important to the photographer, a strength of the photographer, etc). Discuss safety, support, pictures shared, etc.

Picture Processing: Lay out postcards or pictures and invite your client to select a picture based on your question, e.g., select a picture that represents how you were supported during this activity.

Sample Session Sequence 4

Smile Check in: invite your clients to find an object to share something that made them smile today or this week.

Starburst Challenge: Invite everyone to place one hand on a hula hoop (or loop of rope). Invite everyone to identify one thing they need to do reach your goals. Once you have thought of something raise your hand and I will hand you a starburst after you share this need. Now that everyone knows what they need, throw your object away from the group. (Wait for group to throw objects). When I say go everyone needs to get their object while keeping one hand on the hula hoop at all times. Discuss support, conflicting goals, differing distance of goals, communication, etc.

Chaos: Set up the room so that there is a hula hoop in the center filled with about 30 tossable items and the other hula hoops about 10 feet away from the hula hoop in the center and at least 5 ft away from each other. Invite participants (when you say "go!") to gather the most amount of resources possible inside their hula hoop. The only rule is that you can only carry one piece at a time. Let round one go 10 seconds past when all of the objects are gone from the center (usually people start "stealing" from each other). Usually it takes three to five rounds for participants to realize that they need to move all of the hula hoops to the middle surrounding all resources. Discuss competition and strategies.

Two Minute Writing: Invite participants to write any reflections they have for two minutes. Just whatever is on their mind - no worries about grammar or repeating or anything. Then ask them to re-read the reflection and underline anything that seems important to them that they want to remember. Invite them to share one or two things that they underlined.

Workshop Closing Activity: Invite the group in small groups or pairs to share something that they are "taking away" from the workshop and provide some small transitional object to represent this (e.g., the tiny footprint).