

Introduction



“The tiny seed knew that in order to grow, it needed to be dropped in dirt, covered with darkness, and struggle to reach the light.” This quote by author, Sandra Kring truly drives home the process of facilitated growth. The seed could grow even faster and stronger with the proper ingredients like food and water. The goal of Facilitated Growth is to provide the proper ingredients to help participants thrive. According to Webster, to grow is to undergo a natural development by increasing in size and changing physically, also known as a process of maturity. To facilitate means to make an action or process easier. Thus, Facilitated Growth helps the process of change become slightly easier.

Each step along the way has purpose for the seed. At first connected to its source the seed feels safe and secure in its community with other seeds. At some point along the way the little seed becomes separated from its source. All sorts of new experiences transpire for our little seed. Sometimes it flies through the air in the case of a dandelion and sometimes it rolls away like an acorn.

The rain comes and the little seed gets cold and wet, pining for days long ago when it was connected, safe, and protected. The ground, softened by the rain, swallows the little seed up and it is now overcome by darkness deep inside the ground. The seed didn't know what was happening and certainly didn't know why things had to change. The seed began to question himself, had he done something wrong to cause this isolation and darkness? Was this his fault?

At the point in which the seed thought life as he knew it was over, a drop of water came along to soften his hard exterior. The drop of water allowed the seed to begin to change in a way he never knew was possible. Another drop of water came and with it brought some food. The little seed was starving for this type of attention and absorbed what the water and food was offering him. Slowly but surely the little seed grew roots and a stem that began to reach for new heights.

The seed had no idea what was happening to him or where he was headed but he felt a deep connection to the nourishment he was receiving. This nourishment was exactly what he needed to reach into the unknown and grow. Growing can bring up all sorts of feelings. Things like unworthiness, fear, shame, and inadequacy can be common experiences. A facilitator armed with the proper tools can be the nourishment that the participant needs in order to grow.

Finally, the seed rises above the muck and darkness and breaks ground. Connected once again in the land of the living he is reunited with the other seeds that took a similar journey. The seed now transformed sees the light. The seed has learned that there can be no light without darkness, there can be no softening without hardness, and there can be no connection without isolation. Most importantly the seed learned that growing is so much easier with the proper nourishment!

Going back to the definition of the word, facilitate—to make an action or process easier—we find embedded the way we approach facilitation. We believe and have found that if you, as a helping professional are bored with your groups, guess who else is bored? Your participants! However, if you are excited, energized, and inspired then your participants will be as well and their growth will be fueled with fire.

We are very intentional about the language we use. We call those that are helpers “facilitators” and those they serve “participants.” This language attempts to depart from many of the stigmatizing or shame-based language that can traditionally be found in centers around the

country. We choose participants because we want them to participate in the process of change, participate in the intervention, and certainly participate in their life.

Like the water and food is to the little seed, so too is the experience to the participant. The kindness, compassion, and encouragement from a well-trained facilitator can be the very thing that instills hope in someone who was formerly hopeless. The cohesion created by the group experience can be the very thing that unlocks a closed heart. The celebration of success at the accomplishment of a task can be the very thing that empowers the dispirited.

How participants show up in the experience (treatment, group, individual) is very often similar to how they show up in life. The experience indeed becomes the microcosm of the macrocosm. The group process becomes a place to notice patterns emerging and debriefing becomes paramount to highlight those patterns. As participants see their own patterns emerge they are able to play with new strategies for approaching old problems.

Participants are not only allowed to show up as they are; they are encouraged to do so. If someone refuses to participate, that is more an indication about where they are in the moment than who they are as a person. We often confuse how a person behaves for who they are inside. Remember, just because we have bad actions does not mean we have bad actors. We approach this work from the fundamental belief that wellness and recovery is not about “bad people getting good” but rather it’s about “sick people getting well” or “hurt people getting help.” Often giving someone permission to just be how they are, can be the fastest way to create a shift, when they are ready to do so. Being a safe, compassionate, and understanding professional allows the participant to turn to you for guidance when and if they need the support.

Marc was once setting up one of his favorite groups and a participant walked into the room and said, “I came here to get clean not play romper room games.” Marc looked at him, smiled, remembered what Michelle once said to him when he wasn’t feeling well before an activity and said “participate at the level in which you feel you are able.” He looked at Marc in a questioning way and decided to take a risk and join his peers. About ten minutes in, this same guy was playing the game with as much enthusiasm as anyone else in the room. It was powerful reinforcement and a testament to the process.

So many of the participants we work with are starved for play. We can go on and on about the stories clients tell us about growing up in homes, gender roles, or communities where play is an afterthought, if thought about at all. Many had to grow up way too soon and often become “the man of the house” or became “caretakers” for those that were supposed to be taking care of them. Certainly, as adults we don’t have enough play in our lives and then throw addiction and mental illness into the mix, forget it. Giving participants permission to play opens up the doorway to their own sense of adventure, curiosity, and a world of possibility.

Encouragement can be another powerful tool in the process of change. This is especially true for our population. So often our participants are being picked up, kicked out, thrown away, or otherwise asked to leave. “A word of encouragement during a failure is worth more than an hour of praise after success” author unknown (Morris 2012). When asked what he thought the single most important factor in getting along with other people was, Adlerian psychologist Dreikurs (1971) emphatically stated it was encouragement.

Encouragement differs from praise as it communicates interdependence and worth where praise communicates dependence. When we praise others, it creates an emphasis on perfectionism and is outcome driven. When we lead with encouragement it highlights the principle of progress and focuses on each step of the journey. In this way, we model recovery principles such as progress rather than perfection, living life on life’s terms, as well as learning to take things one day/moment at a time.

When facilitators realize that we live in a fishbowl we can recognize the power of our presence, words, and deeds. Participants are always watching to see how we handle circumstances that arise in the group. When a participant is late, doesn’t want to show up, breaks a rule, or gets frustrated with the process, other participants are watching to see how we respond. Be mindful of your reactions. Especially when it comes to things like confrontation, it is useful to scan and see what is the motive and where is it coming from. For example, is the motive a reaction or a response and is it coming from my head or my heart? Let’s begin to unpack these a bit.

When scanning for motive we look at two things; is it a reaction or response? For the purpose of this discussion we will define a reaction as an automatic action triggered by the facilitator’s stuff becoming activated. This can be when we feel a need to control outcomes, become angry, feel the desire to assert authority, be the expert, or otherwise show the participant who’s boss. It can also manifest as what Miller and Rollnick call the “Righting Reflex.”

The righting reflex as defined by Miller and Rollnick is, “the desire to fix what seems wrong with people and to set them promptly on a better course, relying in particular on directing” (2013). When we “fix what seems wrong in another” we place ourselves in a position that exacerbates the power differential. As a facilitator, we assume the position of guide rather than director. If you imagine the metaphor of white water rafting, the water is the director and the guide is in the boat with the group. The relationship those in the boat have with the water can sometimes be supportive yet can also be adversarial; however, the guide in the boat is always on the same team even when guiding.

Our goal as facilitators is to support the process and allow it to unfold so long as safety is not compromised. Remember the old adage, “If you give a man a fish, he eats for a day; but if you teach him how to fish, he eats for a lifetime.” The same is true for the process of change. If you



solve a problem for a participant, that problem is solved for that day; however, if you teach them to solve their own problems they have tools for a lifetime. We find the righting reflex is more about us and our own egos rather than about actually helping others. We strongly encourage facilitators to resist the righting reflex.

So, a reaction is very much like a reflex. It is automatic, often unconscious, and usually about us and our needs. On the other hand, a response is about the participant and what they need. A response requires us to call upon our skills and training as facilitators and the outcome of a response usually helps aid the process of growth. We suggest taking a breath before responding to ensure the frontal lobe is fully engaged thus allowing full access to all your resources. Jim Seckman often says “A good counselor knows what’s going on in the group, a great counselor knows what’s going on in themselves.” Paying attention to what is going on within ourselves sets us up to be the best facilitator we can be for our clients.

When scanning to see if a response is coming from the head or the heart we look to see what it is about. Is what I am about to say what I think (head) is in the best interest of the client? Or is it coming from a place of the heart and unconditional love? Once again the question is, “Is

this about me or is it about the participant?” Even in the midst of a confrontation we can bring in the space of the heart so that it feels less like a 2×4 to the head and more like the guide on a raft. We like to refer to this type of confrontation as carefrontation. We will know we have hit our target if the participant walks away feeling cared for rather than beat up.

One of the biggest benefits that we see in using the Facilitated Growth activities is that they foster group cohesion. When we get a group of people working together toward a common goal that requires them to lean on each other physically as well as emotionally, it fosters the type of relationships that support and enhance change. Marc has had the opportunity to bring experiential activities behind the walls of a local city jail. It was so powerful to watch this group as cohesion began to take root. The correctional officers talked about how the entire environment of the pod began to change.

During graduate school in a research and statistics class, Marc once heard from a professor that the largest adult population that commits suicide are Caucasian men. The researchers believed that in part the correlation was around group cohesion. Caucasian men seem to be socialized in a way that doesn't promote cohesion especially in the United States. At the same time, Marc was taking a class on cultural diversity where the subject of White privilege came up. It occurred to him that this privilege and power was literally killing us and if group cohesion was one of the correlations associated with the data it was paramount to create opportunities to give everyone, but especially men the opportunity to experience cohesion.

One of the benefits of using the Facilitated Growth activities are the inherent socio-metric monitoring components built into them. This allows the facilitator to keep their finger on the pulse of the overall health of the group. Sociometry is the study or measure of social relationships. The facilitator properly attuned to the group can pick up on themes and nuances that surface as a result of play. For example, subtle, seemingly benign comments or jabs between participants, noticing how group members react to different leaders emerging, and paying attention to any collusions or toxic pairing between group members can actually unmask problematic relational themes. During the debrief it is encouraged for the facilitator to bring up these themes and allow for group process.

Another benefit we have seen as a result of these activities is in the realm of emotional regulation. We can teach skills, role-play, and talk about strategies or we can create an experience in which participants receive in the moment real-time feedback in a safe space. This safe space allows for new experiences with new strategies. When the reluctant leader takes a step forward and helps solve the puzzle, the group cheers as the problem is solved. The reluctant leader walks away with a new sense of confidence. When the aggressive competitor realizes he simply cannot solve the problem and takes a step back he gets to experience the art of team play. The fearful

participant summons new courage in a way that s/he never expected. These experiences or lessons while active in the activity have a way of becoming generalized to other settings.

Interoceptive exposure is a technique used where the individual experiences a wide range of emotions and through the implementation of different strategies finds new ways of being with old emotions and story lines. These new ways of being with old emotions unlock stuck points and creates new possibilities. With this technique it is critical to watch for any abreactions occurring within group members. An abreaction is typically defined as the expression and consequent release of a previously repressed emotion or the reliving of an experience in order to purge it of its emotional excesses—a type of catharsis. The experiential activity experience can trigger participants in ways they might not be expecting. It is the role of facilitator to keep a watchful eye on all group members in order to maintain safety. Having a co-facilitator is encouraged for larger groups.

Karen Carnabucci says, “Action therapy has the potential to help people quickly address hidden issues, feelings and patterns that would take months or even years to address in conventional talk therapy.” The recent research on treating trauma points toward the less effective nature of talk therapy and is really highlighting the efficacy of experiential therapy. Since the trauma was an experience that happened to the individual it only makes sense that the transformation really needs to be an experience as well. Facilitated Growth provides a launching pad of experiences that create transformation for the participant.

We get to “re-story” the old stories realizing that the ending can be coauthored by us and the moment. By trying new things, pushing beyond our comfort zones, and stepping into the unknown, the experience begins to change us. Life takes on new meaning for us, our participants, and the group as a whole. Communities come together as never before. Relationships rooted in the experience become powerful agents of change. With the tools and skills, refined by the Facilitated Growth experience, it is our hope that you find a new spirit, new energy, and new approaches to doing this work. Our intention has been to create a book that might be a resource to support you in doing this powerful work. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts for doing your part to make this world a better place. We hope to hear from you and see you on this wild journey.

How Do Experiential Activities Support Facilitated Growth?

How do experiential activities support facilitated growth?¹

This book provides new and innovative strategies for success in working within arenas of recovery and wellness. Experiential activities are designed to facilitate participant growth, and to support different objectives for participants, including the support of skill development, problem-solving and risk-taking skills, improving insight and critical thinking. It is anticipated that the use of experiential activities helps the participant develop a new outlook of one's future, and to promote and support recovery and wellness. We have designed many of the activities during the provision of educational classes and workshops for students enrolled in a learning process. Students come from various backgrounds—clinical, educational, community-based, summer retreats, professional team building. Most seek new activities or new ways to freshen up their traditional approach to working with participants in a group setting.

Most activities have been drawn from a variety of sources, which may be referenced in the activity description. When adapted from another source, reference is made at the end of each activity.

We encourage you to remain open to the experiential group process, modify activities as needed for your participant population, and use creativity. If you find an activity works better a different way, play with it, experiment with a variation, and see how it turns out.

Where to Use This Resource

This book is designed for use in any type of setting, recovery and wellness focused environments, and as part of any intervention, regardless of presenting problem or continuum of care. Common settings or environments in the continuum of care include out-patient, intensive out-patient, partial hospitalization, in-patient, residential settings, recovery residences, sober living/independent living homes and aftercare. As well, these activities can be used in any setting that supports recovery, wholeness, and wellness—settings such as retreats, professional development, team-building, conferences and workshops or seminars.

Experiential activities are designed to be used in a group intervention, but can be adapted for individual, couples, and family sessions. Activities can be completed in one session, or used over several sessions. While these activities are designed to promote recovery and wellness, they may be adapted and beneficial in other specialty groups (i.e., trauma group, anger

1. Adapted from Jurkovic and Sherman, 2009.

management, anger resolution groups, stress management groups, or community or house meetings in a recovery residence or residential setting).

How to Use This Resource

One aspect of experiential education is flexibility. We anticipate that activities can be used to meet the various needs of the participants. They can be used to support a psychoeducational lesson plan or a cognitive, emotional, or behavioral skill or objective. The intent of each activity is to create opportunities for one to learn more about oneself within the context of wellness and recovery.

Facilitators will gain the most by first reviewing the contents of this book. We suggest that you first try the activity you have selected to gain an appreciation of the tasks, the process, and your observation of your emotional/cognitive experiences from the activity. The confidence you gain in preparing first before using a selected activity will convey modeling and increase the likelihood of participant's engagement earlier in the experiential process.

A Standard Approach

When using experiential activities, it is recommended the facilitator use a standard approach to each session. We suggest the following:

- ▶ *Check-in.* Rather than asking participants to check-in using a feeling word, which may be difficult for one to identify, we choose to ask participants to check in by offering one or two things they are grateful for, or one or two things they did to support their recovery and wellness. We find that this recovery-based approach supports recovery capital. Also feel free to use any of the check-in or ice breaker ideas in order to inject creativity into your programming.
- ▶ *Review homework.* Be sure to review any homework or assignments given from the previous group to support the learning process.
- ▶ *Experiential activity.* Select your activity in advance, and understand the purpose for the activity. Consider reviewing the prior activities in a preceding group, connecting it to the present activity, to support the learning or change process. Observe rather than label behavior. Encourage discussion about the purpose of the activity. Do not underestimate the ability of participants to interact and participate in activities—empowering them by inviting them into the process. Perhaps they have an alternate way to attempt completing the task or activity or perhaps a participant evolves into a peer support or peer leader role.

- ▶ *Debrief activity.* Allow sufficient time to debrief, as this is a critical part of the process, and one where participants can gain a lot through sharing their experience with one another. Use your debriefing questions as a springboard in each activity to the debriefing process.
- ▶ *Homework assignment.* Homework assignments can be powerful opportunities to reinforce what is learned in group. Only give homework if the facilitator intends to review it—giving homework or assignments without follow-up will not support a change or learning process and in fact often undermines it. Help participants to be accountable by being consistent with reviewing homework assigned at the prior group at the beginning of the next.
- ▶ *Check-out.* We have found it useful to ask participants one thing that they learned about themselves or one takeaway they are leaving with in the check-out process. It may provide useful information for the facilitator to determine if the purpose or anticipated outcome of the activity was accomplished, as well as provide the participant with a self-reflection process.

Group Management

Facilitating activities may be met with resistance from participants (Jurkovic and Sherman 2009). If this happens, consider the following options:

- ▶ Explore behavior and possible solutions rather than labeling it.
- ▶ Explore with participants their experience of or their resistance to the activity.
- ▶ Critically evaluate the possibilities for the reaction.
 - ☐ What may be connected with the resistance in terms of administration (too boring or tedious) or one's ability (too challenging for participants)?
 - ☐ Is the reaction connected to a situation (i.e., a stressful situation that preceded the activity, conflict between participants, or little group cohesion)?
 - ☐ Is there emotional disturbance related to one's mental health diagnosis?
 - ☐ Do you have the right participants gathered together? Sometime poor selection of group participants may lead to participant disruption.
 - ☐ Is the facilitator prepared or lacking in confidence or training?
 - ☐ Is the facilitator experiencing countertransference?
 - ☐ Is the environment adequate to limit outside distractions and promote confidential exchanges?

General guidelines to manage resistance constructively:

- ▶ Acknowledge that resistance is normal or usual and encourage participants to sit with their feelings, thoughts, or experiences to learn more about themselves.
- ▶ Use redirection skills; encourage the group to observe their experience, sit still with their response, and to consider a different solution or new coping skills.
- ▶ Encourage participants to discuss the resistance, or for some participants to help others with finding a solution to their resistance.
- ▶ Modify the tasks—sometimes activities may be selected that do not fit well with the cohesion of the group. If a group of participants is new, conducting activities that are associated with higher risk are not the best choice until the group has developed better cohesion.
- ▶ Process the issue differently—more succinctly, enthusiastically.
- ▶ Perhaps consider self-disclosure, when it is beneficial for participants.
- ▶ Invite participants' input on how to improve the task.
- ▶ Allow participants the opportunity to opt out or participate to the best of their own ability.

Facilitators can best support the experiential group process by being prepared. Consider these general guidelines:

- ▶ Clarify group guidelines at the beginning of the group. Modify as needed.
- ▶ Include activities that support team building.
- ▶ Determine if your group is best suited as an open or closed enrollment. Closed enrollment is a predetermined number and/or preselected participants, and no others enroll for a selected time frame. Open enrollment is open to any participant for any group session.
- ▶ Consider if any participant(s) can be assigned a role of responsibility, perhaps co-facilitation.
- ▶ Offer three positive affirmations for every critical one.
- ▶ Consider expressive tasks such as psychodrama, physical activity challenges, acting, art, music, humor.
- ▶ Process transference and countertransference with a supervisor or trusted colleague.

Comfort Zone, Stretch Zone, Panic Zone



When facilitating experiential activities, you will routinely ask people to step outside their comfort zones. Having an understanding of the behaviors associated with this concept is important as you step into the role of a facilitator. Associating these three zones with the colors of a stoplight helps facilitators as well as participants visualize this concept. Green: Comfort Zone. Yellow: Stretch Zone. Red: Panic Zone. When facilitating this concept with a group, draw a bull's-eye and label each ring: Comfort Zone, Stretch Zone, and Panic Zone. Then ask participants to tell you what each zone looks and feels like.

The Three Zones

Comfort Zone

This is where you are comfortable and feel “safe.” Routines are easy, people possess skills that enable them to perform tasks well. Our comfort zone is usually where we spend most of our day. Usually it’s with people you know and interact with on a regular basis. Your work routine is familiar and you are used to your environment.

Comfort Zone Questions

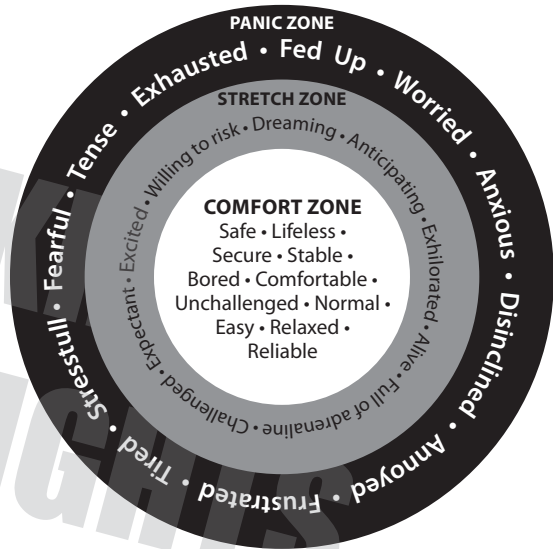
- ▶ What does your comfort zone look like for you?
- ▶ What do you think will be easy for you today?
- ▶ What are some emotions associated with being in your comfort zone?

Stretch Zone

This is where you are doing something new, allowing yourself to learn, and where you feel energized and engaged. In this zone you are more willing to take risks.

Stretch Zone Questions

- ▶ What would it look like if you stretched beyond comfortable today?
- ▶ What would we see?
- ▶ What would you like to change?
- ▶ Where will you start?



Panic Zone

This is where you are paralyzed by fear, cannot think straight and are completely unable to use your resources. No new learning can take place when someone is in the panic zone. Most people go to flight, fright, or freeze mode and are not able to take in new information.

Panic Zone Questions

- ▶ What would push you into the panic zone today?
- ▶ What are you not ready for?
- ▶ What are your roadblocks?

It may be helpful to review this concept before a meeting or as a new group is forming. After a discussion about the three zones, encourage participants to step outside of their Comfort Zone and into their Stretch Zone with you for the day. New learning takes place in the Stretch Zone. We stop learning once we get into the Panic Zone, and we often go into Fight or Flight mode. That is generally not a place you want to take people. If you introduce this concept early in the program, you can use these terms repeatedly when challenging the group with a new task.

Sequencing

Sequencing your activities is a very important piece of Experiential Education. If you introduce activities that are above the functioning capability of your participants, it can cause more damage than good. In order to create effective reflection, it is important to start with introductory level activities and proceed to more difficult challenges. Groups need to share simple experiences together before introducing them to activities that have a higher emotional risk to them. As facilitators, it is important to start with activities that are appropriate for the needs of the group, background, or stage in group development.

Sequencing of activities begins with assessing client readiness for each activity. It ends with the activities being placed in an order that makes sense to participants. You wouldn't want to start with a "Trust" activity and then move into a "Get to Know You" activity. The natural order of this would not make sense to the participant if you ask them to trust other participants before they even knew their names.

We recommend starting with an Icebreaker or Check-in activity, then moving to more content related material such as a Symbolic Learning Activity or a Play with Purpose Activity.

Processing and Debriefing

Debriefing

Debriefing is a term used in experiential education to describe a question and answer session with participants. These talking sessions are generally thought to be a “sit down” circle where the facilitator asks questions and the participants answer. Although this is an effective debriefing technique, if it is the only technique used, participants can become bored with it and can become easily distracted. Pairing group discussions with partner discussions offers a nice variety to the debriefing process. Incorporating different mediums and learning styles into your activities will also inject energy and creativity into the learning process.

Debriefing an experience helps participants connect lessons and activities they learned in your program to the outside world. It is a very important piece of programming and learning as a whole. If participants are not allowed to reflect on their experiences and relate them to the outside world, then a lot of the learning may be lost. It is important to debrief a group experience, especially after something powerful has surfaced. Mixing up your debriefing activities will keep participants engaged in what they are learning and allow you to create more teachable moments.

Please refer to *A Teachable Moment*, Cain, Cummings, and Stanchfield, for more theory on Processing and Debriefing.

The Value of Reflection

An excerpt from *A Teachable Moment*, by Cain, Cummings and Stanchfield.

An important concept to consider when implementing experiential education activities is providing opportunities to process or reflect on their educational experiences. The educational philosopher John Dewey (1933), who is known as one of the forefathers of experiential education, believed that in order to truly learn from experience there must be time for reflection.

There is no one set way to debrief or one perfect time to debrief. Using a variety of techniques and using activities that give participants the power to take the lead in the debriefing is the most engaging and effective way of viewing debriefing.

Symbolic Learning and Play with Purpose

In the pages of this book, you will find two sections, Symbolic Learning and Play with Purpose. We divided the activities into these two sections as the modalities used for the two types are very different. Symbolic Learning uses the effectiveness of imagery, which helps develop a mental blueprint or teachable moment in story format. The Play with Purpose section contains activities that are more active in nature that will surface behaviors through play. The Greek philosopher Plato was once quoted as saying, “I can learn more about a person in an hour of play than a lifetime of conversation.” We would whole-heartedly agree with this statement. The Play with Purpose activities will intentionally surface behaviors that participants encounter every day. By following the suggested debriefing questions after each activity, facilitators can successfully walk participants through what happened in the activity and relate it back to the real world. This process will aid participants in their wellness and recovery by letting them “catch” themselves in their own behaviors naturally in the game. They then learn strategies in the debriefing process for how to manage those behaviors back in the real world.



Disclaimer

All activities contain some inherent risk of injury whether it be physical or emotional. Michelle Cummings, Marc Pimsler, and Diane Sherman have devoted reasonable attention to the safety of the activities in this book. The reader assumes all risk and liability for any loss or damage that may result from the use of the materials contained in this book. It is your responsibility to obtain the expertise and experience necessary to avoid an injury during one of these activities. Liability for any claim, whether based upon errors or omissions in this guide, are the sole responsibility of the reader.

Michelle Cummings, Marc Pimsler, and Diane Sherman and their affiliates are not responsible for the misuse of the information or activities in this book.



A Note of Thanks

No doubt you will notice, as you read through the pages of this book, that we have been the fortunate recipients of great ideas shared by our friends and fellow facilitators. One of the most outstanding features of the experiential education world is the unique and generous sharing that goes on between members of this field. We are grateful to every person who has allowed us to share their unique insights and their wonderful ideas for exploring conflict resolution and prevention.

In every way we could imagine, we have attempted to thoroughly research the origins and creators of the activities in this book. To the best of our ability, we have tried to credit those who deserve recognition for their contributions.

If, after reading this book, you are aware of any activity for which we have not yet given an appropriate reference or credit, it would be our pleasure to correct this situation in the next printing of this book. Please direct any information you have related to appropriate crediting to Michelle Cummings at michelle@training-wheels.com. We also enjoy hearing from you about your usage of the activities in this book. Please tell us your stories, tales, and experiences with the audiences you serve, both within the United States and abroad. And, if you happen to create a new Facilitated Growth Activity that you would like to share with the world, send us a photo and activity description. If we use it in a future publication, we will send you a copy of that book.

We would also like to thank our teachers and mentors that have guided us along the way and given us the space to grow into the professionals we are. We offer up sincere gratitude for all of our former and current participants, students, and supervisees that teach us more than we could ever teach them. You challenge us with your engagement, curiosity, and hunger for growth. Finally, we want to thank you, the professional reading this book. Your dedication to your participants and professional development is truly inspiring. We know this work is not easy and yet we know just how powerful it can be. We offer this book to you as a resource and a catalyst to your growth, the growth of your participants, and the advancement of our field.

Sincerely,

Michelle Cummings, Marc Pimsler, and
Diane Sherman



Play with Purpose

KH
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7 Up

Group Size: 9–50

Purpose: Increase frustration tolerance, problem solving, communication skills, group cohesion, and increase mindfulness skills. This task sounds easy, but in reality it is difficult to achieve. Participants will most likely reach a level of frustration with the task and one another.

Props Needed: Seven tossable items for every ten people. These could be koosh balls, rubber chickens, bean bags, hacky sacks, etc.

Activity Preparation:

1. Prep time needed: 5 minutes.
2. Prior to class make sure you have all your props.
3. Place 7 tossable items into small stuff sacks for every 10 people.

Time Needed:

- ▶ Directions: 2 minutes
- ▶ Activity: 10 minutes
- ▶ Debrief: 15 minutes

Safety:

- ▶ Physical—For participants with physical issues like back pain this activity might be one they want to sit in a chair rather than stand.

Activity Directions:

- ▶ Have group gather around to discuss.
- ▶ Divide groups into 9–10 people and have them stand in a circle.
- ▶ This activity is somewhat involved but quite worth the effort to learn. Circle up the players and let them know that you will be introducing Tossable Objects into the group 1 at a time. The activity must follow a certain set of rules. If a rule is broken, the activity starts over from the first object.
- ▶ **Rule 1:** Players must start each toss from a circle position. One person will be the designated Tosser, and will be adding an Object each round. Tell the group that the Tosser will toss the Object up into the air with the aim of the Object landing in the center of the circle.
- ▶ **Rule 2:** All tosses must be at least as high as the tallest player in the group and players may not move positions.

- ▶ **Rule 3:** Objects cannot touch the ground. If the first item is tossed and caught, the group can move onto Object #2. Both items will then be tossed in to the center of the circle. Both items must be caught for the activity to continue. If one of the objects is dropped, the group must start over with one item.
 - ▶ **Rule 4:** All tosses must happen on the word “Toss.”
 - ▶ **Rule 5:** Any player in possession of an Object must toss their object into the center of the circle.
 - ▶ The activity is over when all 7 items are tossed and caught.
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Facilitator Script: “Hey everyone gather around. I need you to divide yourself into small groups, with 9–10 people per group. Please stand in a circle with your small group. (*Wait for this to happen.*) I’m going to demonstrate what to do with this group. (*Include yourself in one circle.*) I’m going to give one person in each group a small bag that has seven tossable items in it. Whoever the tosser is, will pull one item out of the bag. This person will say ‘One, two, three toss,’ and toss this item into the center of the circle. This item must be caught by someone else in the group in order for the activity to continue. (*Demonstrate this.*) OK, since Patty caught this first item, the game may continue. Next, I am going to select another item out of the bag. Again, I will say, ‘One, two, three toss.’ Both Patty and I will both toss the items at the same time into the center of the circle. If both items are tossed and caught, the game can continue. This process continues until all seven items have been successfully tossed and caught. If an item is dropped at any time, the group must start over with one item and work their way back up. All tosses must be at least as high as the tallest player in the group, and players may not move positions. You must also stay in a circle formation. All items must be tossed into the center of the circle. Please be careful to avoid any head-on collisions while attempting to catch an item. Nothing is worth getting hurt over today. Are there any questions? (*Pause for questions.*) You may begin!”

Debrief:

- ▶ What were some of the strategies you and your group came up with to be successful at this activity?
- ▶ How many of you thought this sounded like an easy task?
- ▶ How many of you got frustrated during the process? Describe something that frustrated you.
- ▶ What did it feel like when you had to start over?
- ▶ How does this relate back to the real world?
- ▶ What could some of the tossable items represent in your life?

- Who are the people in your life that are helping you successfully toss and catch the important parts of your recovery?

Recovery/Wellness Metaphor: Recovery sounds like an easy process. There are many times we have multiple things in the air and trying to manage it all can be overwhelming. There are also times when we have to rely on others and simply can't complete the task ourselves. The first word in the first step is "we." Learning to work in a "we" sets up for success in recovery.

Role of Facilitator: Safety monitor. Reinforce that items must be tossed into the center of the circle.

Source: *Possibles Bag Manual*, Chris Cavert





As If

Group Size: 8–50

Purpose: To serve as an icebreaker activity for mini-role-plays. Allows participants to practice skills learned in class before experiencing them in the real world.

Props Needed: none

Activity Preparation: none

Time Needed:

- ▶ Directions: 2 minutes
- ▶ Activity: 10 minutes
- ▶ Debrief: 15 minutes

Activity Directions:

- ▶ Have group gather around to discuss.
- ▶ Divide your group into pairs. Have the pairs stand about 6 feet apart from one another and face each other.
- ▶ Instruct them to walk forward toward one another and greet one another **AS IF** they were . . . and give them a role to play out.
- ▶ Each interaction is approximately 60 seconds in duration.
- ▶ After the interaction is over, ask them to get back into their original stance, about 6 feet away from one another.
- ▶ Debrief that round.
- ▶ Proceed with a different role-play.
- ▶ Debrief the second round.
- ▶ Proceed with a third role-play.
- ▶ Debrief the third round.

Facilitator Script: “Please find a partner and stand about 6 feet away from them and face one another. *(Pause until they are ready.)* This activity is called ‘As If.’ In a moment I’m going to give you a role I’d like you to play out with your partner. Once I say ‘Go’, I want you to walk toward your partner and greet your partner **AS IF** you were in the role I’m about to give you. I want you to stay in this role for about 60 seconds. Once you hear me say ‘STOP!’ that round is over

and I want you to get back into this starting position, where you are standing 6 feet away from your partner. Are there any questions? OK, for this first interaction, I want you to greet your partner **AS IF** you were long-lost college roommates. Ready? Go!”

Let this interaction go on for about 60 seconds. It will be loud and energetic. When 60 seconds is up, yell out STOP (or use a noisemaker to get their attention). Ask them to get back into their original 6-feet-away position. Then ask these debriefing questions:

- ▶ What was that interaction like?
- ▶ It appeared to be pretty high-energy. Was there anyone **not** excited to see their college roommate?
- ▶ What were some of the things you talked about?

Then move onto your second role-play.

Facilitator Script: “OK, the beauty of this activity is that we can change the roles to be whatever we want them to be. Let’s have this next round be a little harder. This time I want you to pretend that you and your partner are coworkers, and the two of you got into an argument yesterday. It’s now the next day and you walk in and see one another for the first time. Go ahead and greet your partner **AS IF** you are seeing one another for the first time since your argument yesterday. Ready? Go!”

Let this interaction go on for about 60 seconds. This interaction will have multiple different responses. Some of the pairs will take accountability and resolve their conflict. Other pairs will ignore each other altogether. Some will start out with a “pretend” angry tone, then start to work toward a resolution. When 60 seconds is up, yell out STOP (*or use a noisemaker to get their attention*). Ask them to get back into their original 6-feet-away position. Then ask these debriefing questions:

- ▶ What was that interaction like?
- ▶ Did you resolve your conflict in that 60-second time period? Wouldn’t it be great if that’s the way it happened out in the real world?
- ▶ What made this interaction awkward?
- ▶ How do you respond to conflict in the real world?

Then move onto a third role play.

Facilitator Script: “OK, let’s do one more. This time, I need one person to be someone who has had multiple years of sobriety, and the other person to be a newcomer to group meetings. Decide who is going to be in each role. (*Pause a few moments.*) This time, I want the person who has had multiple years of sobriety to welcome the newcomer to their first group meeting. Go ahead and greet your partner **AS IF** you are seeing one another for the first time at a group meeting. Ready? Go!”

Let this interaction go on for about 60 seconds. This interaction will have multiple different responses. Some of the pairs will be talkative, some pairs will be more quiet. When 60 seconds is up, yell out STOP (*or use a noisemaker to get their attention*). Ask them to get back into their original 6-feet-away position. Then ask these debriefing questions:

- ▶ What was that interaction like?
- ▶ Let’s hear from the newcomers first, what was that experience like for you?
- ▶ Now let’s hear from those that portrayed having multiple years of sobriety. What was that experience like for you?
- ▶ How does this relate to our groups? What kind of environment do we want to foster for our newcomers?

Additional Ideas for Role-Plays:

- ▶ Going out on a job interview
- ▶ Attending a party where there is your drug of choice being passed around
- ▶ You saw an old drug dealer at a gas station
- ▶ You are making amends to someone you hurt in addiction
- ▶ You are welcoming someone back from a relapse
- ▶ You are celebrating 1 year clean and sober
- ▶ You see someone in a meeting you used to use with

Recovery/Wellness Metaphor: These role-plays help to creatively practice a variety of different situations. This is also a great activity to increase group cohesion.



Body Part Check-In

Group size: 5–50

Purpose: Gather information about where participants are at today and what they need, increase group cohesion, and stimulate metaphoric thinking. This is a great way to start a full day program.

Props Needed:

1. Pictures or stress balls in the shape of feet, spine, heart, hand, brain, lips, and ears.
2. 50-foot rope (optional)

Activity Preparation:

1. Prep time needed: 5 minutes
2. Prior to class create an open space for body parts. If you are indoors, put chairs around the perimeter of the room. If you are outside, find an open space to play that is free of debris or obstacles.
3. Obtain stress balls in the shape of body parts (heart, hand, brain, lips, and ears) or print pictures from the Internet. (Remember to use images that are representative of your population.)

Time Needed:

- ▶ Directions: 5 minutes
- ▶ Activity: 10 minutes (depending on size of group)
- ▶ Debrief: 5 minutes

Set-Up:

1. Create a circle with large rope.
2. Scatter body parts around the circle so participants can gather around and see all 7 body parts from any angle.

Activity Directions:

- ▶ Have the participants stand in a circle. Include yourself in the circle.
- ▶ Ask participants to select a body part that represents what they need for today.
 - ☐ Foot—a stronger foundation to stand on or maybe needing to feel more grounded
 - ☐ Spine—more courage and the ability to stand up for yourself
 - ☐ Heart—more in touch with feelings

- ☐ Hand—ask for help when needed
 - ☐ Brain—open mind to learn new things
 - ☐ Lips—to speak and give voice to what is going on with me
 - ☐ Ears—to listen more
 - ▶ Go around the group and have everyone check in with the body part they selected and why.
 - ▶ Short debrief of what participants noticed.
-

Facilitator Script: “Let’s form a circle to hear the directions for today’s check-in. You may have noticed all the body parts scattered around the circle. Today we are going to do our check-in a little differently. I would like to use the body as a metaphor for what we need, so when you check in you are going to choose one of the body parts to metaphorically represent where you’re at today. For example, if you choose the Foot, it could represent needing a stronger foundation to stand on, or the Spine might represent the need to gain more courage or to stand up for myself. If you choose the heart it might represent needing to be more in touch with your feelings, or maybe a Hand in order to ask for help when I need it. The Brain could represent having an open mind to learn new things or Lips in order to speak and give voice to what is going on with me. And finally, the Ears could represent the need to be a better listener.

So you are going to choose a body part and then tell us how it represents either a need or where you are at today.

Any questions? (*answer questions*) OK great, who would like to start?” (*then go around the circle until everyone checks in*)

Debrief:

- ▶ What did you notice about check-in today?
- ▶ What were your thoughts as you entered the room and saw all the body parts?
- ▶ How is this check-in different from others we have done?

Recovery/Wellness Metaphor: This check-in is helpful as it is a way to gather information about your participants in a slightly different way. This is a safe, easy way to engage the subconscious and access information that clients might not automatically share by just having a verbal check-in.

Role of Facilitator: Make sure to spread out body parts so each participant can see each body part. We recommend having at least 4–6 sets of each body part.

Variations: Feel free to add in additional body parts as needed.

Where to Find It/How to Make It: You can purchase spare body parts from training-wheels.com or feel free to print off pictures in a public domain from the Internet. We have found that if you are going to use pictures it might be helpful to have them laminated so that they can be reused and do not get crumpled.



