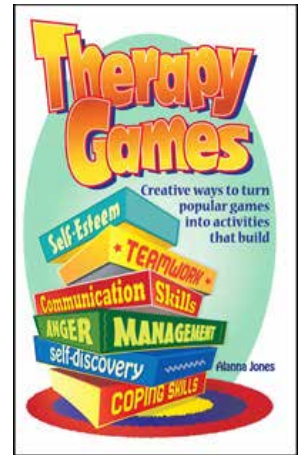


Seven free games from the book:
Therapy Games: Creative Ways to Turn Popular Games Into Activities That Build Self-Esteem, Teamwork, Communication Skills, Anger Management, Self-Discovery, and Coping Skills



Magic Block

Objective

To talk about the need for some people to always be searching for the one thing that they feel will make their life complete, which can sometimes cause people to miss out on the good things they already have in their life.

Who

People who are so focused on getting to the next level (more money, more drugs, becoming more popular, finding a boyfriend/girlfriend, etc.) that they miss out on what they already have.

Group Size

2 to 8 is ideal (but the game can be played with larger numbers)

Materials

⇒ The JENGA game with one block that has a star or other symbol marked on the bottom side of the block.

Description

Play the JENGA game with one block marked with a star (or other symbol). Offer a prize to the group if they can find the magic block before the tower falls. This can be anything from a treat to extra minutes of free play time or allowing the person who finds the star to select the next game the group plays. However, if the tower falls before anyone can find the magic block, then the group has to complete a task (this can be anything from cleaning, to exercise, to singing a silly song).

Discussion Prompts

1. Were you focused primarily on finding the star or were you enjoying the process of playing the game?
2. Once the star was found, did you want to continue to play the game to see how high the tower would go, or to see who would knock it over, or was the fun over?
3. Have you ever been so focused on getting something in your life that once you achieved it you were left wondering what to do next?
4. Is it good to have things in your life that you are striving to find?
5. Are there some things you could be striving for that are negative?
6. What things are you always searching for in your life?
7. Do you ever miss out on things in your life because you are so focused on a goal that only the future seems to matter?
8. How can you achieve balance in your life when striving to reach a goal?

Rich vs. Poor

Objective

To understand how we react to the situations we are born into and to recognize ways to improve our own situation.

Who

Individuals who think they're victims of their own circumstances and who could benefit from looking at ways to improve their situation.

Group Size

4 to 8 is ideal (but could have more if have bigger teams)

Materials

☞ The MONOPOLY game

Description

Place one card from each of the property groups in a pile. Shuffle the pile and evenly distribute the cards to the group members. If there are extra properties, have group members roll the die and the highest roller gets to select an extra property. Continue until one card from each property group has been distributed. Once everyone has their cards, give them the other properties that go with their set(s). Each card set in the game should belong to someone.

Money is distributed based on the amount of money each property would cost to buy (e.g., the person with Boardwalk and Park Place would start the game with \$750 – the amounts listed on the board).

The railroads and utilities are up for grabs if anyone wants to buy them when landing on those spaces. The game can be played using the Chance and Community Chest Cards or simply make those free spaces.

Now, play a regular game with each person moving around the board. At the end of the game, discuss the feelings individuals have towards those who started with less and those who started the game with more.

Discussion Prompts

1. Did you feel that one player had an advantage over the others in this game? If so, how did this make you feel?
2. Do you ever look at what others have and get jealous? If so, why do you think you have these feelings?
3. What do you usually do if you find yourself in a situation where you feel that you're at a disadvantage compared to others?
4. Is there a way to move yourself into a situation where you have more security in your life than you have now? What will it take for you to do this?
5. What changes can you make in your life to change your current situation?

Variation

☞ Focus the questions on anger management issues if you have individuals who react with anger when others have more than them.

Truth or Lie?

Objective

To share how you view yourself in a non-threatening manner.

Who

People who have a hard time sharing openly about how they view themselves. Groups who could benefit from getting to know one another at a deeper level

Group Size

4 to 15 is ideal

Materials

➔ APPLES TO APPLES game

Description

Spread the red and green cards out on the table. Each person selects three cards that they would use to describe themselves (the truth); they also pick out three cards that are the opposite of who they are (a lie). (Both the truth and the lie can be green or red cards.) Each person should have their own two sets of cards in two piles face down in front of them. Nobody else in the group knows which pile is a truth and which one is a lie.

Starting with one member of the group, the leader randomly selects one of the piles (or the person sitting next to them can do this as well) and asks the person to turn those cards over for all to see. The group members then vote “truth” or “lie” based on which pile they think was revealed. Voting can be done by asking or by using the green and red cards to vote (any green or red card will do). Simply place a red card down on the table if it is thought to be a lie and green if it seems to be true. Give one point to anyone who guesses correctly. After each turn, ask to see the opposite pile and have the person explain why they selected the cards they did.

Discussion Prompts

1. Why did you select the cards you did?
2. Was it harder to find cards that were true about yourself or ones that were lies? Why?
3. Was it hard for you to find positive things about yourself?
4. Do you feel that you're bragging if you are asked to state positive things about yourself?
5. What did you learn about another member of the group that you didn't already know? Were you surprised to learn this information?

Variation

- ➔ Instead of asking for “truth and lie” cards, tell the group members to find three cards of things they like and three cards of things they don't like.

Building Words

Objective

To discover how the choices we make as individuals can affect others.

Who

People who need to think about the choices they're making in their own lives.

Group Size

4 or more

Materials

- The BANANAGRAMS game or the SCRABBLE game
- Paper
- Pens

Description

Divide the group into teams of two to eight members each. One at a time, each team member will go to where you have a pile of letter tiles laid out and select a specific number of tiles. (You want each team to end up with a total of around 20 tiles.) When selecting the tiles, allow individuals to look at the letters. However, don't allow them to let the others in their group know what was chosen until everyone has selected their tiles. Once everyone has collected their tiles, team members reveal the letters they chose to their own team and put them all into one pile.

Set a time limit (three to five minutes), and challenge the teams to use their letters to make as many words as possible by rearranging them. Have them write down the words on their paper. You may give points according to how many words they come up with, extra points for longer words, etc. The team with the most points at the end wins.

Discussion Prompts

1. Did the letters you chose make it easier or harder for the group to create words?
2. Did you have control over what letters your team members chose?
3. If you chose your letters after they had been picked through, how was your selection compared to others?
4. In your own life, do you ever experience times when the choices you make have an affect on a group of people?
5. Do you find the choices you make in life usually help or hurt others?
6. Do you feel like you have control over the choices you make?
7. Do you ever feel like the choices others make hurt you?
8. If others make poor choices that affect you, how can you overcome this obstacle?

Variations

- After each team has made as many words as they can with their letters, have them write the words down on a list. Send the list and letters to another group, who can get bonus points for any additional words they make.
- Let people collectively choose which letters to use. Next, either allow them to keep the letters or make them trade with another group.

Story Clues

Objective

To play a communication game requiring individuals to listen carefully to determine the clues in the story.

Who

People who have trouble sharing their feelings directly and who hope others can pick up on hints and clues.

Group Size

2 or more

Materials

- The TABOO game
- Paper
- Pens or pencils

Description

Give each person a piece of paper and a pen. One person in the group selects a card and must tell a short story using all the words on it. (You may wish to set a time limit for this story.) Group members attempt to guess the six words by writing down six guesses as the story is told. After the story, have the storyteller read the words on their card. Each person earns a point for every correct word they have on their list.

Discussion Prompts

1. What clues did you listen for to help determine what the words were?
2. What listening skills did you have to use today to pick up on the clues?
3. Do you tend to tell people how you feel directly? Or do you let them guess how you're feeling through the clues you give to them?
4. What happens when you think someone got your clues but it turns out they didn't at all?
5. In what circumstances would it help you to be more direct, rather than relying on clues?

Consequences and Rewards

Objective

To explore actions we take in our lives that are negative and to understand the consequences that can occur. To explore positive things we can do and understand the rewards for choosing a positive way to live instead of a negative one.

Who

Individuals who would benefit from looking at positive ways to deal with situations and understanding the consequences of acting in a negative manner.

Group Size

4 to 10 is ideal (find items to use as game pieces if you have more than four)

Materials

- The CHUTES AND LADDERS game
- 2"x1.5" Sticky Notes (or regular size Sticky Notes and cut them into smaller sizes)
- Scissors, if needed
- Pens or colored markers
- Extra game pieces (if you have more than four players)

Description

Hand out four small Sticky Notes to each person. Ask everyone to create two new spaces for the game that can be associated with one negative thing that a person might do to slide backwards in life. The first Note tells of the action and the second one reveals the consequence. These can be just words on the Note, or they can draw pictures. Ask each person to do the same thing regarding a positive behavior, with one positive action listed on one Note and the reward revealed on the other.

Ask the group members to share what they have come up with. Then place the negative ones on a chute and the positive ones on a ladder before playing the game as a group. When a person lands on a related space, ask them to share with the group any time they may have had a similar experience.

Discussion Prompts

1. Was it easier to think of situations that held negative consequences or positive rewards? Why?
2. Do you think about the possible outcomes before you act? Or do you act first and then worry about the consequences later?
3. Was there any positive action that someone put on their Sticky Note that you would like to do more often in your own life?

Variations

- Use paper instead of Sticky Notes and cut the paper into pieces the size of a space on the game board.
- Ask group members to come up with enough cards to fill all of the CHUTES AND LADDERS game spots on the board (hand out more than four notes to each person).
- Have the group think of the new spaces for the board as a group and the leader writes them down.
- Make a paper copy of the game. Next, have each person fill in blank Notes for CHUTES AND LADDERS negative and positive actions and consequences as described above. Share with the group about the new game board they have created.
- After creating the new spaces, play the game but do not place the Sticky Notes on the game until someone lands on a chute or a ladder. At that time, they can share what they came up with.

Missing Pieces

Objective

To discover what people feel is missing in their own lives, and to figure out what they're doing to try to fill the void.

Who

People who are always trying to fill a void they feel with something that may not be healthy.

Group Size

1 or more

Materials

☞ Any size puzzle that your group can put together in one session.

Description

Select a puzzle for your group to put together. Prior to the group time, hide as many pieces as there are people in your group around the meeting room. Don't tell the group there are pieces missing. Simply have them all work together to put together the puzzle. Once the puzzle is put together (minus all the missing pieces), use the Discussion Prompts for the 1st session.

After the discussion time, let the group know about the pieces that are hidden around the room. Each person needs to find one piece in order for the puzzle to be complete. After everyone has found one piece, ask them to identify things that they can change in their own life to make their life whole again. As each person speaks, they can put their piece into the puzzle. When the puzzle is complete, move on to the Discussion Prompts for the 2nd session.

Discussion Prompts – 1st session

1. Can you relate to a puzzle that has missing pieces in any way?
2. What is something you always feel like you're missing and searching for?
3. Is this a healthy or negative thing for you to spend your time searching for? Why?
4. If you feel like there's a void in your life, what do fill this void with? Is this negative or healthy?
5. Do you think some people focus too much on what they feel is missing and they overlook all the good they have?

Discussion Prompts – 2nd session

1. Can you relate to a complete puzzle that is all put together in any way?
2. When do you feel that your life is whole and complete?
3. If you're someone who is always searching for something, what can you do to make your life whole?
4. What is something you can change in your life *right now* to fill in the holes and make yourself whole?