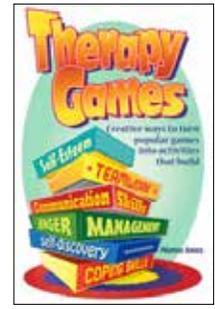


Introduction from the book:
Therapy Games
*Creative Ways to Turn Popular Games Into Activities That Build
Self-Esteem, Teamwork, Communication Skills, Anger Manage-
ment, Self-Discovery, and Coping Skills*



Introduction

The fun, interactive games found in this book are unique variations of popular games that can be used to enhance the therapeutic experience. By using one game in a variety of different ways, value is added to each game you own. The amount of time needed to prepare for each group session is simplified by mostly using the supplies provided with the games, with the occasional paper and pen added. *Discussion Prompts* are also included with each activity to simplify the therapeutic application.

In addition to making changes to existing games, it is also simple to use almost any ordinary board game as a therapeutic activity without making *any* changes to the game at all. The game can be used as an object lesson that leads to a discussion and teachable moment based on what occurs when playing the game. The discussion that occurs after the game opens the door for the lesson to take place.

Game Selection

You will find various “board games” used in this book to create new *Therapy Games*. Some of these games have been around for years and are commonly found in the family game closet such as SCRABBLE, MONOPOLY, and the OPERATION game.

Other games haven’t been around for very long but have grown quickly in popularity. Many of these newer “board games” require group members to engage with one another in conversation and are considered “party games.” This type of game is very interactive and can often be played in teams and with larger groups. Examples of interactive games are APPLES TO APPLES, TABOO, and IMAGINIFF.

Some of the “board games” used in this book will be more familiar to those who work in a therapeutic setting. The UNGAME is a good example of a game commonly utilized by counselors to help people open up in a non-threatening environment.

Other games, such as jigsaw puzzles, decks of cards, dice, and foam balls, don’t require a board, but just simple props. These game props are easy to acquire, versatile, and simple to use.

No matter which types of games you choose, you will be able to use the same game over and over again. With all the game variations found in this book, each activity will always be a fresh and new experience.

You will find anywhere from five to twelve creative new variations for each “board game” or game prop used in this book. If you already own a number of these games, you will be able to pick up this book, grab a game off the shelf, and be ready for group. If your game library is currently very small, there are several games utilized that can be purchased even if you have a small budget. You will find a majority of the games used in this book to be common, affordable, easy to use, and easy to find.

Group Assessments

Games are a powerful tool for making observations and assessments about an individual’s behavior. By observing behaviors during a competitive, or even a non-competitive game, the group leader will be able to make assessments about social skills, communication skills, anger control, and the individual’s level of self-esteem and confidence. Once an assessment has been made, it will become clear what topics the individuals in your group need to focus on. With this assessment in mind, you can use the *Objective* that is listed with each game to find the right games for your group.

Group Goals and Objective

When planning your group session, it's important to know the goals and objectives you have for your group. The objectives should be based on the outcomes you are hoping to achieve. If a goal is to create an atmosphere where individuals can share more openly, then the games that focus on self-discovery will be best. (A complete index of the issues each game addresses can be found in the back of the book, and each individual game comes with its own *Objective*.) If a goal is to work on social skills, then use games that address communication skills, teamwork, or anger management. Games that address coping skills are primarily focused on finding new and healthy ways to use one's extra time. Free time tends to be a time when negative behavior occurs and exploring ways to fill this time with healthy alternatives is important for those who need it. Self-esteem games are always beneficial in our society where we are often told what it is we need to do better as opposed to what our strengths and talents are.

Discussion Prompts

The group discussion that takes place after playing a game is an extremely important part of the process of turning a regular game into a therapeutic experience. Without a discussion, the game is just a fun group interaction. Without debriefing what occurred during the course of play, participants will walk away from the session without digging deeper into their individual behaviors. The discussion will also create an opportunity to talk about the object lesson the game was meant to reveal.

At the beginning of each chapter, there are *Discussion Prompts* that can be used with the "board game" that is the focus of that chapter. These questions can be used when simply playing the game as it is meant to be played (without making any changes to the rules).

You will also find a list of *Discussion Prompts* with each game variation found in this book. The type of questions you ask will depend on the therapeutic outcome you want to address during your session. Each group has its own personality and sometimes you won't know what lesson will come out of an activity until it is played. Sometimes the competition itself will lead to behaviors that can be addressed.

Competition

Many of the games in this book offer an element of competition. The leader of any game can create a positive competitive atmosphere, where having fun is more important than winning the game. The leader can also create a more intense environment where winning is the main focus. How the game is presented makes a difference in the competitive experience for all those involved.

Competition is a very real part of life. Competition for jobs, promotions, to get into certain schools, to make the team, etc., can lead to stress and disappointment or excitement and pride. Playing competitive games and learning how to deal with losing can be a great life lesson. It's equally important to learn how to be a gracious winner.

My Hopes for You and Your Group Members

The games in this book are meant to enhance the therapeutic experience for both the leader and the participants through the power of play. My hope is that you will view "ordinary" board games in a new light after using the variations in this book. Perhaps you will even invent some of your own unique activities using games you already have to create a new therapeutic experience for your group. I hope you find these games useful, entertaining, engaging, productive, and fun for all those involved!