

Play With Adults: AEE Conference 2025 Game Guide

Facilitator: Mary Blazier, MA (IMH25285)

- Phone: (217) 417-2787
- Email: mary.blazier@LifeAdventuresCC.org

Facilitator: Maurie Lung, PhD, LMHC, LMFT, CCAT

- Phone: (727) 481-4577
- Email: dmlung@LifeAdventuresCC.org

1. Ants in Your Pants

- Intro Activity (We invited people to “help test” a game. See what we did there?)
- Directions:
 - Partner game. Materials needed - garbage bag, mini beach balls
 - Toss as many balls as you can into the garbage bag with one partner inside. Can cut out holes for your feet if you wish.
 - Can challenge yourself to distance or as many as possible in a time frame, etc.
- Reflection Opportunities
 - How did the invitation to help affect participation and comfort?
 - Problem solving

2. Name Gestures

- Why?
 - Comfort, Icebreaker, Introduction
- Directions
 - Game is played in a circle.
 - Leader says name with an accompanying gesture/symbol. Group repeats all together.
 - Play passes around the circle, with the next person saying their name and gesture. Group repeats after each person
 - “It” is passed around the circle (like tossing a ball). One person “catches” it by saying their name/gesture, then “passes” by saying someone else’s.
- Reflection Opportunities
 - Comfort with being seen/percieved
 - Noticing others/other’s effort
 - How memory is affected by anxiousness

3. “Yes, And” Story

- Why?
 - Introduce Improv themes
 - Very short participation needed
 - Building collaboration as basis for future games
- Directions:

- i. Game is played in a circle
 - ii. One person starts off a story and tells a sentence. Play goes around the circle with each person adding on and starting their sentence "Yes, and...."
 - iii. Story ends when group wants it to!
 - c. Reflection Opportunities:
 - i. agreement, acceptance, and collaboration
 - ii. Presence, Flexibility, letting go of control
- 4. 1-25 Group Count
 - a. Why?
 - i. Assess group dynamics
 - ii. Opens awareness from individual to group
 - b. Directions:
 - i. Challenge the group to count to 25 without speaking at the same time as anyone else. No preplanning or strategizing allowed! Group needs to start over at 1 if a "mistake" is made
 - c. Reflection Opportunities:
 - i. Active Listening
 - ii. Group Roles
 - iii. Empathy/Perception of others
- 5. Volcanoes and Craters
 - a. Why?
 - i. Get moving - change the energy
 - ii. Look at the difference between collaboration and competition
 - iii. This is not an improv game- variety of offering
 - b. Directions:
 - i. Props needed: Cups of any size
 - ii. Game is played in two teams of any size.
 - iii. Volcano team trying to get all the cups upside down, crater team is treating to get them all right side up.
 - iv. Give a specific amount of time (30 seconds/1min is plenty) to flip their cups. People can reflip cups others have turned. Team with the most wins
 - c. Reflection Opportunities:
 - i. Perseverance
 - ii. Motivation
 - iii. Overcoming Obstacles
 - iv. Facing Resentment
 - v. Failure
 - vi. Interpersonal Relationships: Your goal conflicts with my goal.
- 6. Emotion Walk
 - a. Increase vulnerability
 - b. Also movement based like previous exercise
 - c. Directions:

- i. Players participate as individuals moving around the space ,but doing group instructions
 - ii. Have players walk around the space embodying an emotion
 - 1. Call out different ways to embody:
 - a. in your legs/gait, arms, posture, pace, face, noise, then combine?
 - 2. Have players switch emotions - change to one that has a different energy/feel to it
 - 3. Last step is to interact with another and introduce yourself as your emotion.
 - d. Reflection Opportunities:
 - i. Somatic Connection - Physical changes have emotional/energetic implications
 - ii. Where can/do emotions manifest in our bodies?
- 7. Late for Work
 - a. Why?
 - i. Increasing capacity for vulnerability and discomfort through having an “audience”
 - ii. These sorts of activities come later!
 - b. Directions:
 - i. Play consists of 3 Active Participants: Boss, Co-worker, Employee. (Plus optional “audience”)
 - ii. Employee leaves the room while others decide two reasons why Employee is late for work. (I.E. Toothbrush fell in the toilet, Got a flat tire)
 - iii. Chair set up as boss’ chair. Co worker stands behind, employee stands in front.
 - iv. Employee comes in and explains themself verbally based on what the coworker is doing with their silent actions. (charades)
 - v. Boss then decides if the person is fired or not (Can make up your own criteria/let the boss have creative freedom for this)
 - c. Reflection Opportunities
 - i. Non Verbal Communication
 - ii. Failure,
 - iii. Vulnerability,
 - iv. Collaboration
 - v. Creativity
- 8. Hot Seat
 - a. Why?
 - i. Similar to previous, increases vulnerability.
 - ii. “Next level of risk” activity
 - b. Directions:
 - i. Play consists of an interviewer (Usually the group facilitator), interviewee, and audience

- ii. Interviewee leaves the room. Interviewer and audience decide a Celebrity for the Interviewee to become.
 - iii. Interviewee returns and has to answer audience/interviewer questions as if they are the assigned character - even though they don't know who they are!
 - iv. Play continues for several questions/until interviewee realizes who they are
- c. Reflection Opportunities:
 - i. Facing the unknown/uncertainty
 - ii. Working with our Blindspots
 - iii. "Playing along" when we are unsure
 - iv. Problem Solving
- 9. Bippity Bippity Bop
 - a. Why?
 - i. Ending with a group game to bring everyone back together
 - ii. high energy, positive ending
 - b. Directions:
 - i. Game is played in a circle
 - ii. Leader stands in the center and points at a player. Leader can do one of several options based on level. Levels are cumulative. If a mistake is made, leader and player swap OR player is out
 - 1. Bippity Bippity Bop - Player says Bop before leader
 - 2. Bop - Player stays silent
 - 3. Banana 3-2-1. Player points upward with both hands, Players on either side "peel away"
 - 4. T Rex 3-2-1 - Player puts hands behind their back and makes a baby T rex noise. Players on either side make the claws
 - iii. Celebrate when people make mistakes!!
 - c. Reflection Opportunities:
 - i. Presence
 - ii. Making Mistakes/failure

Take Away Points

Why Improv?

- Life is not scripted!
- Many adults have heard of Improv and find it socially acceptable as an adult activity. This can be double edged - some have pre conceived fears about performance expectations
- Improv themes of "Yes, And", Presence, Collaboration, and Emotional Expression have easily transferable skills

- Beginning of Social Work and Improv are connected. Viola Spolin considered a founder of Second City. She worked with Neva Boyd at Hull House to use these games to help Immigrant Children
- Play with adults includes a lot more than Improv! What games can YOU think of?

Increasing Comfort

- Adults need more than children to become comfortable entering a play state
 - Let them know what's coming - they are not performing, ability to pass, etc
 - Set the scene:
 - Set out snacks/drinks
 - Music in the background can be calming
 - Have an activity set for them to do (nametags, etc)
 - Scaffold activities from least vulnerable to most
- Remind adults that the experience counts for something, even if they aren't automatically more playful
- "Will you help me test this?"

Structuring a Session or Group

- Helpful order of themes for activities:
 - Setting the stage
 - Embracing Imperfection
 - Deep Listening and Empathy
 - Emotional Expression
 - Creativity and Self Confidence
 - Communication and Cognitive Flexibility
 - Tolerating Discomfort and Vulnerability
 - "Curtain Call" or Group Wrap Up
- Start and End with a full group activity
- Usually 3-4 games per session

Workshop Tips and Debriefing

Therapeutic Connection: There are several reasons we like adventure therapy 1) it is effective to develop factors that influence the process of change, 2) it addresses specific and relevant treatment issues, 3) it offers variety in treatment options. Of course, therapeutic relationships (positive regard for the therapist) and therapeutic alliance (partnership between the client and therapist to achieve the client's goals) are among the most significant factors leading to the success of any psychotherapeutic approach. Experiential and adventure interventions have demonstrated strong engagement, active participation, increased self-regulation, developed skills, meaningful relationships, and decreased behavioral symptoms. (Duncan, 2010; Orlinsky, 2004; Koperski, Tucker, Lung, & Gass, 2015)

Group Agreements: Most people have both spoken or unspoken rules about how they behave together. Beginning sessions with group agreements lays a foundation from the

beginning of norms around safety and respect. These are dynamic and can be updated as the need arises. (Rohnke, 1977; Schoel, & Maizell, 2005; Lung, Alvarez, & Stauffer, 2008; Frank, 2013)

Mindfulness: Studies show a strong positive indication that mindfulness practice enhances the ability to self-regulate attention and emotion. Typically, mindful practices focus on intention, attention, and attitude. This practice can help us neutralize our thoughts, our emotions, or our body sensations as they arise, instead of feeling controlled by them. Furthermore, research clearly supports how the practice of mindfulness can change the structure and function of parts of the brain associated with emotional control (Bitsko, Holbrook, Ghandour, et al., 2018; Gotink, Chu, Benson, Fricchione, Hunink, 2015).

Facilitation: Rules, guidelines, safety, space, and time considerations, are all issues that you can adapt to meet the needs of your clients. You can always adapt the activity to compensate for what you are seeing with the group as it relates to physical safety and emotional risk. Safety may include considering the physical skills, responses during previous experiences, cultural relevance, and the amount of engagement. (Itin, 2003, 1995; Schoel, & Maizell, 2005; Lung, Alvarez, & Stauffer, 2008)

Guiding the Learning: This is the process to anchor the learning and transfer it back into the family's own environment. You may do this by sharing your observations of the group's behavior throughout the activity; establish and affirm metaphors or analogies that arise; identify thoughts, behaviors, and emotional responses that enhance your strengths and movement toward achieving treatment goals; and, encourage the process of experimentation with new/healthier responses. (Lung, Alvarez, & Stauffer, 2008; Lung, Alvarez, Stauffer, & Conway, 2015)

Sample Observations/Questions:

- How did the group strategize? How did this change with different challenges?
- What changed in the different rounds?
- How did the group handle making a mistake? How do you usually handle this?
- How did you support or care for others during this activity?
- What? So what? Now what?

Group Process

1. Individual does work in the group setting
 - a. Work with one participant at a time—the group learns from watching
 - b. Leader facilitates focal work on specific issues
2. Interpersonal work
 - a. Observations of subgroups—correcting flaws and practicing skills

b. Leader encourages work between group members and designs experiments or role-plays for practice.

3. Group as a whole (entity)

a. Group is a container—experiencing emotion and providing support

b. Leader makes general observations and interpretations and lets the group work.

Curative Factors (Yalom, 1995)

Group therapy is believed to offer:

- Hope (I can overcome this with help.)
- Reassurance (I'm not alone. My problems are not unique.)
- Support (sense of belonging and "holding environment")
- Healthy Interactions (Immediate and direct feedback and information)
- Improved Interpersonal Skills (Role modeling. Watching others work.)
- Feedback and guidance. Correcting distorted thinking through reality testing)

Group Roles

1. **Observer** (passive and safe)...Wants a sense of safety. Needs encouragement to take a risk and self-disclose.
2. **Helper** (advise and rescue)...Wants to feel needed by others. Needs permission to attend to self and get own needs met.
3. **Leader** (control and compete with others)...Wants to feel superior. Needs to allow vulnerability and humility to show.
4. **Patient** (need for attention and sick role)...Wants to be cared about. Needs to experience being attended to when behaving competently and successfully.
5. **Saint** (perfect, superior, "I've learned that already.") Wants to be admired. Needs to show humility and have permission to just be human and normal.
6. **Predator** (attack, use, and manipulate others)...Wants to hurt and control others. Needs to allow vulnerability to show and develop empathy for self and others.
7. **Member** (open and active)...Wants to be involved in the process to learn and grow. Needs to be encouraged to continue participating, to confront behaviors that undermine group safety.

GROUP FACILITATION

A. Creating the container

1. Establish safe environment
 - Physical & emotional protection
 - Disarm disruptive students
 - Stay in control
2. Maintain structure
 - Enforce rules
 - Keep group on task
 - Consistency (e.g., group format)
3. Know thyself
 - Be Grounded
 - Monitor self disclosure

2. Facilitation guidelines

1. Identify group goals
2. Encourage/solicit involvement
3. Invite group members to respond to each other (vs. you)
4. Model acceptance, warmth & empathy
5. Redirect
6. Summarize and clarify
7. Normalize
8. Intensify
 - Reflect feelings
 - Probe
 - Confront
9. Manage psychological depth
10. Utilize silence
11. Build group cohesion
 - Encourage group responsibility
 - Identify feeling states experienced by group
12. Be FLEXIBLE

3. Educate

1. Offer brief educational input
2. Focus on skills, e.g., problem solving, coping, etc.
3. Provide reality check

Remember:

You don't have to have the answers. Put back on group. Be authentic. If you feel out of control, take a time out.