

The Rehearsals for Growth
Reference Guide
for Online and In-Person Enactments

Daniel J. Wiener, Ph.D. and Ariel Axelrod, M.A.

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Version 1.5

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Preface

From Embodied to Online Practice

The Covid-19 pandemic forced a rapid transition to and acceptance of teletherapy and other remote work in online environments. While much of teletherapy likely comprises talk therapy, therapists trained in kinesthetic and somatic modalities were faced with equally substantial if not greater obstacles to continuing their work. Artists and other practitioners quickly adapted in turn: Chorus members put on headphones and sang at home; theatre performances traded live performance for Zoom and other platforms. People took their instruments and selves to parks and patios to play and perform.

When originally written in 1994, *Rehearsals for Growth* provided descriptions and instructions for improvisational games and exercises that were, up to the onset of the Covid pandemic, always enacted in-person. Due to the widespread and increasing use of online platforms for both training and psychotherapy since 2020, there has been a growing need for online-modified instructions that work for most (though not all) of these enactments.

Starting in 2020, Dan Wiener, founder of the Rehearsals for Growth (RfG) approach, offered trainings, provided clinical supervision, and conducted therapy primarily on the Zoom.us platform. In 2022 he sought the assistance of Ariel Axelrod, an LMHC with professional writing and editing experience, who had begun studying RfG with him. The project began as an effort to modify the instructions for embodied enactments used in RfG training and therapy into their use over online platforms.

Categorization and Additional Enactments

As Dan and Ariel collaborated, the project expanded to include instructions for another forty-five enactments and training exercises that had not been described in the 1994 book and provided about forty categories that grouped the now-one hundred and forty enactments by useful, common features. This categorization had not been addressed previously in the RfG literature. These categories have been included in the [Access Guides](#) of this publication.

Supplements to the 2020 RfG Practitioner Manual

A further result of their collaboration was an articulation of some guidelines for RfG practice that had not been included in the 2020 *RfG Practitioner Manual*, Second Edition. These guidelines have been included in the front material under [Practice Guidelines](#).

A Further Use for This Reference Guide

An informal survey was conducted by Dan Wiener about a decade ago. He asked about thirty RfG certified trainers and advanced students, all of whom were using RfG enactments in their clinical practices, how many different RfG games and exercises they had ever used. No one reported using more than sixteen; the median number was only six! It thus seems likely that many RfG practitioners are unaware of the potential advantages of utilizing some of the much larger number of available enactments. Therefore, yet another use for this Guide is to facilitate clinicians' access to a greater variety of enactments when cross-referencing familiar ones within the same categories.

Final Thoughts

Finally, this Guide is a work in progress; we, the authors, seek and intend to use feedback from the community of RfG practitioners and trainers to refine and expand its features going forward in time. While Version 1.0 is available as a print version, the Guide's primary form is that of a searchable PDF document with bookmarks, allowing future versions to be modified when convenient.

We invite the RfG community to make use of this resource and encourage you, our reader, to contact us with your comments and suggestions for its improvement!

Dan Wiener

Ariel Axelrod

October 1, 2024

Using This Guide

Intended Goals

This Guide is recommended to serve as a reference both for clinical practitioners and instructors teaching RfG coursework. Its organization allows for a broader consideration of exercises in groupings (in the **Access Guides**) based on use and type. We did not pursue categorization for categorization's sake. Rather, we hope you engage with these groupings as suggestions rather than as engraved commandments. You can't learn just from a book!

There are numerous applications for each game, exercise, and device. Also, each clinical situation may be approached by deploying one of several possible enactments, limited only by the imagination of the therapist. In the course of applying RfG you may find new uses for enactments beyond those described in the RfG literature. This happens frequently and organically within games, but also you should feel free to use the game-as-a-platform in new ways to tailor it to new goals and purposes. And when you discover or invent a new way of using an enactment not noted in this Guide, please let us know!

Structure of this Guide

The electronic version of this Guide is a searchable PDF document with bookmarks. Within this Guide you will find the following sections: **Enactment Descriptions**, **Access Guides**, the **Glossary**, the **Bibliography**, and the **Access Guides Matrix** in the Appendix.

The [Enactment Descriptions](#) present the enactments alphabetically using their most common enactment names used in RfG. The descriptions are formatted to include the following elements where pertinent:

Usage Notes: Brief descriptions of, and basic instructions on, how the enactment is to be directed and performed.

Online Tips: Best practices for use in an online environment, including performance notes indicating whether the players must be together in person and when an online platform-specific feature comes into play in staging the enactment.

Sources: Reference information regarding where the exercise is mentioned or described in other publications.

Categories: We have organized the games and exercises herein using a keyword system of related elements, such as the categories used in the Access Guides. Also, this makes searching and sorting easier in the digital version of this Guide.

The [Access Guides](#) comprise groups of enactments organized by shared elements. A description of each Access Guide is followed by a listing of all enactments that share that particular element. Sometimes those elements can

serve as keywords; sometimes they cluster into less formal groupings that may nonetheless be helpful.

The Glossary contains an alphabetized listing of brief definitions of terms used in the RfG literature.

The Bibliography references the sources of enactments which are in the literature.

The Access Guides Matrix in the Appendix cross-tabulates each enactment alphabetically with the Access Guide categories, providing a convenient means of searching and comparing by either enactment name or category.

Practice Guidelines

Included with the introduction below are explanations, notes and analogies for guidelines on RfG practice which had not been included in the 2020 *RfG Practitioner Manual, Second Edition*.

Categorization as a Guide, not a Crutch

In their desire to improve their competence, some students over the years have asked for some categorization of RfG enactments as a way to provide guidance for clinicians in selecting enactments. We gently decline to answer this request. We have provided some categories here as a way of grouping certain exercises with their loosely defined kin. But, at the same time, we urge you not to adhere to categories as a way of seeking structure or of making clinical decisions. That structure will bind more than support. To that end, we have sought to categorize lightly, and we hope you use this resource in the same vein: If you rely on categories too heavily, take a breath and let it go (both the breath and the categorization).

Description and Practice Analogy

The detailed descriptions for each exercise are meant to serve as a vehicle for passing on institutional knowledge. There are similar processes in the martial arts, called *kata* in some Japanese traditions. Kata are idealized formal renditions of movements intended to convey the full breadth and depth of knowledge needed to understand the context and particulars of those actions, but they do not reflect individual instances likely to be encountered in a real-life scenario. Rather, they exist in a way that attempts to take into account as many such scenarios as possible, but they merely

resemble any specific individual scenario. As such, they are a practice rather than a possible reality. In these arts, your students are to be pitied if you cannot demonstrate kata, and you are to be pitied if the only way you know how to move is kata. *In the same spirit, the enactments herein are described as a kind of kata: idealized forms and starting points from which you can, should, must depart.* If you follow enactment instructions to the letter, you will find yourself engaged in a highly formalized practice that showcases highly idealized and stylized situations that bear little resemblance to reality. Reality rarely looks like the idealized scenarios described in the instructions, and yet understanding and practicing enactments as they are described is required to fully understand the reasoning for actions and steps therein. While this progression toward competence is needed and desired, it is a separate endeavor from therapeutic application.

The formalized instructions for RfG enactments often include preparations to assure physical and emotional safety and take into consideration any physical limitations, making the environment most conducive to the opportunity for discovery. Such highly formalized preparations cannot meet the needs of every therapeutic scenario. Competence is not achieved by the rote memorization and application of these formalized instructions—rather, these are intended as a jumping-off point. Once you are comfortable with the principles governing these enactments, it may well be time to break them. We hope you will take this information in and then modify it to suit your needs. If you do not break, or at least bend the rules at times, the situations you find yourself in may break them on your behalf, so we urge you to get a head start. *Don't respect an instruction so much that you're enslaved to the form of it.*

On Assessment and Intervention

We initially made some efforts to organize enactments as serving the purpose of either assessment or of interventions. These efforts were abandoned, as we recognized that most enactments can be used in either capacity, depending on the needs of the clinical situation.

When you perform an intervention, you assess the information from the impact of that intervention. When you perform an assessment, your inquiries change the state and system of the person or group being assessed. Therefore, any enactment potentially serves to promote both functions. For example, even while using a particular enactment to assess a couple to learn how they perform together, the couple's engagement in the enactment (an activity possibly out of the norm for that couple) may cause them to reflect on their relationship and interactions and perhaps alter their view of their relationship, thus functioning as an intervention.

As implied above, any differences between assessment and intervention are confounded because the process of engaging in either may bring about a change in the other. A player may develop new insights while engaging in an enactment intended as an assessment, while a clinician may derive new understanding from observing an enactment intended to serve as an intervention. Therefore, though the clinician's initial purpose may be one or the other function, the enactment itself can seldom be classified unambiguously as one or the other apart from its context of use. Over time, both functions, assessment and intervention, intertwine to further the work.

Directing Embodied and Remote Forms

Below are six options/forms for delivering RfG instructions and for their enactment, along with some of the advantages and drawbacks of that form:

A = Director(s); B = Participants/clients/players

(1) Fully Embodied- Both A and all B together in one location:

This is the traditional in-person face-to-face practice.

Advantages- results in greater emotional impact for most enactments; fuller opportunities for observation; full use of all senses (including peripheral vision) by everyone; can be used for all enactments; simultaneous interaction (no lag).

Drawback: geographically inconvenient/costly.

(2) Hybrid-1- A (together In-person with assistants or co-director) in one location; all B's together In-person at another location; A's and B's connected on-line:

Advantages- convenience of remote instruction; A's can demonstrate in embodied form to B; Members of B can participate fully in embodied practices with the advantages listed in (1). Drawback: more limited opportunities for observation than in (1).

(3) Hybrid-2- A on-line with assistants or co-directors in separate locations; all B's together in-person at another location; A's and B's connected on-line:

Advantages- A's, by interacting physically, can demonstrate embodied forms of enactments to B's via the on-line connection.

(4) Hybrid-3- A in one location; B's together in pairs or small groups in-person, but remote from other pairs or small groups in different locations; A and all B's connected on-line:

Advantages- Useful for working with couples group therapy, as couples can be remotely instructed to perform embodied enactments with their partners, either privately in break-out rooms or more "publicly" while being witnessed on-screen by other B's.

(5) Hybrid-4- Same as (1), except additional B's join remotely and are connected on-line to the in-person session/group/training:

Advantage- On-line B's, as spectators, can learn from observation of embodied processes, occasionally being directed to participate as in (6). Often, this form is used to allow B's who are ordinarily physically present members to stay connected to their B group whenever absent.

Drawback: Directing attention to physically absent B's often dilutes the focus of those physically present B members.

(6) Fully Remote- All A's and B's are remote from one another; all A's and B's connected on-line:

Advantage- B's may join or leave the session with less disruption than during in-person forms.

Drawbacks- Lesser emotional impact of enactment; interaction lag during enacting; more limited opportunities for observation than in (1); Enactments limited to those that can be directed and performed on-line.

RfG Concepts and Terms

About Games and Names

The names for games and exercises, the two types of enactments used in RfG are taken from the sources where we encountered them at the time. In the larger decentralized world of performance improv, a vast variety of short-form improv games have been, and continue to be, devised. Many of these games are variations on the ones described originally by improv pioneers like Viola Spolin, Keith Johnstone, David Shepherd and by many others. As stage improvisers have always borrowed from and adapted freely what they saw others doing, it is next to impossible to assign correct attribution to the originators of many specific improv games. Even more confusingly, what is essentially the same game is known to different improvisers by a variety of names. Improvisers from different troupes often need to start describing or playing a game to discover that they both know the same game under different names.

We make no claims to either the originality or comprehensiveness of the body of enactments described and classified herein. After the senior author studied stage improv with Keith Johnstone in the early 1990s, he began using enactments learned from his teacher, whose writings contain descriptions of several of these forms. Many other improv games have been devised and performed; there is no compelling reason to exclude these others from consideration as potentially clinically useful. The approximately one hundred and forty RfG games, exercises and variations cataloged in this Reference Guide have been field tested in clinical settings over time by different practitioners applying them to diverse populations. Since the 1994

publication of *Rehearsals for Growth* there have been relatively few (forty-five) new games added, though modifying existing games (versions) and developing new variations have always been part of RfG praxis.

In the improv world, the general term “game” is used to denote any form of enactment, but the distinction between games and exercises in RfG is meaningful. A **game** involves taking on a character or role to be performed within a dramatic enactment. By contrast, an **exercise** is an unusual activity done by the player as their normal social self (i.e., not taking on a different persona or character). Often, the same enactment form may be used as either a game or an exercise, depending on whether the player takes on a non-self role during performance. Occasionally, a client may inwardly assign him/herself a dramatic role that was not given by the director in the performance of an exercise, something that may only become recognized during the post-enactment processing (PEP).

Devices are instructions added to enactments which do not alter their form. Due to their distinctiveness, some devices have been given their own names in this Guide. Also, some devices comprise the premise of an enactment and can be considered games or exercises in their own right. Devices, named or unnamed, may be chosen in combination with enactments in order to create novel and useful variations.

About Variations and Versions

Most enactments have versions or variations. Some of these are recognized as clinically useful across a number of commonly encountered situations; others are mere curiosities. A **version**, as noted in the Glossary, is an unnamed addition or alternation of an instruction for an enactment. No

attempt has been made to cite or describe every version as this would make this Guide too cumbersome for practical use.

A **variation** refers to an alternative set of instructions for an enactment, and variations are given their own names that are distinct from that of the original enactment. Only variations thus far found to be useful in RfG praxis have been included under their own names.

In practice, many of the separately named enactments and devices may as well be considered variations of other named enactments. There is often no unambiguous way to distinguish a named enactment from a variation; in many of the descriptions offered in this Guide, variations are often described or cited to facilitate cross-referencing.

Also, many enactments have both beginner and advanced variations. You might choose to do one or the other. Enacting the easier/simpler one first and then the advanced one can be useful in its own way. It is up to you to consider how changing the goals of the enactment might change the instructions given to clients, as well as altering the outcome. Devising sequences of enactments allows a less experienced practitioner to build experience toward a fuller use of the RfG approach. Such a sequence may be both idiosyncratic and useful.

Enactment Descriptions

Starting on the next page, all of the Enactments are listed, including alternate names, in alphabetical order.

Accepting in Gibberish

Usage Notes: In this easier variation of Accepting in Mime, players enact a scene with gibberish dialogue. This requires them to pay more attention to one another's physical actions than when only spoken dialogue is used. In both games, after the scene's enactment, it is instructive first to ask the audience and then each of the players what took place. As in Gibberish Encounter, the discrepancies can be hilarious.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: individuals, couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: expanding emotional expressiveness

misc: primarily emotional, control over the meaning of another player's speech, gibberish

Accepting in Mime

Usage Notes: In this advanced game, players enact a scene without any dialogue. This requires them to pay close attention to one another's physical actions and to use movement to indicate clearly what/where/how the story develops. A somewhat easier variation is [Accepting in Gibberish](#) where both mime and vocal inflection convey meaning. In both games, after the scene enactment, it is instructive to ask the audience and then each player what took place. The discrepancies can be hilarious.

💡 Online Tip: Sound is actually unimportant. This exercise can be done on mute.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 70; *Collected Papers 1*, 226-227.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#), [device](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [advanced](#)

misc: [primarily action or movement](#)

Address Through the Telephone

Usage Notes: This exercise was developed by Renée Emunah as an alternative to the Gestalt and Psychodramatic technique of *Empty Chair*. This is also especially useful for transitioning to a psychodramatic, Gestalt, or ego-state approach. The advantage of working with a telephone instead of an empty chair is that the player warms up to the role more easily. It is also quicker to set up than the entire *Empty Chair* technique.

A single player on stage is directed to have a conversation with someone who is created via the player's dialog on a telephone. Though the player is ostensibly in conversation with the absent individual, the player is actually speaking to the audience. The audience hears only the on-stage player's side of the telephone conversation with the absent individual. It can be helpful for the player to perform with a prop telephone/cellphone.

Three distinct objectives may be met in this game: (1) The audience's attention may be drawn to inferring the identity and attributes of the imaginary character; (2) the player may explore a real or fantasy relationship with the imagined character; and (3) the "conversation" may be a psychodramatic encounter with an introject or actual person significant to the player.

Some useful questions for post-enactment debrief:

- What was it like to talk to [the absent person—your mother, your best friend, your ex]?
- Did you "hear" the other person "speaking" during the pauses in your speech turns? If so, what were they "saying?"

Sources: Attributed to Renée Emunah. *Collected Papers I*, 226-227.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: individuals

difficulty: beginner

training functions: story-making

misc: primarily verbal, endowments, inner landscape, imaginary or unseen characters

Arms-Through Puppets

Usage Notes: This game requires in-person interaction between players; only the director can be online. This game features two players playing the part of one character. One player (A) stands or is seated with his hands behind his back while the other (B) stands, crouches, or kneels (depending on the players' relative heights) close behind and sticks her arms forward underneath A's armpits to make the character's arms.

In the simplest version, the character gives a speech to the audience as an expert on some topic; A controls everything except, of course, the arms and hands of the character. Player A attempts to play the scene normally at first, although "his" arms may seem to have a life of their own, making inappropriate or distracting gestures, which then have to be verbally justified. It is B's job to break the routine of the speech through occasionally incongruent behavior.

In stage performances, A is frequently given a jacket with small physical props in its pockets for B to use to complicate A's task. In more advanced versions, two or more characters (usually seated next to one another, as in an interview) play a scene in which the arms of each character can interact with the arms and body of the other character.

More than most improvisations, *Arms-Through Puppets* may occasion conventional body-touching boundary violations. The director should be explicit in setting rules for touching and be discriminating about with whom to use this game.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 85-86xxx97.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

training functions: freeing the imagination, expanding emotional expressiveness

misc: players must be together in person, primarily verbal, shared control of a character, coordination of storytelling, control over another player's movement, control over the meaning of another player's speech

Backward Scene

Usage Notes: A final tableau is established on stage, such as one player lying dead on the floor and the others in position as murderer, bereaved friend, medical expert, etc.

This game is difficult to do online. It is easier for the director to be remote than for players to be remote from one another. Note that the scene is not totally backwards; the subject sequence is backward, but language phrases are spoken forward as normal, not backward.

This is a tool for stabilizing over-performing players. It helps them refocus on scene partners rather than the audience. It is also a fantastic way to have fun with failure, but for the most part it is more performative, less clinically useful.

The idea is to play the scene backward in steps separated by minimal pauses in the action. For example, the scene starts with the final tableau: In this scene, a female player B lying on the floor, with male players A and C kneeling sorrowfully over her.

A: Oh, no, Susan! [all three stand up; A mimes pointing a gun at B and firing] Bang!

B: Pete, don't do it! [positions C in her place, steps aside briefly and then jumps in front of C]

A: I . . . I'll never give you up, Susan . . . and as for you . . . [mimes drawing a gun from waistband]

C: [pulls B down to a lying position next to himself in lying position across room; sits up] Pete, it's time you knew . . . we love each other.

A: [walks up to B and C lying together on floor and stops, looking down in disbelief] I just came home because . . . Susan, what's going on here?

B: [mimes hiding C under covers] Oh my God, Walter, it's Pete! [sits up]

A: [walks backward to opposite side of stage] Hi Susan, I'm home! [mimes slamming door and entering home]

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 81xxx93.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: advanced

training functions: story-making

misc: players must be together in person

Behavioral Lists

Usage Notes: In this group game, the director selects and writes down, on a separate card for each, three to seven attributes or endowments (such as athletic/intellectual/wealthy/sexy) that represent some of the ways that people try to appear to others. For each attribute, the group next compiles a list of behaviors that help convey that particular attribute. For instance, the "To Be Seen as Athletic" list might include *doing push-ups* and *slapping people on the butt*, while the "To Be Thought of as Wealthy" list could contain *mentioning luxury items owned*, *referring to one's servants*, and so on.

Once every list has between five to thirty items, the director sets up a scene with two or more players in a specified location and has the players draw a card randomly for their character to play the attribute written on that card. Players are instructed to play the scene in character, referring to the accompanying list in order to include any of the behaviors on that list, in whatever order, which can be justified and truthfully played.

The easy version: The same behavior list is performed by all players.

The hard version: Each player utilizes a different list.

See also [Combined Lists](#).

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 80, **137-138**, 194, 196, 244-245.

Categories:


type: [game](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

The Blob

Usage Notes: In the in-person performance of this exercise, two or more players form a line by linking arms around each other's waists or shoulders. They then move and speak in unison as a single person (the Blob) either to another Blob or in response to questions from the audience. Blob members are instructed neither to lead nor follow but to speak simultaneously while maintaining eye contact with one another. It should be noted that this instruction is an ideal rather than what actually happens most of the time. When the Blob moves, all its members are part of its body, with the players on the ends supplying the arms and hands. The director should then encourage the Blob to speak more rapidly so that there are mix-ups in which some words are garbled. In doing so, this becomes a good exercise to decondition players from the fear of failure, since speaking different words simultaneously is no one player's fault. While it is acceptable to start players of this game on the challenge of simultaneous speech, it can also be useful to "rehearse" Blob players to first use gibberish, focusing them on coordinated movement before adding actual speech.

 Online Tip: When players are not in person together, there is no need to follow instructions to link arms. Keep in mind that, without interlinked limbs, the illusion of being the Blob is diminished. The director can also highlight the players who are on the stage as the Blob by turning video off for everyone else (including the director) and muting everyone else, except the players on stage and the director.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 84.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: primarily verbal, shared control of a character, coordination of storytelling

Blob Dating

Usage Notes: This game features two groups of players that each function as in *The Blob*. The aggregate-player Blobs are two characters who are meeting on a first date. As noted in the instructions for *The Blob*, Blob members are instructed neither to lead nor follow but to speak simultaneously while maintaining frequent eye contact with one another. When each Blob moves, all its members comprise parts of its body, with the players on the ends supplying the arms and hands. In playing the scene, the players will inevitably garble the Blob's speech, as its member players will make different offers. The scene still works, since the dating premise is already established.

As in *The Blob*, the director can highlight the players on the stage by turning everyone else's video off, including the director's, and mute everyone except both Blobs' players on stage and the director.

To keep the two Blobs distinct, one set of Blob members can wear a hat (arranged for in advance), while the other Blob's members do not. Keep in mind that, without interlinked limbs, the sense of there being two distinct characters in the game is diminished.

Another variation is [Dr. Know-It-All](#), where a Blob poses as a universal expert, answering questions from an interviewer or from the audience.

Sources: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: not in literature, primarily verbal, shared control of a character, coordination of storytelling

Blocking and Accepting Offers

Usage Notes: This series of quick exercises is used to teach the variety of blocking levels, primarily on the verbal dimension, ending with full acceptance of verbal offers. When time permits, the entire series may be presented. Otherwise, the specific variations *Total Blocking*, *Yes, But*, and *Yes, And* will suffice. The series is less of an enactment and more like a series of good beginner or introductory experiential demonstrations.

The full series:

- **Total Blocking:** Players completely negate or invalidate the reality of one another's offers.
- **Negating/Disputing:** Each player directly contradicts the other's offer.
- **Yes, But:** Each statement after the first offer begins with the words, "Yes, but . . ."
- **Accept Verbally/Block Physically:** The players agree verbally while disqualifying one another nonverbally, such as by shaking their heads, looking away, making facial grimaces, walking away while the other person is still speaking, and so on.
- **Accept Physically/Block Verbally:** Players behave attentively, nodding, maintaining eye contact, etc., while at the same time negating, disputing, or responding with "Yes, but..."
- **Merely "Yes":** The second player responds to the first's offer with agreement, but without adding anything else.
- **Yes, And:** Each player accepts what the other does and says positively and then advances the action through a counteroffer. The players notice and receive each offer, thereby validating one another and making each other look good.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 64-65, 74-75, 115.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: accepting and blocking offers

misc: opener/warm-up

Blocking or Accepting

Usage Notes: A scripted exercise that pairs an offer to two possible lists of responses: blocking ones and accepting ones. Lists are written up before enactment. This game trains players to get over the tendency to block, but the real impact is on the blockee. Offers and responses are primarily verbal, though lists could describe offers and responses on the emotional or movement dimensions. You can have two lists of responses: blocking and accepting. Both players should try the roles of blockee and acceptee through multiple enactments.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 74.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: individuals, couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

training functions: accepting and blocking offers, enactment for skill improvement

misc: primarily verbal, blocking rule/premise

Body Freezes

Usage Notes: Players are asked to move their bodies about the room randomly at somewhat slower-than-normal speed. When the director calls, "Freeze," players freeze in position as statues. This exercise is good for opening up imagination, focusing on physicality, and learning how to accept offers from one's own body.

💡 Online Tip: There is some advantage to doing this off-screen and away from eye contact with other players; however, this becomes a challenge in how to get people to return when it is time to do so. You might agree beforehand that a bell, gong, or verbal signal ("Time's up") is intended to bring people back to their screens.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 68-69.

Categories:

type: game

population: individuals, couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: accepting and blocking offers, freeing the imagination, enactment for skill improvement

misc: primarily action or movement, opener/warm-up, inner landscape

Body Offers

Usage Notes: This tri-phasic exercise is a good way to put “training wheels” on starting a scene. It can also suggest a past and future to the interactions in the scene. Consider doing this enactment in multiple rounds: Perhaps start with a nonverbal round, then a round with a single line of dialogue, which then becomes a scene. This exercise occurs in phases:

Phase 1: Two players A and B stand face-to-face; A places his body mindlessly in an unusual position and holds it there while B looks at this physical offer and enacts one of three options: (1) she completes the picture in her imagination that is suggested by the body offer given by placing her own body in some corresponding pose; (2) she puts A’s body back to neutral (gently moving him to standing upright, hands at sides) if no thought or picture comes immediately to mind; or (3) she merely copies (mirrors) the position of A’s physical offer. The player who made the first body offer then says, “Thank you,” ending that round, and then receives a body offer from the other player.

💡 Online Tip: When utilized online, follow the directions for Phase 1, *except* for response (2). A sample modification to (2) would be to just say, “Neutral” or to make an agreed-upon symbolic movement for neutrality.

Phase 2: Starts the same way as phase 1, but the partner adds to the scene by putting the body into position and then adding dialogue that accepts the first player’s body offer.

Phase 3: This scene continues from the ending of phase 2. After the second player responds with movement and dialogue, the first player responds.

Then, they both continue responses to one another, so that both players thereafter move their bodies and make verbal offers, thus enacting a scene. The scene ends when a “beat” is reached.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 68; *Collected Papers I*, 147, 164, 271.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: accepting and blocking offers, freeing the imagination, story-making

misc: primarily action or movement, opener/warm-up, multistage

Boring Scene/Serious Scene

Usage Notes: This game helps balance out over-striving performers and reorients them to their partners instead of to the audience. This scene is not intended to be absurd. The goal is to cease striving to be special, original, or entertaining, and simply to do just the expected, routine stuff.

The premise of this game is for each player to follow, in a naturalistic way, the logic of the character and setting given at the beginning of the scene without being original, clever, or funny. This instruction gets players to focus more on being in character and attending to the relationships among characters. Paradoxically, the resulting enactments are not usually boring to watch, as the choices made to advance the action stem from an inner consistency that can reveal players' real-life choices and attitudes.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 87-88.

Categories:

type: game

population: individuals, couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

training functions: story-making

misc: primarily verbal

Boris/Doris, or Boris

Usage Notes: Boris is a complex game that can be thought of as a playing of the projection (or catastrophic fantasy) that others off-stage are coercing a person to cooperate or accept offers. The scene is that of an interrogation, with A as the interrogator and B as the suspect.

A scene might start as follows:

- B sits on a stool or armless chair. A paces around B asking questions like, "Are you known as Lefty LaRue?"
- B answers uncooperatively, or not at all: He looks at the ceiling, insolently tells the interrogator to go to hell, asks the interrogator his name, says things like, "What if I am?"
- A now explains that he will be compelled to call on Boris (invisible only to the audience), a seven-foot enforcer that demonstrates he means business by roughing up B.
- B's eyes might widen with fright; he screams in terror or pain and acts as though he is being hauled to his feet and strangled, thrown across the stage, his arm twisted, and so on. Much shaken, B then collapses on his chair.
- A, acting quite in control, resumes the interrogation. Whenever A isn't satisfied with B's answer, he motions for Boris to come forward to compel B to cooperate.

The scene is usually played to where B eventually confesses all, but it can also develop to a point where Boris is the one beaten up, B never breaks despite fearsome torture, or Boris is bribed to turn on A. Another variation of this game is *Doris*, where seduction takes the place of brutality in

advancing the action. And of course, all parts, including the imaginary ones, can be played by any gender.

💡 Online Tip: It is particular important for players to stay on camera, given the utilization of an invisible character.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 72, 74, 219, 220.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

training functions: freeing the imagination

misc: players must be together in person, primarily action or movement, blocking rule/premise, imaginary or unseen characters

Calling Objects (by) the Wrong Name

Usage Notes: This exercise is a good group warm-up that reorients focus off what other people are doing. Everyone at once runs from object to object in the room, points to each, and shouts its wrong name (i.e., any word other than that normally used to denote that object, such as calling a chair "democracy," an ear "ceiling," and so on). Sensory perceptions are heightened; colors get brighter; sounds sharper; and participants report feeling refreshed.

💡 Online Tip: In online settings, players often leave the computer behind in their exploration of the environment, and it can be challenging to bring people back when it is time to do so. You might agree beforehand that a bell, gong, or verbal signal ("Time's up") is intended to bring people back together.

See also [Body Freezes](#).

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 81, 144.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [individuals](#), [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [beginner](#)

training functions: [freeing the imagination](#)

misc: [primarily verbal](#), [blocking rule/premise](#)

Character Encounter

Usage Notes: When all players are in person together, this can be done with fairly large groups.

Steps:

1. Dim the lights and have players mill around the room, calling out instructions about every 30 seconds for players to change their speed, gestures, and gait.
2. Instruct players to settle on a specific speed, set of gestures, and gait that is not habitual but is of interest to oneself: "Continue moving with that speed, gestures, and gait."
3. "Answer the following questions: Who am I? Where am I? What am I doing?"
4. "Notice other players in the room. Find another player to pair up with, mutually choosing partners."
5. "Move together for 30 seconds without speaking."
6. Introduce your characters to one another. *Interact in character* as the character formed in answer to the questions in Step 3.
7. After a few minutes, the exercise ends. Volunteer pairs take turns introducing their character's partner to the group.

See also the multistage variation, building upon [Body Freezes](#), [Who? Where? What?](#) (steps 1-3).

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: [game](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [beginner](#)

misc: [not in literature](#), [inner landscape](#), [multistage](#)

Character Relay

Usage Notes: This is played to warm up to using more body movement and to break routine, especially for players who sometimes forget physical action and revert to just standing around and talking. Each of two players is supplied with one physical prop as well as an identity and relationship to the other character(s). Props are used to inject a physical element. Directors will need to prepare for players to bring agreed-upon physical props for the enactment. Each player needs to have the same approximate prop (e.g., bottles, books), and each player should have just one prop.

The players begin a scene, which is frozen by the director calling, "Switch!" At this point, the players exchange both props and roles and continue the scene as the character with whom they have switched, imitating the voice, movement, and character of the player who originated the role.

Advanced versions can utilize three or more players or introduce alternative transactions.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 136.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: opener/warm-up, multistage

Circle Gibberish

Usage Notes: Three or more players in a circle have a group discussion, gesturing and reacting in no particular order to one another's gibberish as though the content were understood. This is one exercise in which it is preferable for the director to initiate the gibberish discussion among the players. *Circle Gibberish* may be used as a couples, group, or family warm-up, as it creates a more expressive and cohesive group atmosphere.

In another useful variation, Gibberish Relay, attention is paid to matching the offers on the emotional dimension.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 128-129.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner


training functions: expanding emotional expressiveness, gibberish

Combined Lists

Usage Notes: In this advanced variation of [Behavioral Lists](#), three players enact a scene in which each player plays a different list to each of the other players. The goal here is for a player to play one behavioral list to one partner and play a different behavioral list to another partner. One good example is directing a player to give one fellow player a good time and another, a hard time. Compiling lists for the game usually takes longer than the enactment itself. Don't use this game too often, as it requires complex role play.

The following example follows three players (A, B, C):

1. Player A plays *to convince others that you're normal* toward player B while playing *to get sympathy* from player C.
2. At the same time, B plays *to give people a good time* toward A and *to give people a hard time* toward C.
3. Meanwhile, C plays *to be thought beautiful by others* toward A and *to be thought wealthy by others* toward B.

 Online Tip: Chat provides a handy place to make lists available to all players.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 138; *Rehearsals Growth (PDF)*, 150.

Categories:

type: [game](#)

population: [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [advanced](#)

misc: [lists](#)

Comparative Status Cues

Usage Notes: This game is very useful to prepare players for understanding status and how it is performed. Two players take positions as statues, with or without status provided by director. They each should be taking notice of one another and adjusting position based on those observations.

One option is for each player to be instructed to take notice of the body position of the other and then adjust their own position based on those observations. The director can also offer changes in the pose(s) of one or both players. An audience, if present, can report on the relative status rankings of the players before and after pose changes.

The director's first directions are generally, "Take a position and hold it." In (post- or concurrent) enactment processing, the director can ask both audience and players to identify the status impacts of enacted positions. Some possible questions might include:

- For the audience: "Which player seems to be lower/higher status?"
- For the players:
 - "What does it feel like to be in that position?"
 - "What of your position speaks to your status?"
 - "What of your position relative to the other player tells you about your status?"
 - "What is it like to change your position in that space?"

Status is demonstrably comparative. How players move, change tones, question, or choose to remain stationary changes the status of one player relative to the other. A director may ask a player to lower or raise his/her status. A director may also ask a player to change into a specific position with

status sequelae. The audience makes a judgment about comparative status of each individual in the enactment.

💡 Online Tip: When played in-person, players merely stand close to one another. In online environments, it can be helpful for players to move away from the camera to show more of their bodies.

See also Status Cues.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: status-improvisation and power, enactment for skill improvement

misc: not in literature, status game

Conducted Story

Usage Notes: In this exercise, a group of players tell a story as one person. Any player speaks when, and only when, pointed to by the conductor (the name for the director in this particular enactment), whether that speech turn consists of one syllable, a word, a phrase, a sentence, or several sentences. A player continues to speak whenever pointed to. conductors change the speaker abruptly and frequently, but the storytelling must go on! When any player hesitates, stammers, or speaks ungrammatically the conductor eliminates that player by calling, “Out!” or “Die!” whereupon that player complies, and the story continues to be told by the remaining surviving players.

This exercise can be used competitively to eliminate players, resulting in a “last man standing” winner, though it is entertaining and challenging without encouraging a win-lose mentality.

Online Tips:

- The conductor holds up that number of fingers corresponding to a player’s number. For greater clarity, the conductor can also call out the intended player’s number when changing the number of fingers being held up. A player continues to speak whenever their number is called or cued, only stopping when another player’s number is called.
- In online use, it is vital that (1) the conductor remain visible on camera; (2) players be renamed with a number or given a number before the start of the exercise so they can be cued by calling the number; and (3) players keep their microphone on for the entire exercise.
- When players are in person together, this exercise may have up to twelve performers; when used online, it is best played with three to five performers.

- The pace of this exercise is too rapid for technological spotlighting of players. A Speaker view that highlights whomever is talking might be used to accentuate the experience but should not be used to cue players.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: not in literature, primarily emotional, opener/warm-up

Cooperative Storytelling

Usage Notes: In this verbal exercise, one player (A) provides context through questions and the other player (B) provides content as answers. The players sit facing one another, knee-to-knee, looking into each other's eyes. A shares the storytelling function with B, following as well as leading at times. This exercise can be considered a variation of [Dream Story](#).

💡 Online Tip: Some modification is required for online use. Namely, the physical setup indicated in the written instructions are not possible in online environments. In online use, individual players can be instructed to pin or spotlight one another in a Speaker View (or by hiding Self View), so they can focus on receiving cues from one another.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, **94**, 181-182.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

training functions: [freeing the imagination](#), [story-making](#)

misc: [primarily verbal](#), [coordination of storytelling](#)

Couples with Contrasting Emotions

Usage Notes: This game is for four players, divided into two pairs. The scene is set by the director, who assigns players the roles of two marital couples, each with a contrasting emotional mood, and who are meeting socially (e.g., The Grumps meet The Cheerfuls, The Anguished meet The Bored, or The Haughties meet The Humbles).

In the in-person version, each couple in turn plays a short scene in their assigned mood before playing the main scene, in which the couples meet. The couples' relationship could be that of friends, strangers, business partners, neighbors, siblings, etc., while the setting could be over dinner, on a double date, in a lifeboat, on a tennis court, and so on. During the main scene players should be coached to remain in their mood, whether with their partner or in interaction with the other couple. As an option, there can be an additional scene for each couple following their encounter with the other couple.

This game has mixed results when used online because of the difficulty of physical coordination required for the game. When players are able to work together in person, the director can sometimes do a walk-on part as, say, a waiter in a restaurant scene. This may be possible to replicate online as well, as you see fit.

When played online, it is best utilized verbally. The following provides a useful way to ease into a complex online interaction: One way to warm up to this game is for the director to give a prologue, prequel, or epilogue to the couples involved. Letting individual couples meet at home is a way to strengthen the dyadic element. Furthermore, doing a prologue gives couples

a chance to practice in advance to cope with the difficulty of imagining interpersonal space and physicality in the online environment.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, **131-132**, 140, 204; *Collected Papers I*, 28, 31, 138-139.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

training functions: expanding emotional expressiveness

misc: primarily emotional, multistage

Crazy Eddie

Usage Notes: This game is an excellent way to train players in a group setting to take the risk of jumping out on stage when totally unprepared in order to rescue a faltering teammate.

Three or more players line up across the back half of the stage and face the audience. The director places an object (e.g., a paper cup) on the front center stage floor, and one player steps forward to pick it up. When he does so, he becomes an intense, high-pressure salesman of the object to the audience, verbally and physically demonstrating how it can be used in many, many ways.

The other players become a chorus line, mimicking the salesman's movements in unison behind the foreground player, lip-synching to his patter. Sooner or later the speaking player runs out of new ideas and begins to stall, repeat himself, or stretch out the latest idea. As the chorus lines witnesses this begin to happen, one of the other players, with or without an idea for a new use of the cup, jumps forward, tapping the speaker's shoulder and steps up to be the salesperson, while the former salesperson rejoins the chorus. This continues so that every player gets to speak at least once.

The valuable part of this exercise is the rescuing that takes place when one player taps out the other; players are stretched by taking the risk to rescue and thereby build camaraderie with one another. Such shared risk-taking builds group solidarity. This exercise teaches players to share the danger of failing on stage and to rescue other players in trouble. Not infrequently, the rescued player has strong delayed reactions to having been rescued, ranging from gratitude to embarrassment to anger.

The scene also needs an agreed-upon common prop such as a cup, piece of paper, or pen that is offered for sale. There is also a need for players online to be in a place likely to have such a prop (i.e., at home and not in the middle of the woods), or the prop should be agreed-upon and secured by each individual player beforehand. If players are not together in person, the group must have an agreed-upon signal that indicates that a player from the chorus is taking the salesperson's place.

💡 Online Tip: Several alterations are required for use online. You will need an agreed-upon verbal signal for players to freeze. You may direct everyone to switch off their camera, except for the salesperson in the hot seat. Alternatively, you can utilize a speaker view to highlight the salesperson without totally causing the chorus to disappear.

See also **Guilford's** *Brick Exercise* or *Brick Test*.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 106.

Categories:

type: game

population: families and groups

difficulty: beginner

misc: primarily verbal

Dimensions of Blocking

Usage Notes: This is an experiential demonstration of partial blocking by accepting on some dimensions and blocking on others. The three dimensions on which offers are made are verbal, emotional, and movement.

In a training situation, the director works with a volunteer student to demonstrate, explaining that he (the director) will respond differently each time to the student's making the same offer. The student is instructed each time to approach the director, smiling, and extending a hand and saying cheerfully, "Hi! How are you?"

The first time: The director shakes the student's extended hand, smiles back, and replies enthusiastically, "Fine! How are you?" This is acceptance on all three dimensions.

The second time: The director ignores the student's outstretched hand, smiles back, and replies enthusiastically, "Fine! How are you?" This demonstrates blocking on the movement dimension and acceptance on the verbal and emotional dimensions.

The third time: The director shakes the student's extended hand, smiles mechanically, and replies in a cold, emotionless way, "Fine. How are you?" This demonstrates blocking on the emotional dimension and acceptance on the verbal and movement dimensions.

The fourth time: The director shakes the student's extended hand, smiles back, and replies enthusiastically, "I've now quit smoking for a week." This

demonstrates blocking on the verbal dimension and acceptance on the emotional and movement dimensions.

The fifth time: The director walks past the student, not making eye contact or speaking. This demonstrates blocking on all three dimensions.

After each scene, the student is asked what he or she noticed. Invariably, the student will report feeling the incongruity of interacting with blocked dimensions. Observers typically report having similar reactions.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: individuals, couples, families and groups


difficulty: beginner

training functions: accepting and blocking offers, enactment for skill improvement

misc: not in literature, primarily verbal

Directed Story

Usage Notes: This is essentially an enacted scene in which the action is advanced or altered by offers made by outside sources during the scene, not only from the director (ex: “Freeze! The player pulls a handgun out of his pocket,”) but from any off-stage spectator, where the director asks the audience (for example, “Freeze! the player pulls an object out of his pocket. What is it?”). That offer is accepted and worked into the scene. As with player-generated offers, outside offers can include new or revealed circumstances, endowments, dialogue, props, secrets, states of mind, anything that advances the action.

 Online Tip: The director can turn his or her camera on or off, but the players in the scene itself should be visible to the camera for the entire game. Do three or four offers per scene but be careful to avoid over-managing the scene. If that happens, the actors lose their volition and become puppets.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 102-103, 104, 175.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: individuals, couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner


training functions: accepting and blocking offers, story-making

misc: primarily verbal, coordination of storytelling

Dr. Know-It-All

Usage Notes: In this variation of *The Blob*, the aggregate-player Blob is a universal expert who answers three questions posed by the director or audience members. As noted in the instructions for [The Blob](#), Blob members are instructed neither to lead nor follow but to speak simultaneously while maintaining frequent eye contact with one another. When the Blob gestures, all its members are part of its body, with the players on the ends supplying the arms and hands.

In playing the scene, the players will inevitably garble the Blob's speech, as its member players will make different concurrent offers. The scene works best when the director repeats the Blob's answers, often supplying coherence to what Dr. Know-It-All produced.

 Online Tips: When used online, you can highlight the on-stage players by turning everyone's video off, including the director's, and muting everyone, *except* the video for the Blob's on-stage players and the director. If audience members want to ask Dr. Know-It-All questions, they may use a raised hand emoticon or other sign to signal their interest and then unmute to ask the question. Blob players can disregard instructions to link arms in the book's directions for players working together in person. Keep in mind that, without that instruction, there is a diminished sense of there being two distinct characters in the game.

See also [Blob Dating](#), where two Blobs go out on a first date.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups


difficulty: beginner

misc: not in literature, primarily verbal, shared control of a character, coordination of storytelling, opener/warm-up

Dream Story

Usage Notes: This exercise is primarily a solitary one to open imagination to possibilities. It is also a trust exercise. The exercise requires two players: one is the dreamer; the other the listener. The dreamer closes her/his eyes and tells a story. The listener acts as a helper and witness. If done by players working together in person, the exercise begins with the dreamer lying comfortably on the floor on his back with eyes shut; his partner the listener sits on the floor near him and makes light contact by putting a hand on the dreamer's shoulder. Rarely, a dreamer may prefer not to be touched, in which case the listener sits nearby without physical contact.

The lights are dimmed, and the director leads the players through a brief relaxation exercise. The dreamer then tells a third-person story created by interweaving the imagery that came into his imagination during the relaxed state. The listener's task is to be there attentively for the dreamer; he speaks only if the dreamer gets into a distressing dream-story, indicated by its content, more shallow, rapid breathing, strained vocal tone, or other physiological signs of stress. In such cases, the listener makes verbal suggestions that turn the story away from the source of distress. If this is not sufficient, the listener can ask the dreamer to open his eyes, give him a hug, or rock him and reassure him that the distress will soon pass. After four or five minutes the director announces that the dream will be over in one more minute, giving the dreamer notice to bring the story to an end.

 Online Tip: Staying on camera is not required, but it is preferred. Online work has significant implications for safety here. Physical contact contributes to safety, and vulnerability requires safety. The problem is that if the dreamer and listener are not in the same physical space, the opportunity for physical

comforting is removed, and that may make it harder for the dreamer to take risks in terms of emotional vulnerability. For that reason, doing this exercise fully online is possible but not ideal for clinical use. The best chance for good outcomes occurs when players are able to be in person together.

See also Cooperative Storytelling.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 94-95.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups


difficulty: intermediate, significant emotional risk game

training functions: freeing the imagination, story-making

misc: players must be together in person, primarily verbal, opener/warm-up, inner landscape

Dubbed Identities

Usage Notes: In this more difficult variation of [Dubbing](#), the on-stage players speak for one another. It is even possible for three players to do this, with A speaking for B, B speaking for C, and C speaking for A. Often extra coaching is needed to get each actor to sustain action and stay in sync with the respective dubber.

 Online Tip: When used in an online environment in which players are not in the same physical location together, the lag in synchrony present in all online interactions may feel especially salient or intrusive in this exercise. This presents an exceptional case, where coaching cannot lead to meaningful synchronization. Instead, players will need to adjust to the sense of timing being off.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: [game](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [advanced](#)


misc: [not in literature](#), [control over another player's speech](#)

Dubbing

Usage Notes: In this game, the on-stage players have control of their bodies, but their voices are supplied by another player off-stage. On-stage players lip-synch what their off-stage voices are saying. Two players play two parts of one person, thus co-creating a narrative. One player plays the body, and the other the voice of the character. The voice/dubber speaks the narrative, and the actor provides the body movement and facial movement as if the dubber's voice were their own. The players take cues from one another and accept offers from one another.

The easier version: One on-stage and one off-stage player co-tell a third-person narrative, starting from physical movement.

The advanced version: A scene is played between two or more on-stage players, each with his own off-stage voice. The advanced version of this game is not especially clinically useful, except perhaps for learning to fail with grace.

 Online Tip: An especially effective use of technology here is to turn the dubbing voice actor's camera off to hide them. Often extra coaching is needed to get the actor to sustain action and stay in sync with the dubber. When used in an online environment in which players are not in person, the lag in synchrony present in all online interactions may feel especially salient or intrusive in this exercise. This presents an exceptional case, where coaching cannot lead to meaningful synchronization. Instead, players will need to adjust to the sense of timing being off.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 86, 147.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: primarily verbal, shared control of a character, control over another player's speech

Dueling Keyboards

Usage Notes: This game requires at least four players: two players on each side of the stage are authors, and 2 or more players are the actors. The authors and actors alternate being in the foreground and background. The general process is as follows:

1. The audience chooses two distinct genres (examples include: Gothic Horror, Shakespearean Comedy, Film Noire, Science Fiction); the authors stand on opposite sides downstage.
2. At a signal from the director, one author starts telling his story (no more than four sentences) while miming using a keyboard. The story is improvised within the assigned genre, setting the scene by describing the setting, mood, characters, and beginning plotline.
3. When that author pauses, the actors on stage enact their interpretation of the story narrated by that author, taking on character and improvising dialogue. The director calls, "Cut!" and the actors freeze in position.
4. The second author now begins her story in the different genre assigned to her, again stopping after no more than four sentences. Now the actors, still frozen in position from the cut at the end of the first scene, begin moving and speaking as new characters in the second author's scene.
5. After the next call of "Cut!" the first author resumes his story, narrating the development of the plot, as the actors again come to life enacting the next installment of that plot, reverting to the setting, mood, characters, and plot-line of the first story. In this way, the two stories develop alternately, as the actors scramble to keep their enactments faithful to each of the two stories.

6. Each story is brought to a climactic conclusion after three or four turns for both authors.

Source: Performance Game adopted for clinical use.

Categories:

type: game

difficulty: advanced

misc: players must be together in person, not in literature

Elephant-Giraffe

Usage Notes:

This exercise is derived from a children's game and requires a director and at least four players. The online version is expected to be confusing due to the absence of spatial cues.

One player calls out another player by number and then calls out, "Elephant" or "Giraffe." The player called out initiates the pertinent stance along with the two players to either side. If there is too much hesitation, the umpire/director says, "Out!" and the slower player "loses."

Play should be fast, light-hearted, and without analysis or discussion. The umpire's call is final, even if seen as an error. It is a nice warm up that allows for safe failures. Step-by-step directions for a simple version and a complex version are below.

Instructions for the Simple Version

1. The first player to start is the Calling Player. Calling Player calls out the number of any other player, (say, Player no. 7), adding either the word "Elephant!" or the word "Giraffe!" An example: "No. 7, Giraffe!"
2. The Target Player, the one whose number is called has to respond *at once* with movements corresponding to which word is called, as follows:
 - If the Calling Player calls, "Elephant!" the Target Player puts both fists to their nose (mimicking the trunk of an elephant) [demonstrated].

- If the Calling Player calls “Giraffe!” the Target Player puts both fists on top of their head (mimicking the bony knobs on the head of a Giraffe) [demonstrated].
3. If the umpire rules that the Target Player performed the correct movement *and* performed it quickly enough (within a count of two), the umpire calls “Safe!” Next, the Calling Player now calls out the number of a new player, adding either “Elephant!” or “Giraffe!”
 4. As long as the Target Players are judged by the umpire as having performed correctly and quickly enough, the Calling Player remains the same player.
 5. However, if the umpire rules that the Target Player didn’t perform the correct movement *or* hesitated too long in moving correctly (longer than the count of two), the umpire calls “Out!” and the Target Player *becomes* the new Calling Player, immediately calling out a different player who becomes the new Target Player on that round.

Instructions for the Complex Version

Building upon the Simple Version, the players with adjacent numbers to the Target player *also must respond at once* with movements corresponding to which word is called when the Target Player’s number is called, as follows:

1. If the Calling Player calls “Player No. 7, Elephant!” not only does the Target Player have to perform the correct movement at once, putting both fists to their nose (mimicking the trunk of an elephant) but also both Players Nos. 6 and 8 have to cup their hands alongside their own ears to No. 7’s side, mimicking the ears of the elephant.
2. If the Calling Player calls “Player No. 7, Giraffe!” not only does the Target Player have to perform the correct movement at once, putting both fists on top of their head (mimicking the bony knobs

- on the head of a giraffe) but also both Players Nos. 6 and 8 have to put both hands over their mouths (imitating the silence of giraffes).
3. As in the simple version, If the umpire rules that the Target Player didn't perform the correct movement or hesitated too long in moving correctly, for more than the count of two), the umpire calls "Out!" and that Target Player becomes the new Calling Player.
 4. However, the judge umpire *also* can call out the players with adjacent numbers, either for making the wrong movements or being too slow in making the correct movements. The umpire will call out the number of whichever of the three is judged to be incorrect in their required movements or the slowest in responding.
 5. Whomever is called out now becomes the new Calling Player on the next round. The players at the high and low numbers in the group are considered adjacent to one another (so if there are 10 numbered players, Nos. 1 and 10 are adjacent). This means that if Player No. 1 is called, both Nos. 2 and 10 also have to respond.

💡 Online Tip: In preparation for online use, have all but one of the volunteer participants turn on their cameras and rename themselves by putting a number in front of their screen names. One other player or the director takes the role of umpire.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: families and groups

difficulty: beginner

misc: players must be together in person, not in literature, primarily action or movement, opener/warm-up

Emotional Lists

Usage Notes: This game can be done with two people or a larger group of people. This game is related to [Hitchhiker](#). Two players begin an improvised scene, both playing an emotion supplied by the director from a list of emotions drawn up in advance. At various points the scene is frozen, a new emotion supplied, and the scene continued with both players taking up the new emotion. Throughout, the players must continue playing the scene while justifying their emotions. This game is usually lively and often teaches players to expand their variety of emotional expression.

Three additional levels of difficulty may be used:

- Beginner version: Both players enact the same emotion.
- Advanced version (which challenges players' attention): One player gets one emotion. A second player responds with a different emotion. This game can also be played in a yet more difficult version where the players are given different concurrent emotions to play, for example, A plays *sadness* while B plays *anger*; then, A is switched to fear while B is to play *boredom*.
- Another advanced version: When B is switched to a new emotion, A assumes B's previous emotion.

The challenge in all three versions is twofold: first, to play the emotion authentically; second, to justify the current emotion in relation to what has gone before in the scene.

💡 Online Tip: When used online, the following instructions should overrule the instructions in book: The director will set up index cards with a single emotion on each one (e.g., angry, sad, happy, surprised, etc.) before the

scene. The scene starts with a basic premise; a good one is two people at a bus stop on their way to work. The director will hold a card up, and players will enact the listed emotion. An alternative is for the director to verbally call, “Freeze” and then call out an emotion picked off a list.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 96, **131**; *Collected Papers I*, 151.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: expanding emotional expressiveness

misc: lists, primarily emotional

Emotional Short-Circuit

Usage Notes: This is a non-improv acting exercise repurposed as an action version of a narrative therapy technique that offers something of a refresh. This is not for theatre workshop use; it is primarily for therapeutic use with clients. First, ask the participants(s) to think of a happy time in their lives and to physically cry over it. Next, have them think of a terrifying or depressing incident and then laugh out loud.

The goals here are (1) to perform an emotion at variance with current feelings and (2) to notice that you can have a different emotional reaction to a memorialized event that has an associated outcome.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, **81-82**, 183.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: individuals, couples, families and groups

difficulty: advanced, significant emotional risk game

misc: primarily emotional, inner landscape, enactment not in the playspace

Emotional Symphony

Usage Notes:

This game is divided into two parts, a rehearsal and a performance. Instructions for both in-person and online use follow.

In the rehearsal, the conductor first assigns each player a distinct part and then demonstrates the hand gestures he or she will use to signal when and how each player is to perform:

The following are options for performing parts:

- Vocal rhythms: (exs: Rat-a-tat, Rat-a-tat, BOO-Yah, BOO-Yah)
- Spoken phrases: (exs: I wanna go home, I wanna go home; Make me rich! Make me rich!)
- Sung phrases set to music
- Wordless melodic phrases
- Contrasting emotional sounds

The following are signals from the conductor that a particular player is to change the way she or he is playing: to start, stop or change their dynamics (louder, softer, slower, or faster):

- In in-person performance, by pointing with the left hand at the player.
- In online performance, holding up the number of fingers of the left hand corresponding to that player's assigned number.

All other conductor signals are the same in both performance versions. The pointed-to player responds to the following signals:

- Gestures with right hand in an upward sweep: Play louder.
- Gestures with right hand in a downward sweep: Play softer.

- Gestures with right hand moved away from conductor's body: Sustain their playing.
- Conducts the rhythm by waving right hand more rapidly: Play faster.
- Conducts the rhythm by waving right hand more slowly: Play slower.
- Conducts the rhythm by shaking right hand wrist: Play staccato.
- Conducts the rhythm by moving right hand wrist evenly: Play legato.
- Upward sweep of both arms: Play louder.
- Downward sweep of both arms: Play softer.
- Moves from both hands upraised, hands open, to downward sweep, clenching both fists: End the performance.

Next comes the performance. The conductor, using the hand signals above, directs the ensemble, maximizing the variety of dynamics. The performance should last about four minutes. Allow volunteers to take the conductor role; in that role players experience leadership of others.

💡 Online Tip: The in-person form may have up to twelve performers. However, the online version works best with three to five performers. The conductor must remain on screen throughout. All players must keep their microphones on at all times. In the online version, you will need to number the players by adding numbers to their names so they can be cued by the conductor holding up fingers to signal their number.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

misc: [multistage](#), [not in literature](#), [primarily emotional](#), [opener/warm-up](#)

Emotional Zones

Usage Notes: In the in-person version, the stage area is divided into two or more zones, each of which is given the name of a contrasting emotion. During a scene, any player moving into a different zone must play his part and justify that emotion for as long as he remains in that zone. It is helpful to instruct players to play their emotion immediately upon entering or leaving a zone, and to physicalize in addition to indicating emotion verbally. Since the main interest in this game is to experience and justify abrupt contrasts in emotion, players have an incentive to advance the action so that they, or another player, gets to move into other zones.

💡 Online Tip: In the online version, the director could assign the emotion to an object (e.g., assigning anger to a paperclip) instead of a room or area, so that when the director says to pick up the paperclip, the result is that when you pick up the paperclip, you now act out *angry*.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 131.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: individuals, couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate


misc: primarily emotional

Endowment Lists

Usage Notes: In this more advanced game, two or more players are each privately given a list of endowments that they use to give character to each of the other players. The lists of endowments can, but need not be, identical. For example, suppose a three-player game in which all players receive the following list: "Smart/Sexy/Funny."

Each player now selects one endowment for himself/herself and assigns each of the other two players one of the two remaining endowments. During the enactment each player plays the scene by giving assigned character to self and each other player. It is important that players behave within a socially normal range in order to keep the scene and the characterizations realistic. At the end of the scene the players are asked to point in turn to the one they made smart, sexy, or funny.

What makes this especially interesting is that player A will say or do something that is taken differently by the others; B may react as though A has just been funny, while C will react as though she was being sexy. It can be challenging fun to play the scene without blocking the other players' different attributions. What players discover is that behavior takes on meaning from the way it is construed by others.

 Online Tip: Private messaging in chat can be useful in delivering list.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 101-102.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: lists, endowments, multistage

Essences

Usage Notes: Someone volunteers a fictional name for a character whom the group will co-create (e.g., Bob). Someone else comes up with an attribute (e.g., 46 years old, smokes a pipe, loses change because of holes in pockets). On each turn, players spontaneously keep adding an attribute. The only rule is that all previous offers are not blocked by subsequent ones.

After a while, the continued addition of attributes are increasingly likely to stop working because new offers are blocks of older ones. For example, Bob can't be 46 years old and also a fresh-faced youth. Eventually, players will run out of ways to describe the character that make sense, given previous attributes.

When the character stops being feasible and someone in the group feels it is impossible to imagine the character realistically anymore (this doesn't have to be justified rationally), that player says, "No," and the group ends the exercise and starts over on building a new character.

This game is especially good for learning to accept offers, building upon offers others have contributed to, and opening up the imagination. It is also good for group building. Smaller groups are best; large groups are OK. It is also practice for learning to build a character. The point here is that as the character gains attributes, the group builds a picture of who the character is and what he or she does in the world. This is primarily a group game that allows players to accept offers and build on offers already made by the group.

Don't do this for more than two sequential characters, or players will burn out and lose interest.

This endowments game features an exception to the rule that endowments cannot be explicitly described (i.e., indicated), since it is a verbal game that merely describes a character by naming the character's endowments.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: freeing the imagination

misc: not in literature, primarily verbal, endowments, opener/warm-up

Exclusion

Usage Notes: This game is primarily for training players; it is not for clinical use. In this game, each of the three players, speaking in gibberish, tries to avoid becoming "iced out" (i.e., excluded) by the rest of the players. The effort to stay connected with the majority and avoid exclusion activates the players to attempt all manner of negotiations and maneuvers, including positioning their bodies so as to get closer to one player while blocking eye contact between the other two. The danger of being excluded shifts from person to person until the majority ices someone out. The game isn't over until the isolated player accepts his or her exclusion; some capitulate quickly, some never do.

In another version, roles and intelligible dialogue may be improvised. This is frequently experienced as unpleasantly realistic and often activates vivid early memories of being excluded or of excluding others.

💡 Online Tip: Players must work together in person; only the director can be online.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 118, 245.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#), [significant emotional risk game](#)

training functions: [enactment for skill improvement](#)


misc: [players must be together in person](#), [primarily action or movement](#),
[blocking rule/premise](#)

Excuses

Usage Notes: There should be three players. In the in-person version, two players with arms around each other's shoulders play a scenario as two young children. When confronted by an off-stage parental voice, voicing an accusation, for example, "Who let the dogs out?" or "How did chocolate ice cream get all over the upholstery?" they have to create a story that will avert the risk of getting spanked.

They are indeed guilty but must make up a fantastic story, using acts of God or superheroes and lots of imagination to get out of a tight spot. They must support each other as brave, affirm one another as right, and display lots of sibling harmony, thereby making the parent look good for having created such exemplary children. The children succeed when each player is approving of the other and the responsibility for advancing the action passes frequently back and forth.

It is also possible to have the players be adults (e.g., a married couple facing a tax auditor, or two robbery suspects in a police interrogation). Although the authority will be an on-stage player, the choices then include playing it straight (i.e., trying to concoct a plausible story) or absurd (i.e., relying on fantasy). The point of the game is to co-create the experience of a genuine mutually supportive relationship out of a shared fictional danger.

 Online Tip: When played in the online environment, it can be useful to utilize camera function to place people on and off camera. The parent is made to be off-stage by turning off their camera. The other two players are the children, who must remain on camera.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, **97**, 191, 211.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

misc: primarily verbal, imaginary or unseen characters

Expert Debate

Usage Notes: This game is a variation of *Expert Lecture* and features two experts on-stage, either reinforcing one another's aura of expertise or engaging in a one-up debate (without blocking each others' offers outright). It is more entertaining when the experts have contrasting styles (e.g., a refined intellectual versus. a profane simpleton). A third player (or the director) may play the role of the debate moderator, who may playfully get the experts in trouble. Another version for groups has the audience divided into factions who vocally cheer for their expert or boo the other expert.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: not in literature, primarily verbal

Expert Lecture

Usage Notes: Originally the verbal component of *Puppets*, this game has one player in the role of an expert delivering a lecture to an actual or imaginary audience. The topic is chosen by the director or the audience and should be absurd (e.g., ambulance-chasing in ancient Babylon, losing weight on the motor-oil diet, or teaching calculus to parakeets).

The expert should adopt the mannerisms and speech of an expert, someone entirely sure of him or herself, even though the lecture content is nonsensical. For many, taking the expert role is an opportunity to give a solemn, deadpan, high-status performance, though the expert can also be played as an animated, fast-talking salesperson. There should always be an actual off-stage audience to whom the expert is lecturing or making a pitch.

See also [Expert Debate](#).

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: [game](#)

population: [individuals](#), [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

misc: [not in literature](#), [primarily verbal](#)

Fast Food Stanislavsky

See [Behavioral Lists](#).

Family Masks

See [Couples with Contrasting Emotions](#).

Family Legend

Usage Notes: This group game, using the form of *The Trial*, is based on a story involving an actual (often long-dead) ancestor in one player's family tree. The volunteering player, as a member of the seated group circle, first tells as much of the story as he knows, which may be merely a description of a single trait or event, and then sits in a chair in the center of the group, taking the role of this ancestor. Other group members who choose to participate stand up and move near the seated volunteer, taking on improvised character roles. These characters may be freely invented, need not be relatives, and yet are based on or connected to the emerging story. Each character in turn approaches the ancestor, addressing him or her in character. During this speech the ancestor "takes in," but does not react or reply. After all characters have spoken, the ancestor gets out of the chair and replies, as the ancestor, to each character in turn. The characters now "take in," but do not react or reply. The family has now invested drama into the legend; they may then be encouraged to discuss the meaning and impact of their newly fleshed-out legend. Sometimes the director may opt to have an actual family member of a player join as the ancestor.

This game may appear similar to psychodrama, but unlike psychodrama, the auxiliaries are improvised rather than tightly scripted.

💡 Online Tips: When you use this game online, make sure that the ancestor is pinned on-screen in speaker view, so that the ancestor stays on screen. Other players come on screen one at a time, in sequence. This may be done by turning others' camera views on or off or pinning them in speaker view as well. Rename players with numbers in front of their names to determine the order in which players come on camera. Players should stay off camera or turn their camera view off until it is their turn to speak with the ancestor.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 136.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate


misc: primarily verbal, imaginary or unseen characters

Family Sculpting

Usage Notes: This exercise provides a nonverbal way of metaphorically physicalizing the interconnectedness of individuals. In the following versions of the established action technique of *Family Sculpting*, each volunteering family member sculpts (i.e., places into position as statues) the other family members, stepping into the sculpture at the end as themselves. The director may take the position of the sculptor so that that the sculpting member can walk around the entire tableau, seeing it from an outside perspective. After the family sculpture is complete, each member can report on their feelings while holding their assigned position.

The following are several other versions:

- The sculptor can give each family member a word, phrase, or sentence.
- Each family member can offer their own word, phrase, or sentence.
- The sculptor can give each member a gesture or repetitive movement, as a sort of family choreography.
- Each family member can offer their own gesture or repetitive movement.
- The director can make suggestions for changes to any of the above-mentioned versions.

 Online Tip: In terms of online use, this exercise only works if players are all in-person together.

Sources: Developed by family therapist David Kantor, who was influenced by psychodrama. Famously used by Virginia Satir. For more information, see *Collected Papers I*, 193-204, 237.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: players must be together in person, not in literature, primarily action or movement, multistage, enactment not in the playspace

Family Story

Usage Notes: For this game everyone needs to be on screen at the same time. The scene can be set up like a family dinner at a table with five or more players at the table. Contribution by individuals can be spontaneous, but make sure everyone does contribute. The director might reinforce this:

“Everyone will get a chance to participate.”

“Has everyone gone?”

This game is useful for actual families or for unrelated groups of players who play the parts of extended family members. The game is started by one member introducing a fictional event involving a fictional family member who is *not* present (e.g., "Do you remember the time Uncle Jack showed up at our house with no shoes?"). Other members play the parts of family members, whether actual or fictional, and take turns adding details and furthering the story, often becoming major characters in the story itself.

There are only two rules: (1) everyone gets a chance to contribute, and (2) no blocking (i.e., objections, denials, or negation) of anything already said is allowed. Since the story is made up on the spot, no one actually knows more than anyone else. One result is every member's contribution is important; the story is owned by all.

The *Uncle Jack* variation starts with a query such as, “I notice Uncle Jack isn’t coming. What’s the story?” The replies to this become the story, which, like *Essences*, builds a character. The nice additional aspect is that offers about the character *can* be negated by later offers, simulating differences in information and attitude among family members.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 97, 173.

Categories:

type: game

population: families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: freeing the imagination

misc: primarily verbal, imaginary or unseen characters

Five-Second Pause


See Take Five.

Forbidden Letter

Usage Notes: This exercise was developed by Keith Johnstone and is a powerful exercise for couples and families in which an explicit or implicit rule has been effected with regard to what can or cannot be expressed to or in the presence of others. The director first asks players to have a regular “unrestricted” conversation. After a minute's pause, the rule is added that players now continue their conversation but cannot use words that contain a particular common letter (The Forbidden Letter). Do not use vowels for this rule; use a consonant. *L* or *M* are good. Then continue.

You will notice that the players’ dialogue begins to slow down as they have to be more conscientious about the new rule. The particular goal here is to notice how much cognitive energy is taken up trying to abide by rules. This exercise is useful for experiencing the ways we censor ourselves, specifically how *survival mind* permeates conduct after deploying a rule impacting communication, especially in how much cognition is impacted by rules. It can be especially useful for rule-bound individuals to practice breaking rules that are inconsequential.

A couple other aspects of the ensuing interaction to notice: (1) *Adherence:* How strongly do players adhere to rules? Do they take them seriously? Do they treat them as trivial? Do players treat adherence as a game? Does it become a competition to see who will fail? Do they simply ignore the rules? (2) *Failure:* How do players react when they fail: No big deal? Shame? “Look how bad I am!” “This is a silly rule and I’m going to ignore it.”

 Online Tip: There is not a great deal of action in this game, but it is still a best practice for players to remain on camera when used online.

Source: Attributed to Keith Johnstone and adapted to clinical use.

Categories:

type: device

population: individuals, couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

misc: not in literature, primarily verbal, blocking rule/premise, inner landscape

Fortunately/Unfortunately

Usage Notes: There are two players: a narrator and an interjector. This is an improvised first-person narrative told mainly by one player. The storyteller's partner serves both as audience and as a shifter of the narrator's point of view, which is accomplished by alternatively interjecting "Fortunately," or "Unfortunately," after every sentence or two of the story. The narrator takes this as the first word of his next sentence, which he then completes. This frees up the imagination of the narrator as he proceeds, since he now has to justify the incorporation of the attitude implied by either word.

One example:

“I was going to the lake that day—“

“Unfortunately.”

“Unfortunately, my car got a flat—“

“Fortunately.”

“Fortunately, my neighbor Bob had an extra tire—“ and so on.

Similar to [No, You Didn't](#) and [Narrative/Color/Emotion](#).

💡 Online Tip: Though the exercise is primarily verbal, it is best if players remain on camera.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 98; *Collected Papers I*, 149-150; Escott, 2022.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: individuals, couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: accepting and blocking offers, enactment for skill improvement

misc: primarily verbal, coordination of storytelling

Four-Person Status

Usage Notes: This four-player scene features a status hierarchy that governs the interactions among players. In one version, set in a factory, the character's (ranked) roles are: (1) the Owner; (2) the Manager; (3) the Foreman; and (4) the Worker. The scenario is that the company is facing a crucial deadline for delivering an order of widgets, and the machinery that produces widgets has broken down.

The rules are that each character can only communicate with the character with adjacent rank (i.e., (1) can only interact with (2); (2) can only interact with either (1) or (3); (3) can only interact with (2) or (4); and (4) can only interact with (3). The game is played as an impromptu collection of brief two-character interactions, with orders, threats, and pleas moving down the chain of command and complaints, excuses, and placating statements moving up. Of course, the machinery is never fixed, and the pressures only increase as the widget delivery deadline approaches and passes. Throughout, the players enact their roles in strict conformity to their respective assigned statuses.

Source: Attributed to Keith Johnstone, adapted to clinical use.

Categories:

type: [game](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

training functions: [status-improvisation and power](#),

misc: [not in literature](#), [primarily verbal](#), [opener/warm-up](#), [status game](#)

Foreign Movie

Usage Notes: This exercise requires four players. It comprises a two-player scene with gibberish dialogue. The dialogue is paused after every two lines for two off-stage translators to supply vocally the “captions” for the dialogue. The translators’ dialogue choices should be influenced by the tone and inflection of the players’ gibberish and their bodily actions.

This is different from a *Dubbing* scene, where off-stage voices provide the dialogue for on-stage players, who in turn move and mouth the dubbers’ dialogue.

As the action is paused while the translators speak, this game resembles Freeze Tag, since the dialogue supplied usually alters the plot or the characters’ relationship. It is also similar in process to Poet’s Corner.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

misc: not in literature, primarily verbal, coordination of storytelling, control over the meaning of another player’s speech, gibberish


Freeze Tag

Usage Notes: This is an exercise of intermediate difficulty for at least three players. It also works well for small groups and gives players a chance to take bold risks because they tap out frequently.

Two players begin a scene while the other players wait off-stage. The director calls, "Freeze!" when the players are in physically interesting positions; the performing players become statues in their positions and one of the off-stage players promptly *tags* (taps the back or shoulder of) one of the performers, placing her body in the precise position of the tagged player, who moves off stage. Then, using the physical offer of the still static body positions, she speaks a line of dialogue that begins the action of an entirely different scene.

This new scene continues until "Freeze!" is again called; another off-stage player comes in, tags the player who has been on stage longer, begins a new scene, and so forth.

A version in which a director is not needed has the off-stage players wait in line. The player at the front of the line calls the freeze and enters the scene by tagging one of the players, who then goes to the end of the line.

 Online Tip: This exercise is best utilized with all players in person together. While it can be used fully online, the process for doing so tends to outweigh the benefits of the exercise: When used in the online environment, players will have to transition to calling the name of a player instead of physically tagging them to freeze. You can toggle players' cameras on and off to indicate players who are on the sideline.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 71; *Collected Papers II*, 30.

Categories:

type: game

population: families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: players must be together in person, primarily action or movement

Freeze with a Line

Usage Notes: This performance game combines elements of Body Offers and Body Freezes. One player mindlessly moves his body while his partner watches. At some point the partner calls, "Freeze!" and the player becomes a statue in the position at the moment *freeze* was called. The partner places her own body in a position offered by her imagination and the player's frozen position and speaks a line of dialogue consistent with her offer.

In the initial version, the exercise ends with the player saying, "Thank you," and the player and partner play another round with roles reversed. Another version has the director call, "Freeze!" rather than the partner. A more advanced version has the player begin to move after the partner's line of dialogue and respond both verbally and physically; in this way the two may start an improv scene.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 71.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: accepting and blocking offers

misc: primarily action or movement, opener/warm-up

Gibberish Diplomacy

Usage Notes: This is a variant of *Poet's Corner*, where a third player is added. Two of the characters are counterparts from different worlds (perhaps businessmen or diplomats from different planets, countries, or cultures) who are attempting to negotiate with one another. Each speaks their own language (both of which are represented by gibberish), which is foreign both to the audience and to one another. The third character is a translator who pretends to speak both languages as well as English. The translator translates the gibberish speech turn of the first diplomat to the other, saying in English, "He says..." and making up the meaning.

Illogically, the second diplomat can understand the English translation, but the first diplomat acts as if she or he cannot. This simplifies and speeds up the game. Otherwise, the translator would have to respond in gibberish, then translate to the audience in English and finally speak in gibberish to the second diplomat. The second diplomat then responds in gibberish and the translator translates that reply in English ("She says...") to the first diplomat.

While the first exchanges are neutral or even complimentary, the translator, who is in complete control of the scene, soon begins to introduce unflattering meanings into the dialogue ("He says he's surprised they sent such an inexperienced diplomat to negotiate this important treaty") The receiving character acts a bit cool or put-off by the translation at first but still wants the negotiation to remain civil and constructive. Soon, however, as the translator escalates to translating derogatory statements ("She says you're too stupid and ugly to bother dealing with"), the diplomats act increasingly offended and aggressive as they shout angrily at one another in gibberish. The scene usually ends with a declaration of war or a physical fight.

The player of the translator role may act either (1) as though he is shocked that these two diplomats are so rude and may appear reluctant to be direct in conveying the insults (“Well, er, he is saying that he doesn’t think very highly of your proposal”) or (2) gleeful and eager to deliver the insult in the translation (“He said, ‘Not only are you stupid, you smell bad too!’”) In both cases, the scene is played as though the diplomats are unaware that their conflict is being instigated by the translator. Of course, the diplomats could catch on to the fact that they are being set up and join forces to turn on the translator!

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: not in literature, primarily emotional, control over the meaning of another player’s speech, gibberish

Gibberish Emotions

Usage Notes: In the simplest version of this exercise, paired players have a gibberish conversation, experimenting with their inflections to express emotions of different quality and intensity while picking up on the expressions of their partners. This exercise is good for helping players experience expressiveness and responsiveness through the use of contrasting moods.

A significant minority of players find it difficult to speak in gibberish. They will vocalize sounds without consonants, repeat the same syllable pattern over and over (e.g., "bibble-bibble-bibble-bibble"), or completely freeze up. About half of these players will succeed at speaking gibberish following brief private coaching. Others may require gradual exposure before venturing into gibberish scenes and exercises.

See also the variation [Gibberish Lists](#) and another variation described in [Volume Control](#).

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 128, 200.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [beginner](#)

training functions: [expanding emotional expressiveness](#), [gibberish](#), [multistage](#)

Gibberish Encounter

Usage Notes: This two-person game is characterized by the players not knowing one another's scripts. You can plan out in advance how the players will misunderstand each other. In the in-person version, the two players walk toward each other, become aware of each other, and then interact. Therefore, modifications for online use are focused on indicating this start process online. You can have people decide which corners of the screen they will enter with a gallery or group view, for example.

In the in-person warm-up phase of this game, the director first privately gives each character a nationality, dominant emotion, and/or occupation. Then, the players are sent to opposite sides of the room, backs to each other. They are told that when they turn around, they will be on a street and will meet someone with whom they have a significant personal relationship. They will discover the identity of that person and what their relationship is only when they turn around. Once they recognize the other person, they are to play a brief scene in gibberish with them. At the director's signal the players turn and walk toward each other, simulating a meeting in the street between two characters, each with their given endowments, gesturing and speaking in gibberish to one another.

The director then ends the scene and asks the audience, if any, to say what they saw going on. Then, each player is asked to describe her or his character, who the significant other was to them, and what she or he thought was going on during the scene.

In another version, the director privately supplies each player with additional information about the other player's character and the history of

the characters' relationship and motivation such that each player perceives the other in ways that contradict the other's presuppositions. For example, Player A is told that she is a divorced mother whose ex-husband disappeared without paying child support and that Player B is that ex-husband. Player B is told that he is a businessman who has had a religious conversion that motivates him to proselytize to whomever he meets, and that Player A is a former secretary of his. When the players encounter each other, they are thus set up to misperceive and misunderstand one another.

💡 Online Tip: The director can highlight the players on the stage by turning video off for everyone else (including the director) and muting everyone else, except the player on stage and the director.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 82, 241, 245; *Collected Papers I*, 164; *Collected Papers II*, 110.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups


difficulty: intermediate

training functions: expanding emotional expressiveness

misc: primarily emotional, gibberish, multistage

Gibberish Group Story

Usage Notes: This game is best attempted following [Circle Gibberish](#). The in-person form is as follows: Players sit in a circle and go around the circle taking turns speaking gibberish and using gestures and mimed objects to build upon previous players' offers to tell a collective story. This game helps players attend to one another, reincorporate the gibberish utterances and gestures of others, and experience a relatively low-risk form of expressiveness in front of a group. At the end of the story, players can be invited, in turn, to describe what the story was when it reached their turn and what their added part was.

 Online Tip: If used online, you lose the relative locality of being in a circle. Instead, you should rename individuals with a number in front of their name to let them know when their turn is in the abstract circle.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 129; *Collected Papers I*, 270.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [beginner](#)

training functions: [accepting and blocking offers](#), [expanding emotional expressiveness](#)

misc: [primarily emotional](#), [gibberish](#)

Gibberish Lists

Usage Notes: The director prepares a list of four to seven successively contrasting moods or emotions and calls out each in turn every half-minute or so. The players continue a gibberish dialogue, preferably with plenty of gesturing, expressing the most recently called-out emotion.

💡 Online Tip: If used online, rename individuals with a number in front of their name to let them know when their turn is in the abstract circle.

See also [Gibberish Emotions](#) and [Volume Control](#).

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 129.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)


difficulty: [beginner](#)

training functions: [expanding emotional expressiveness](#)

misc: [gibberish](#), [lists](#)

Gibberish Relay

Usage Notes: In this variation of [Circle Gibberish](#), the gibberish offer is made in sequence, taking turns going around the circle, with each player first receiving an offer in gibberish, next responding with gibberish to the offerer while matching the emotion, and then turning to the next player to make a gibberish offer in a contrasting emotion. This game can also be played making minimal, subtle emotional offers rather than broad ones; this sharpens the players' perceptions and heightens sensitivity to subtle differences in vocal inflections and gestures.

 Online Tip: Online use requires specific alterations to the original directions. The director will need to designate a sequence or order of action for turn taking by players, such as changing players' positions on the screen or renaming players by adding a number in front of their name to indicate turn in sequence.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [beginner](#)

training functions: [enactment for skill improvement](#)

misc: [not in literature](#), [primarily emotional](#), [opener/warm-up](#), [gibberish](#)

Give and Take

Usage Notes: This is a device for group use. In the nonverbal (movement) version, one person at a time is moving; when another person starts to move, the first person stops. All players remain alert so that there is only one person in motion at all times.

In the verbal version, one person at a time is talking; when another person starts to talk, the first person stops. All players remain alert so that there is only one person speaking at all times.

Source: Created by Viola Spolin.

Categories:

type: device

population: families and groups

difficulty: beginner

misc: not in literature, primarily verbal, control over another player's movement, control over another player's speech, opener/warm-up, inner landscape, enactment not in the playspace

Giving Character

Usage Notes: This is a good training exercise for making offers that endow others with character and can be preparation for other games, such as [One Knows, the Other Doesn't](#) and [Endowment Lists](#). Players practice publicly endowing others in the group. It also prepares players to receive endowments given by others by instructing them to “pick up cues to let me know that you know what I think of you.”

The scene is heavily coached. Before introducing the concept of endowments, allow players to notice and be expressive of their own endowments.

First, player A is given or selects an endowment for player B that is unlike B's usual characteristics. Examples include emotion (bitterness, sexual arousal, condescension), occupation (dentist, truck-driver, farmer) physical trait (bad breath, lame, very tall), present or recent transaction (cheating, just now insulted, has been flattered by A's character). Then, A makes an offer to B, treating him as a person with the chosen endowment. A accomplishes this by herself becoming the person affected by B's endowment. B responds by becoming endowed by A's offer, *not* by attempting to guess what A has made him into.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 100-102.

Categories:

type: [game](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

training functions: [enactment for skill improvement](#)

misc: [endowments](#), [opener/warm-up](#)

Hands Out

Usage Notes: This exercise provides practice in accessing offers via imagination. In the in-person form, the players stand in a circle and one at a time walk to the center, then stop, put their hands out and "see" what they touch, describing the sensation or object out loud.

It can be helpful to lightly instruct the hands-out player to "lightly close your eyes."

If the player relaxes mind and hand, allowing the object to be felt to the touch, there is a wonderful sense of surprise and knowing. A picture, a sensation, or a voice usually appears in the imagination. The director may guide this experience by asking numerous follow-up questions such as: "What color is it?" or "How old are you at this moment?"

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 79.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [individuals](#), [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [beginner](#)

training functions: [freeing the imagination](#), [enactment for skill improvement](#)

misc: [primarily verbal](#), [coordination of storytelling](#), [opener/warm-up](#)

Hat Game

Usage Notes: This is an advanced improv game with a competitive premise. Two players, each wearing a not-too-tightly-fitting brimmed hat, attempt to snatch the hat of the other while playing an improv scene in which all offers must be accepted. In the historically earlier version of this game, the rules prevent players from holding their own hats; an unsuccessful attempt to snatch the other's hat loses a point, as does having one's hat snatched. After a point has been scored the players start a new scene. This game may be played in groups where the winning player remains on stage with a new challenger until defeated.

More recently, this game has been conceived of as Zen-like training in staying mentally present in the moment. Instead of such crude maneuvers as snatching or making offers to maneuver the other player into a physically vulnerable position, successfully taking the hat occurs when the other player becomes distracted from the present danger (usually by becoming engrossed in anticipating where the scene is headed). In such cases, the hat can be lifted quite slowly, rather than snatched. Good improvisers are usually skilled at this game because they remain present-centered throughout a scene.

Given the physicality of the interaction, all players must work in person together. Only the director can be remote.

Sources: Keith Johnstone; *Rehearsals for Growth*, 109-110.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: advanced

misc: players must be together in person, primarily action or movement

He Said/She Said

Usage Notes: In this narrative game for two players, each controls his or her own speech and controls the other's body movements through instructions as the storyteller. The game can be confusing because it is something of a mental tongue twister. It is important that instructions include movement. They can also contain emotion. From the player's perspective, this is imagined as: "I can control my speech and your body movements through instruction."

For example, a scene might go as follows:

1. A begins by speaking in character: "Well, Amanda, I'd better start looking for the treasure."
2. At the end of A's speaking turn, player B says: "...he said, picking up a shovel and digging a hole." B thereby names the action that A then mimes.
3. B then speaks in character as Amanda: "I guess Grandpaw wanted you to be the rich one when he gave you that pirate map, Jed."
4. A, continuing to dig, says: "...she said, pointing a pistol at him and motioning him to hand over the treasure-chest," and so on.

Emotional states may be used as offers, (e.g., "he said unhappily") but there should always be at least one movement instruction on each "he/she said" turn.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 87.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: expanding emotional expressiveness

Hidden Endowments

See Endowment Lists.

Hidden Pecking Order

Usage Notes: This is one of a number of status games for three or four players. At the beginning, players are assigned role relationships and a setting (e.g., family members at a picnic). Each player privately chooses his own status rank before the scene is played. At the end, or after a few minutes of interaction, the players in the same roles and setting pick a new status rank and repeat the scene, attempting to keep the same content. Alternatively, the director gives each person an importance hierarchy list detailing who is most and least important in the family.

💡 Online Tip: When played online, the director can provide unique hierarchy lists to individual players by directly or privately messaging individual players through the platform. Individual players may need prompting by the director: “Tell us whom you are saying this to.”

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 117.

Categories:

type: [game](#)

population: [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

training functions: [status-improvisation and power](#)

misc: [status game](#), [multistage](#)

Hitchhiker

Usage Notes: This is primarily an action game and beginning group exercise that is useful for teaching players to accept emotional offers. It requires physical interaction and space. The players must work together in person; only the director can be online.

Four chairs are set in two rows to simulate the seating of a car. Four players sit in the car, miming going on a drive and having a conversation, with all four displaying the same mood, which is supplied initially by the director.

Other group members line up on the "side of the road"; the player at the front of the line puts out his thumb and flags down the car, which stops for him. Any one of the players in the car finds a reason to get out of the car and then mimes opening his door and leaving, which makes room for the hitchhiker. Exiting passengers take their place at the end of the hitchhiker line, available to re-enter the scene as new hitchhikers. When the hitchhiker enters the car, he or she establishes a contrasting mood or attitude, and the other three players all take on the same mood or attitude. All four maintain this attitude until the next hitchhiker changes it again.

This game also provides training for players to accept spatial offers in the playspace by accepting the car as real (i.e., opening and closing car doors; walking around, rather than through the hood of the car). Rather than stop the action and start the scene over if such a violation/block occurs, the director can coach players to correct their actions, allowing the scene to continue.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 130.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: families and groups

difficulty: beginner


training functions: accepting and blocking offers, expanding emotional expressiveness

misc: players must be together in person, primarily action or movement, opener/warm-up

How We Met

Usage Notes: One player asks two other players how they met. More specifically, two people are instructed to tell the story of how they first met, which they do. When the people have a real-life relationship, this becomes a non-improvised exercise in telling a true story together. What is more useful is to have the players improvise a fictional story of how they met, in which they can explore other status positions, accept all offers, and create a new story together.

Those who are real-life partners can be asked to tell the story of some future event (retirement, a trip around the world, taking a yet-unborn grandchild for the summer) for that same purpose. Naturally, for unacquainted partners, How We Met is an improv exercise as given.

 Online Tip: When used online, you can then use the camera function to take the first person off screen, thereby spotlighting the other two players.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 103; *Collected Papers I*, 169; *Collected Papers II*, 109.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: freeing the imagination, story-making

misc: primarily verbal, coordination of storytelling

Imposing Status

Usage Notes: Essentially, this game is about changing status through how one player talks to another. This exercise teaches players to make and accept verbal status offers. Player A starts by speaking to player B using tone of voice as well as content to make clear which of them is higher and which lower status. Posture and movement may be added to emphasize this. Player B is to accept the status positions implied by the status offer, replying to confirm A's offer and take up the opposite (complementary) position.

For example:

A: (Begins, speaking humbly): "Excuse me, sir, could you spare some change?"

B: (Now recognizing that A is playing low status to his high, responds haughtily): "Why don't you get a job?"

The conversation continues with two or three turns apiece, the players maintaining their initial status positions. Then B starts a new conversation by making the initial status offer, which A accepts.

One version is to have players establish a relationship by posture and movement, without speaking, until the status relationship is clear. When they begin speaking, they will discover whether they were in agreement with their partners.

Another version is to have player B respond with the most minimal status difference from player A's position of which he is capable. In this version, B might reply to A's opening line above, "I really wish I could, but I'm having some troubles of my own right now," indicating an only slightly higher status

relative to A. This tends to produce more realistic scenes and gives players who are already experienced with status transactions an opportunity to develop more nuanced status maneuvers. Care should be taken to distinguish these complementary status transactions from competitive ones, such as those developed in [Status Conflict](#).

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, **115-116**, 209.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [beginner](#)

training functions: [status-improvisation and power](#), [enactment for skill improvement](#)

misc: [status game](#)

Inner Monologue

Usage Notes: This RfG device is derived from the psychodrama technique of the same name and features interludes punctuating a scene after the characters have been established and the plot or scenario has started to take shape. When another character calls, “I.M!” the named or pointed-to character’s player steps downstage, addressing the audience and speaking a brief monologue that articulates the inner thoughts or feelings of her character at that moment in the scene. At the same time, the other on-stage players freeze in position, remaining silent and motionless until the I.M. is completed. Upon completion of the I.M. (typically no more than three sentences though it could be a single word or exclamation) the scene unfreezes and resumes, with the I.M. character now moving and speaking from the exact moment the action was frozen by the “I.M!” call.

The tone of the scene is often shifted by the I.M., as the prior focus on outer action is often overshadowed by attention to the inner landscape. I.M. can be highly useful in clinical applications, where the playspace of the player-in-character may be eclipsed by the contaminating awareness of the player-as-self. That is to say, her character’s spoken thoughts resemble or actually accurately embody her own thinking, rather than the character’s. This may end the scene on the spot, leading the director to shift at once to de-roling the player and commencing the post-enactment processing. When this happens, the priority is on attending to the player’s emotional well-being. Completing the scene is never the first priority.

One version has the director call “I.M, [name of character]!” rather than a player-in-character make the call. In addition to adding dimension to a scene, doing so can be a way to assess the player’s identification with her character

role. It is also feasible to have the director add, “New Choice!” (c.f., [New Choice](#)) though this should be done sparingly, as the coherence of the character’s I.M. monologue is thus easily compromised.

💡 Online Tip: In the online environment, I.M. can be accomplished by spotlighting or by having the featured character move closer to her camera.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: [device](#)

population: [individuals](#), [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#), [significant emotional risk game](#)

misc: [not in literature](#), [primarily verbal](#), [inner landscape](#)

Insults

Usage Notes: Essentially, the exercise starts with a gibberish insult that escalates through continued transactions. Directors may have to coach more actively when using this game online.

Insults can be used as both assessment and intervention. [Team Insults](#) is only for intervention.

In one version of this game, a brief, commonplace scenario is first enacted between two players. Then, the same scenario is repeated, but with a gibberish word added at the end of each line. This gibberish word is treated as an insult by the other player, who reacts with astonishment and annoyance, repeating the word before delivering his next line, which also ends in a different gibberish word “insult.” The first player now repeats that insult while reacting more strongly than before and going on to deliver his next line, also ending with a gibberish insult.

As the scene advances the reactions to the insults magnify to disbelief and outrage, climaxing in all-but-speechless fury. When the players pace themselves and remember to complete the scene (not always easy to do) this game produces wonderfully satisfying results for players and onlookers alike.

See also [Team Insults](#).

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 132-133, 211.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

training functions: expanding emotional expressiveness

misc: primarily verbal

Interplanetary Negotiations

See Gibberish Diplomacy.

Inviting a Character

Usage Notes: This series of steps constitutes a methodical and thoroughly improvisational approach to exploring a character that is unlike one's everyday persona from the inside. The director begins by asking each of the players, who are seated, to focus on some character attribute that has a particular charge to that person. This could be an attribute that the player is repulsed by, has some significant judgment about, holds dear, etc. The director then invites players to close their eyes and allow that attribute to inhabit their bodies and take them over, to become another character.

Players are then asked to stand and begin moving slowly as their new character, exploring the physicality of their character's body and giving their character a name, age, gender, occupation, country of origin, circumstances, a description of how they dress, etc. Next, the players are instructed to give their character a line of dialogue, to see the world through their character's eyes, to get in touch with their character's needs, and to begin to interact with other players' characters in order to get their own character's needs fulfilled.

After a brief amount of time during which the players in character interact with a few other characters, they are instructed to be seated again, shut their eyes, breathe deeply, and are invited to bring up the opposite character attribute in themselves and repeat the process described above as their new character.

Then, some players are invited to interact in pairs, in character, in front of the rest while the rest are asked to be observers as one of the two characters they had just explored. The pairs do a Boring Scene, beginning the scene as

one of their characters and transforming into the opposite character by the end of the scene.

This game requires more sustained coaching because it typically activates a great deal of emotional vulnerability in the players. Directors should tailor player depth/intensity to the fortitude of that individual group safety and rapport, and your own ability to handle sequelae and consequences, all of which is impacted by whether everyone is together in person and in the same space, partially present, or fully online.

So, consider first how much is “on the line”, especially between players. Also, consider how confident you are in confidentiality as maintained by individual players. What if there were a breach? If you feel the exercise is moving into risky territory, you should say something like, “I don’t think it’s safe/we’re not ready to go there right now.”

💡 Online Tip: When utilized online, it is actually imperative for players to sometimes go off screen to move around in the mode of the character.

Sources: Originally developed by Gloria Maddox. *Rehearsals for Growth*, 138-139.

Categories:

type: game

population: individuals, couples, families and groups


difficulty: advanced, significant emotional risk game

training functions: freeing the imagination, enactment for skill improvement, inner landscape, multistage

It's Tuesday

Usage Notes: This is a two-player game. One player makes an innocuous offer in the form of a simple statement (e.g., one classic is a player saying, "It's Tuesday.") The other player verbally repeats the offer, reacts to it in some specific emotional way, continues to build to the extreme beyond coherence, and ultimately to a comic death by offing his or her character.

Then, the offed player revives, gets up off the floor, and makes an innocuous offer to the other player who repeats the exercise with different emotion but in like manner. There is license given to break all the rules against making noise and losing emotional control.

 Online Tip: When used online, each player should make a distance from the camera to act out and better show their full body, especially when they off themselves.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, p133-134; *Collected Papers I*, 168.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: expanding emotional expressiveness


misc: primarily verbal

King/Queen Game

Usage Notes: This game is especially good for children in groups. The premise of this game, for three or more players, is that one character is an absolute despot in the form of a king (or queen), with power of life and death over the others, who play servants. This game needs at minimum one king and two servants on stage at any given moment.

The king is to give commands to the servants. The king is very difficult to please; at the slightest provocation he or she points a finger at the offending servant, who is merely trying to placate and survive, and says, "Die!" A gallery view where everyone sees the same order of players on screen is especially helpful. If you do not have this capability, the king can call a servant's name and tell them to die, instead of pointing at them. The targeted servant promptly expires on the spot, moving unobtrusively off-stage a few moments later to appear as another servant further on in the scene.

This game teaches those in the servant role not to assume what's good for the king, because when their execution of commands differs from what the king expected, that can be a way to invite their death. The servant's goal is to find out what pleases the king and avoid injecting personal wants or interpretations into orders given to them. The director may need to coach less assertive kings to practice less justifying and more killing. The king can be capricious but shouldn't be random.

 Online Tip: In the online environment, exiting the stage online can be accomplished by going off camera or turning the camera off and on again. The king is usually seated on an elevated chair. In the online environment, this can be facilitated with camera position and angle.

See also [Access Guide: Status Games](#).

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 120.

Categories:

type: [game](#)

population: [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

training functions: [status-improvisation and power](#)

misc: [primarily verbal](#), [status game](#), [master-servant game](#)

La Ronde

Usage Notes: An enactment for at least four players (A, B, C, D), with exactly two on-stage at any time. Players A and B on stage start a brief scene (possibly set at a house party). At some point fairly soon, A finds a justification for leaving the stage and the next player (C) simultaneously enters, starting a new scene. The remaining player (B) stays in the same character as during the previous scene.

Subsequent scenes include references to, or gossip about, off-stage players already seen. B exits and D enters. C exits and A enters. The scene with A and D is the final scene that concludes the enactment.

This game is best performed by at least moderately experienced players, as they will need to attend to details from all the previous scenes.

Source: Created by Alan Arkin.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: not in literature, primarily verbal

Line Repetition

Usage Notes: This exercise changes the felt sense of interaction between characters. It is derived from the Gestalt therapy technique of *Line Repetition*. It can be done with various emotional overtones. It can be done with a pattern of yes/no or yes/maybe.

The director prepares the exercise by giving the two-line script to the two players before starting. Don't let the exercise go too long, but about three or four rounds minimum.

In this simple exercise, two players face one another and repeat the dialogue (for example, A: "You will!" B: "I won't!") with a variety of inflections and gestures on each turn.

Typical line pairs include:

- You will/I won't
- I want it/You can't have it
- Please stay/I've got to go
- Yes!/Maybe...

After several rounds, A and B trade scripts and repeat the exercise. While this exercise might be classified as an exercise with a blocking premise, since it demonstrates how opposition, here the premise of opposing wills, can be used to create a scene, it is more usefully employed to explore emotional intensity and variety. Often, feedback between partners elicits useful information concerning the effect of one's partner's emotion on the other's, such as frustration, pleasure at frustrating the other, or seduction.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 129, 203; *Collected Papers I*, 27, 31.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: expanding emotional expressiveness

misc: The Big 8, primarily emotional, opener/warm-up

Lists

See Blocking or Accepting.


Little Voice

Usage Notes: There are two players, one a big person (A) and one a small person (B). The small person is so small as to be invisible. In the in-person version, B is off-stage to facilitate this invisibility.

The scene starts with the small person making a request of the big person. One player (A) is walking along on stage when an off-stage player (B) begins to speak to A. A is startled and at first cannot locate B, who is a small talking creature or object, but then they connect. The further premise is that B has a favor to ask of A. Since B is only an off-stage voice, A has to create B's physical location, size, and attributes for the audience. Another version is to reverse the sizes and have B become a big voice (e.g., God, Gaia, a giant, etc.).

As in Dubbing scenes, this game permits players who are inhibited about displaying themselves on-stage to play the role of B, in which they can stay physically hidden but nonetheless have an outsized persona. Since the premise ensures the resulting scenes to be fantastic, both players have to contend with the unconventional.

This game can also be played with deliberate Status Transfer.

 Online Tip: In the online version, direct the player in the role of B to keep his or her microphone on and camera off.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 86-87, 104.

Categories:

type: game

population: individuals, couples, families and groups


difficulty: intermediate

misc: primarily verbal, imaginary or unseen characters

Making Faces

Usage Notes: This game is a variation of the [King/Queen Game](#) in which the king figure is an employer with the power to fire any of his employees whom he catches mocking him, which of course they begin to do as soon as he takes his eyes off of them. The key difference is that in this instance, when the boss isn't looking, the underlings ridicule the boss. The boss can whirl around and ask, "What are you doing?" If an underling's justification isn't adequate, the underling is fired and exits the stage so to subsequently re-enter as a new employee.

There should be at least four players on stage: one boss and three underlings. If caught in some disrespectful gesture or face, the employee can save his job only by coming up with a justification on the spot; for example, if caught sticking out his tongue at the employer during an office scene, the employee might mime bringing an envelope flap to his mouth and explain that he was licking it shut. Unlike the monarch in the first variation, who kills off servants purely on whim, the boss should relent if offered a plausible justification, but his decision to fire is final. The re-entry part of this scene gives underlings the opportunity to take more chances of getting caught.

 Online Tip: This game is not easily utilized in the online environment. In order for the premise to work, the boss must experience the limitations implicit in only being able to look in one direction at a time. Most online platforms are geared toward engagement and therefore utilize something of an omnidirectional view, which negates some of the otherwise typical limitations of eyesight in reality. An immersive reality concept might eventually be of use here, but as of this writing, players must be in-person together.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 120.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

misc: players must be together in person, primarily action or movement, master-servant game

Mantra

Usage Notes: The director gives a distinctive mantra to each of the players to orient them to or help them own their respective characters. It is a phrase used to shape a relationship to self or others. The director's goal is to select a mantra that expresses a specific intention when inwardly repeated. When successful, it will be clear to an audience that there is increased depth and authenticity to each character's performance. Mantra is a device which can be used as an addendum to other games.

The players are instructed to mentally repeat their given mantra to focus their character's intention toward other characters during the playing of a scene. The mantra may be, "I love you," "I hate you," "I hate you but want to sleep with you", "I'm afraid of you," etc. The mantra, which should always be phrased in the affirmative, is to be repeated inwardly throughout the scene but is only said out loud if it can be said truthfully. Players may have the same or different mantras from one another, or only one may use a mantra, or the spoken dialogue can be in gibberish.

The content of the scene may start out as unrelated to the mantra. The precise content of the mantra, when given privately, may be unclear to the other players, but the presence of its intention invariably makes itself felt to the audience and other players during the scene. Scenes done with mantras take on a dramatic intensity, as the players are more involved emotionally with one another than is ordinarily the case.

For more information, see *Devices, Conditions, and Resources in Rehearsals for Growth*, pp. 254-256.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, **135-136**, 180.

Categories:

type: device

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: primarily verbal, inner landscape

Mirrors, or Mirror Exercise

Usage Notes: This elementary theater exercise is profound in its simplicity. It creates a bond between the players for the following reasons: eye contact is held throughout; there is a greater awareness of the physical capacity and limitations of the other person; and players experience the constant need to give in, adjust, and trust their own internal impulses.

Two players stand facing one another at a distance of four to six feet, remaining silent while looking into each other's eyes and focusing on their breathing. The designated leader begins to move slowly, and the follower mirrors the action until the director calls, "Change!" and they switch roles. After calling a few alternating turns at leading and following, the director calls, "Mutual!" and they give up leading or following to move simultaneously. Care should be taken by the leader to move slowly and in such a way that the follower can keep up and not be forced to break the mirror.

If a player isn't willing to participate because he or she feels enslaved to the other player, that player can partially accept an offer or focus on mirroring only an aspect, such as rhythm of movement. This can also be a way to accommodate differences in mobility between players.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 69; *Collected Papers I*, 10, 36, 77-78, n134, 148, 171, 229-231; *Collected Papers II*, 109-110, 117.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: accepting and blocking offers, enactment for skill improvement


misc: The Big 8, primarily action or movement, control over another player's movement, opener/warm-up

Monsterpiece Theater

Usage Notes: This game is very good for training players to move from impromptu action to training how to be successful as a social individual and improviser. Good improvisation shares key characteristics with good social functioning.

The group first creates a common list of repulsive attributes or endowments, which can include emotional states, personal mannerisms, hygienic habits, ways of treating others, physical characteristics, and so on. Next, the director selects no more than three attributes from the list that each player is to incorporate into her or his character during a given scene with any number of players. If done online, it would be best to avoid high-movement attributes, such as “fast runner.” Alternatively, the attributes may be selected at random.

After the scene, players share their inner difficulties and offer feedback about whether they were convinced by one another. In practice, this game is easier to enact than *Play the Monster* since the players have been assigned endowments which are not necessarily their own worst nightmares.

 Online Tip: When utilized online, this game can be done in sets of three in breakout rooms. Once players are given their attributes and go into the breakout rooms, they get to practice their attributes and being affected by others’ endowments.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 82

Categories:

type: game

population: individuals, couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate, significant emotional risk game

misc: endowments, lists, multistage

Monster Party

Usage Notes: *Monster Party* is a variation on [Monsterpiece Theater](#), in which the attributes or endowments are self-chosen. As a warm-up to the scene or with less experienced players, players can assume character with attributes and encounter other players to get used to their attributes through small, informal, transient social groups. Players mill about, briefly pairing off with different partners just long enough to establish all their endowments before moving on to another partner.

💡 Online Tip: When utilized online, this game can be done in sets of three in breakout rooms. Once players are given their attributes and go into the breakout rooms, they get to practice their attributes and being affected by others' endowments.

After the scene, players are asked about their inner difficulties and offered feedback about how convinced they were by one another's performances.

This game's form is similar to that of [Status Party](#).

Categories:

type: [game](#)

population: [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

misc: [endowments](#), [multistage](#)

Movie Critic


Usage Notes: This performance game is modeled on the old Siskel and Ebert *At the Movies* TV show. It is especially fun for families and best played with others present beyond the actors as audience. It requires at least four players: two players on the side of the stage are critics, and two or more players are the actors. The critics and actors take turns being in the foreground and background.

General instructions are as follows:

1. The audience comes up with a name of an imaginary movie (genre optional).
2. The two critics next introduce themselves and the show. They then make up a summary of what the movie is about, agreeing on the movie's general description but disagreeing strongly with each other's overall review.
3. To support her argument, the first critic next calls for a clip from the movie to be shown, referring to that clip as though the second critic knows it as well ("Oh, yeah? (Example: "Oh yeah? Well, what about the scene where Roland is caught chopping down Queen Esmerelda's favorite apple tree? Roll 'em!").
4. At this point, the actors, who have been standing motionless on-stage with their backs turned to the audience, come to life, improvising freely with the information just provided to play that scene for up to one minute. Both critics step into the background while the scene is enacted briefly, ending when the first critic, who introduced the scene, calling, "Cut!" The actors return immediately to standing motionless with their backs turned to the audience.

5. After the critics resume arguing about the acting quality or plot coherence or any other movie feature, the second critic retorts, “Well, what about that later scene, where Roland escapes from the dungeon with the help of Esmerelda’s serving-wench?”
6. Again, the actors enact briefly the just-indicated scene from the movie being critiqued, playing the out scene using information from both the critics’ dialog and the previous scene for another minute. The actors do not attempt to support either critic’s viewpoint but instead favor dramatic absurdity.
7. Then, the second critic calls “Cut!” and the actors again turn their backs to the camera, go motionless, returning to the background while the critics take the stage.

This usually goes on for no more than three scenes from each critic. This process repeats for the final climatic scene; following the last “Cut!” the critics summarize their (still opposing) critiques and ending the scene with something like: “Take your friends to see it! (or “Avoid it like the plague!”) ‘Til next week, this is John and Jane. See you next week!”

 Online Tip: When used online, you can alternate turning off cameras for critics and actors to spotlight whoever is live on stage.

Source: Performance Game adapted for clinical use.

Categories:

type: game

population: families and groups

difficulty: advanced

misc: not in literature, coordination of storytelling, control over another player's movement, control over another player's speech, multistage

Moving People

See Torture a Teammate.

Moral Choices

Usage Notes: This device simply indicates the introduction or offer of a clear moral choice or problem with more than one alternative option to decide on. At some point, the topic may no longer be playful. This modification can be especially useful in a displacement or proxy scene to consider moral dilemmas that are too close to real life to examine directly. This is less a distinct enactment and more a good way to practice blending multiple games and factors into a single enactment.

This category encompasses games in which the characters are offered dilemmas or temptations requiring a clear moral choice. While any scene might develop in this direction, Directed Story could be utilized to develop a moral choice, as could a Little Voice scene where the off-stage voice personifies the on-stage character's conscience. For a *moral choice* scene to be impactful, the player facing the choice must be aware, in the moment, of the plausibility of more than one alternative. The resulting experience is interesting both dramatically and psychologically, since the player often will experience the choice in the scene as resonating with some real-life personal moral choice.

For more information, see *Devices, Conditions, and Resources in Rehearsals for Growth*, 254-256.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 104.

Categories:

type: game

population: individuals, couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate, significant emotional risk game

misc: primarily verbal

Narrative/Color/Emotion, or Narrative/Color

Usage Notes: This game features two players: a narrator and a partner who calls out one of the following choices to signal a modification by the narrator. The narrator's task is to tell a story which the partner assists by frequently interjecting alternations of the following call choices:

- Narrative: Can be called when the storyline stalls; the narrator should further articulate the plot so to move the scene forward.
- Color: Can be called when the story needs more description; the narrator should shift to describing features of the scene rather than action.
- Emotion: Can be called to highlight the subjective impact of the story on its characters; the narrator should shift to discussing the subjective experience of the persons in the scene (i.e., their inner landscapes).

Similar in form to [No, You Didn't](#) and [Fortunately/Unfortunately](#), the improvised story can be told in any person or tense.

1. For example, the narrator begins: "Jake ran to the edge of the cliff and looked down. Flavia screamed at him to stop, but Jake dove off the cliff anyway . . ."
2. At this point the partner wants more description and calls "Color!"
3. The narrator continues: "Jake's body was arched, his arms held in tightly to his sides. He appeared to Flavia intent on smashing headfirst onto the rocks below. The cliff looked to be 150 feet high; large grey boulders were jutting from the teeming, dark waves below . . ."
4. Now, the partner calls "Emotion!"

5. The narrator continues, “Flavia felt a wave of despair, as she realized that she would be all alone in the world without Jake...”
6. At this point wishing the plot to advance, the partner calls "Narrative!" and so on.

In contrast to Fortunately/Unfortunately, the partner exercises more judgment and plays a more significant part in the co-creation of the story. At times it may be necessary for the partner to repeat the choice whenever the narrator does not shift at the first instruction.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, **98**, 181.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: individuals, couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: freeing the imagination, story-making

misc: primarily verbal, inner landscape

New Choice

Usage Notes: At any point during a scene, the director calls out, “New Choice!” and the player who had the last speech turn changes the content of the last-mentioned object, location, offer, or other facet of the scene. The director may then either allow the scene to proceed or again call for a new choice.

Source: Performance Device adapted to clinical use.

Categories:

type: device

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

training functions: enactment for skill improvement

misc: not in literature, primarily verbal, blocking rule/premise, control over another player’s speech

No, You Didn't

Usage Notes: There are two players: player A, a narrator telling a fictitious first-person life story, and player B, who interjects occasionally "No, you didn't," or "No, it wasn't," or some other similar block that challenges the content of A's story.

When this happens, the narrator acknowledges and validates the contradiction without any attitude ("Right!") and then carries on the story, accepting the changes made by the block.

Player A must at once accept the block and change his story to incorporate B's contradiction. B continues to interject a negation or block after every couple of sentences. A will find that B's interjections actually aid his imagination, provided he gives up the need to control the story, which is why this game won't work with a factual narrative.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 74, 157; *Collected Papers I*, 168, 169, 174.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: accepting and blocking offers

misc: primarily verbal, blocking rule/premise

Object Relations

Usage Notes: This device is less a distinct enactment and more a good way to practice blending multiple games and factors into a single enactment. It functions as a scene extender that is good for getting things started and helping players both to visualize action better and to transition to miming.

For example, Player A, alone on stage, is given an object (e.g., a scarf) which she uses to begin a physical action (walk a dog, using the scarf as a leash). The action is frozen, and player B enters, including himself in the scene (perhaps as the dog being walked). Once the idea is established, the scene is ended.

Keep in mind that the addition of physical props also limits imagination. While physical props are not generally used in RfG, it can be useful to employ a few simple objects, such as a short stick, a piece of cloth, or a cushion to facilitate the making and accepting of body offers among players who are more inhibited or concrete in their thinking.

For more information, see *Devices, Conditions, and Resources in Rehearsals for Growth*, pp. 254-256.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 68.

Categories:

type: [device](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [beginner](#)

misc: [primarily action or movement](#), [opener/warm-up](#)

Off-Stage Voice

See [Little Voice](#).

One Knows, and the Other Doesn't

Usage Notes: This is more of a parlor game; it is not clinically useful, but it is used frequently in improv training. Essentially, it is training about endowments: “How do you treat someone in order to tell them something about themselves?” It is excellent for teaching the acceptance of offers and drives the creative imagination of the knowing player to communicate clearly.

One player is sent out of the room while the second is given exact details of character and situation for both. For instance, Judy, (who is out of earshot) is the aging mother being sent to a nursing home against her will; she has fallen several times and cannot be left alone. The second player is the daughter whose husband won't have the mother live with them. They are upper middle class, the mother is 80 years old, the daughter, 50. In the easy version, the second player is given a character that matches his or her actual age and gender. In a more advanced version, no restriction applies to the second player's character.

When Judy returns to play the scene, she knows nothing. The player his or herself could be male or female, younger or older than her real age — all clues for who her identity and the details of character and situation must come from her partner.

The burden is on the other (knowing) player to treat Judy in such a way that she will "get it" and take on the characteristics communicated without verbally indicating any details directly. If Judy misunderstands and begins to act like a three-year-old, the partner might say, "It's just this kind of childish behavior that proves you can't live alone anymore." The partner *should not* say something direct, like, "Mother, you're 80 now. Act your age!" which would be overly direct indicating. The comedy or drama of this exercise depends on the nature of the circumstances given.

💡 Online Tip: In the online environment, the player who is *out* can be placed in a break room or the waiting room during the time he or she would otherwise be out of earshot during in-person work. The player re-enters the room and must guess three things about his or her character.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 101, 245; *Collected Papers I*, 49-52.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

training functions: enactment for skill improvement

misc: primarily verbal, endowments, multistage

One Sentence at a Time

Usage Notes: The setup is as follows: Two players, arms around each other's shoulders, create a single character who sets forth on an adventure, encounters danger or an obstacle, and triumphs over it, with the players alternating single sentences at a time and thereby co-creating the story sentence by sentence.

A more demanding version, not feasible in the online environment, has the players physicalize/act out their adventure-story during their storytelling.

This game is a variation on One Word at a Time.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: device

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: not in literature, primarily verbal

One Word at a Time

Usage Notes: This game can produce useful diagnostic information in therapeutic work. Players tell a story collaboratively, one word at a time. You can encourage the pace to move more quickly, to deal with players' latency or freezing up.

In the in-person form, two players, standing sideways with arms around each other's shoulders and looking frequently into each other's eyes, narrate an improvised story, alternating words with each other. This is a clear demonstration of co-control, where the dyad cannot function successfully without each player giving and receiving support. It is necessary to give up preconceived associations and storylines as the other player will often give the "wrong" (i.e., unexpected) word. If this is accepted and built on, surprising stories spring forth, to everyone's delight.

In a sense, this game places the players in the interesting position of choosing to block their own associative patterning in order to accept their partner's offer. Every time a player gives a word, she or he is anticipating a specific direction for the sentence to go toward. Players can, with a modest amount of practice, become fluent in this game. The challenge at that point is to go faster, outstripping the mind's anticipation of where the story is going.

Another version has more than two players, each adding a word on their turn. Online use with more than two players requires specific alterations to the original directions: The director will need to designate a sequence or order of action for turn taking by players, such as: changing players' positions on the screen, or renaming players by adding a number in front of their name to indicate turn in sequence.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 61, **65-66**, 76, 108, 216; *Collected Papers I*, 24, 55, 122.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: accepting and blocking offers, enactment for skill improvement

misc: The Big 8, primarily verbal, blocking rule/premise

Only Questions

See Questions Game.

Options

See Directed Story.

Overaccepting

Usage Notes: This is an exercise that explores overaccepting an offer on the emotional dimension. The receiving player repeats and then overaccepts the purposefully mundane and emotionally bland offer of the first player by escalating the emotional intensity, leading to the fullest emotional extreme possible.

This is a game for two or more players. In a two-person example (say, A and B), A first makes a mundane statement. B then makes a more emotional response to A's statement, ramping up, but only verbally. In effect, the receiving player is doing a monologue in which he explores going in the emotional direction of the initial offer as far as he can. Once he has reached his limit, he makes a bland offer to the first player, who then practices overaccepting it.

When physically enacted, *Overaccepting* becomes the exercise [It's Tuesday](#).

See also [Overaccepting Together](#).

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 65.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [individuals](#), [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [beginner](#)

misc: [primarily emotional](#)

Overaccepting Together

Usage Notes: This game is built on Overaccepting. The game needs two players, A and B. A makes a mundane statement. B then makes an emotional response to the statement, ramping up the intensity, but only verbally. A takes B's response as an offer and responds with similar ramp up, with the back-and-forth building energy toward an emotive climax.

The difference between this exercise and Overaccepting is that a dialogue is developed so that the emotional energy of both players increases on each turn. For example:

A: [In a controlled but slightly annoyed tone] Sodas cost 75 cents in this machine.

B: [With greater intensity] Yeah, they're robbing us students blind!

A: [Now gets it] You're damned right! I'm gonna get even with this vending machine! [mimes using a crowbar].

B: [Jumps alongside the first, fairly screaming] Right! Let's rip the damn thing wide open! (and so on.)

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 65, 128.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

training functions: expanding emotional expressiveness

misc: primarily emotional

Overconfessing Servant

Usage Notes: This game is an example of how to get away with wrongdoing by assuming a defenseless, low-status stance. It teaches players how it can be useful to take a low status to avoid punishment. *Overconfessing* can be explored as a passive-aggressive stratagem by people who suffer from low self-esteem when experiencing conditions of relative powerlessness.

In the following sample scene, the mistress questions the servant, who not only readily admits to her culpability but refers to even greater misdeeds:

Mistress: Have you finished making the beds, Marie?

Servant: Oh, no, ma'am, I haven't done any work all morning, on account of my hangover, ma'am.

Mistress: What? have you been drinking on the job again?

Servant: Yes, ma'am, I just had to have a drop after I felt so bad for scorching your evening gown while ironing it.

Mistress: What? My Dior gown?? I ought to fire you on the spot!

Servant: I know I deserve to be sacked, man, especially after I then dropped the iron on the carpet, burning a hole in it.

Mistress: Nooo! Not the priceless Oriental! (And so on.)

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 119.

Categories:

type: [game](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

misc: [status game](#), [master-servant game](#)

Own the Object

Usage Notes: In this exercise, usually experienced as a contest, a small object is placed midway between two players (who are initially standing at least ten feet apart). At the signal "Go!" each tries to possess the object—but touching it is not permitted. Both body movement and talking are permitted, as players may physically come between the object and their scene partner. The exercise ends when one player concedes the object's possession to the other.

Version 1: No talking is permitted, only movement by the players.

Version 2: Both talking and movement are permitted.

💡 Online Tip: This exercise can be done online in a more stilted version, as only talking will influence the players.

Source: Attributed to Rebecca Rice. *Rehearsals for Growth*, 216.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [beginner](#)

misc: [players must be together in person](#)

Own Without Touching

See [Own the Object](#).

Pass the Object

Usage Notes: In the in-person version, one player in a group of players standing in a circle mimes holding an object, moving in ways that indicates something of its size, weight and shape. The player passes the object to the player next to her. After the object is received as it was passed, the player in possession transforms its properties (version 2, below) when passing it to the next player. The pass is repeated until the continually transformed object has made its way around the circle.

In the online version, the object is passed *through* the screen and is received by the receiver the same way the giver interacts with it. As they receive it, they transform the object or shape through mime. If this group contains more than two individuals, you will need to number the players by adding numbers to their names to know who will pass the object to whom and create a deliberate order.

There are several alternate versions:

- Version 1: Each player passes the object the same way it was received by her.
- Version 2: Each player initially receives the object, miming the same way it was passed to her, then transforming its size, weight or shape through mime before passing it to the next player.
- Version 3: The object remains unchanged during passes, but the emotional reaction of the receiver changes from player to player. Each player initially receives the object, miming the same way it was passed to her, but displaying a different attitude or emotion to receiving it before passing it to the next player.

- Version 4: Each player initially receives the object, miming the same way it was passed to her, but both transforming its size, weight, or shape through mime and displaying a different attitude or emotion to receiving it before passing it to the next player.

Source: A variation of Sound and Movement developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: accepting and blocking offers, enactment for skill improvement

misc: not in literature, primarily action or movement, opener/warm-up, multistage

Pass the Sound

Usage Notes: In the in-person version, one player in a group of players standing in a circle makes a repetitive sound or a phrase with an accent. The player passes the sound to the player next to her. The sound is a repetitive sound, but it changes with each player. The pass is repeated until the sound has made its way around the circle.

💡 Online Tip: In the online version, you will need to number the players by adding numbers to their names to know who will pass the sound to whom creating a predictable order.

Source: A variation of [Sound and Movement](#) developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: [game](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)


misc: [not in literature](#)

Play the Monster

Usage Notes: In this emotionally involved game, one player selects from one to three endowments that are personally repugnant and describes or demonstrates these briefly to a partner. It should be clearly understood that the endowments offered are not attributes that the selecting player detects in, or projects onto, his partner but are ones that are difficult for himself to play.

At this point the partner has the option of refusing the offer to play any or all of the endowments, in which case the rejected endowments are dropped from the scene, and the first player offers acceptable alternatives. These agreed-upon unwelcome endowments—physical, emotional, and psychological—are then incorporated into both players' characters in an improvised scene. Depending upon the purpose to which this game is put, it may be desirable to approach the formation of characters using the methods described in [Inviting a Character](#).

This game is very advanced, as it puts players in an emotionally vulnerable position and therefore requires trust built on solid therapeutic rapport. Do not play this game with strangers meeting for the first time. It is wise to consider the trust implications of doing this in couples or family work.

 Online Tip: Given that in online work individual players are physically removed from one another, there must be well-established trust and rapport approaching intimacy for this to be done safely online.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 82, **139-140**, 222-223.

Categories:

type: game

population: individuals, couples, families and groups

difficulty: advanced, significant emotional risk game

misc: endowments, inner landscape, lists

Play the Script

Usage Notes: This game is for more experienced improvisers. Two players first accept offers from the director or an audience for their characters' names, occupations, relationship, and non-geographical location. Next, a written playscript containing dialogue between two players is arbitrarily chosen and opened randomly to a page. Each player is provided with a copy of the same script, opened to the same page.

The players commence improvising a scene as their assigned characters, using the verbatim dialogue from each line of the script and ignoring any written stage directions. As they play the scene, the players must justify the given dialogue without resorting to implying or referring to their scene partner's character as crazy.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: advanced


misc: not in literature, primarily verbal, control over another player's speech, multistage

Poet's Corner

Usage Notes: This exercise requires two players, one a poet from another planet or country, and the other a translator, who take the stage together. The poet, speaking gibberish while performing broad and varied body movements, pauses periodically to allow the second player to translate the poem. At first, the poet need not know anything and is free to move and make sounds at will. Later, he attempts to incorporate the translation into his gesturing and vocalizing. The translator, taking abstract visual and sound cues from the poet, speaks whatever comes into her head, creating a poem of seemingly great philosophical depth and merit. Both are loudly applauded for courage, if not for literary ability.

The game as a whole is hard to mess up. It is best done with an audience who can ask questions of the poet through the translator after the reading.

Regarding therapeutic work, if this is a group or a couple, the director should be present as audience. If it is individual work, then the director should take the role of the translator.

 Online Tip: In the online version, body use is somewhat constrained by the requirement to stay within view of the camera, as compared to the in-person version.

See also the variation [Gibberish Diplomacy](#). It is an excellent way to get into trouble.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 84-85, 174, 192; *Collected Papers I*, 56, 148-149, 231-234.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: The Big 8, coordination of storytelling, control over the meaning of another player's speech, gibberish, multistage

Possession

See Own the Object.

Presents

Usage Notes: Presents is probably the single most useful game for any clinical use. The most important aspect of the fundamental version is the present/gift receiver's mindset; the giving is just a stimulus for that response. All cultures have concepts and rules around giving and accepting gifts. This can be a useful intervention for individuals from cultures that have strong injunctions against rejecting presents.

In the in-person version, two players face one another. One (the Giver) holds out her hands with open palms in a gesture of offering a present. It is important that the Giver have no preconceived notion of what the present is, but simply offers it in a neutral way.

The Receiver looks at the giver's extended empty palms and allows a desirable present from her imagination to appear there. The Receiver then mimes picking up (no unwrapping necessary!) and using the present. In the main version, the Receiver ends the turn by expressing great gratitude to the Giver for such a wonderful present.

Even though the Receiver is accepting his own imagination's offer, the Giver receives the emotionally experienced present of the Receiver's thanks. The players then exchange roles, and the next turn begins with the offer of another present.

The director may choose to provide instructions about how a gift is given or received, such as:

- The receiver doesn't like the gift.
- The giver gives the gift with strings attached.

- You're giving this gift as a way to seek forgiveness.
- The gift is transactional.
- The gift giving occurs as an exchange of presents, where gifts are exchanged in sequence.
- You might direct a player to reject a present rather than accept it.

💡 Online Tip: In the online version, the first player holds out her hands to camera as if giving a gift *through* the screen, and the second player uses hands held toward camera to accept and unwrap the present.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 105, 192, 198, 205-206, 220-221; *Collected Papers I*, 55, 63-68, 87-91, 234-236; *Collected Papers II*, 3, 109.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: individuals, couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: freeing the imagination

misc: The Big 8, opener/warm-up

Puppets

Usage Notes: One player (the puppeteer) moves the body of another (the puppet), who is giving a lecture on a supposed field of expertise and who is incorporating these body offers into the talk. There needs to be an audience to whom the puppet is lecturing. The puppet is not limp but holds her or his body where it is put until the puppeteer changes the position of the puppet's body parts.

Any repetitive motion begun by the puppeteer is continued by the puppet until halted by the puppeteer. Both players influence each other and accept offers, thereby taking the burden off one another and freeing themselves from prepared ideas in order to respond to what is happening in the present moment.

Scenes involving two puppets may also be played. Players must be in person together. Only the director can be online.

See also [River Exercise](#).

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 85, 95, 247; *Collected Papers I*, 91-93, 110-111; *Collected Papers II*, 26, 110.

Categories:

type: [game](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

misc: [players must be together in person](#), [The Big 8](#), [shared control of a character](#), [coordination of storytelling](#), [control over another player's movement](#)

Questions Game

Usage Notes: Every speech turn has to be a question. Anyone who utters a statement loses.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: device

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: not in literature, primarily verbal

Reverse Trash-Talk

Usage Notes: This game is based on trash talking, which is the face-to-face verbal put-down of a target person. In actual trash talk, the speaker expressively displays disrespect for the target person using not only insulting or belittling words but delivers these words in a sneering vocal tone and accompanying facial gestures that reinforce the message of contempt.

Reverse Trash-Talk is a monologue directed at a target player that uses the same belittling tone and facial gestures that convey an impression of contempt as trash talk *but* is instead accompanied by words of praise and admiration for the target person.

A written transcript of a *Reverse Trash-Talk* monologue would read as a friendly, complimentary speech praising the target person. One way to practice is to read a script that is complimentary of another person while practicing the nonverbal and paraverbal expressions that convey the opposite sentiment.

Reverse Trash-Talk is challenging because it decouples expression on the verbal dimension from that of the emotional dimension. Ordinarily, we communicate in a manner that has expression and meaning aligned across dimensions. This exercise helps players become more performatively skillful by helping them tune into prosody (vocal cadence) rather than relying on lexical (verbal) content to convey meaning.

The effect on the target person listening is also noteworthy. Hearing oneself “dissed” on one dimension while simultaneously praised on a different

dimension creates a confusion and disorients the target person's certainty as to what the speaker really thinks of them.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: not in literature, primarily emotional

River Exercise

Usage Notes: In this exercise, a storyteller begins by standing with eyes closed while his partner, beside or behind him, provides frequent, brief, and gentle touches. These touches direct the storyteller to move his entire body quite slowly, fluidly, and continuously, moving in the direction indicated by the touches.

The storyteller remains in control of his own movement and stays on his own balance throughout the exercise. The partner's job is to attend fully to the storyteller, whose eyes remain shut throughout the exercise, as well as provide specific and varied suggestions (offers) for movement, including touches behind the knees that guide the storyteller to kneel (or sit if a chair is immediately behind her/him). It is helpful if the partner gets the storyteller to lie down, roll over, stand again, etc. After being in motion for only a short while the storyteller begins a third-person narrative, drawing on the indirect suggestions that his movement provides.

Players must be in-person together. Only the director can be online.

See also [Puppets](#).

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 95.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

training functions: [freeing the imagination](#)

misc: [players must be together in person](#), [primarily action or movement](#), [control over another player's movement](#), [inner landscape](#)

Role Reversal

Usage Notes: Derived from psychodrama, *Role Reversal* is not a full exercise, but instead can be considered a device, condition, or resource. Unlike the psychodramatic technique of the same name, this game is a two-player scene distinguished by either the director or one of the on-stage players calling, “Switch!” at some point, once the scene’s characters and plot outline have become established.

When “Switch!” is called, both players exchange roles, first by moving to take one another’s body positions, then continuing the scene as the other character. “Switch!” should not be called more than three times in a scene, or the rest of the scene becomes too choppy.

This device works best for experienced improvisers, as beginners get confused easily. Seeing this may be initially amusing to an audience, but if the scene’s story gets lost, the effect is merely chaotic.

Sources: *Collected Papers I*, 193-211.

Categories:

type: [device](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

misc: [not in literature](#)

Serious Scene/Boring Scene

See [Boring Scene/Serious Scene](#).

Set up the Room

Usage Notes: This exercise is an excellent way to train players' memories for physical offers in scene work and can only be performed when players are working together in person. One by one, players come on stage, mime the addition of a physical object to the room and leave. Successive players must accept all previous offers of imaginary physical objects by moving around, over, and under already placed imaginary objects.

Anyone observing may call out mistakes which have to be corrected by that player leaving and re-entering the room on stage. The objects being mimed may not always be clearly identified, but their respective locations, dimensions, and shapes should be faithfully replicated by all.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [individuals](#), [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

training functions: [enactment for skill improvement](#)

misc: [players must be together in person](#), [not in literature](#), [primarily action or movement](#)

Simultaneous Leaving

Usage Notes: This is more a training game for improv; it does not have much clinical use. Players take cues from one another to leave stage at the same time, with the goal of no one taking the lead.

In the in-person form, three players start seated in armless chairs or on stools in a straight line facing the audience or group. Without any words the players are to pick up on their own and others' impulses and create a common understanding of their situation that results in them all leaving the stage at the same time and for the same reason.

The players need to look at one another frequently, requiring the player seated in the middle to swivel his head frequently to stay in contact with both partners. Players must attune to their partners by imitating one another's slightest physical offers (e.g., a tapping foot, a frown, slumping posture). As with *Mirrors*, the end goal is mutuality rather than leader-follower interaction. When done in accordance with these instructions, the audience will clearly know the players' reason for leaving.

💡 Online Tip: This exercise can be done online, but inevitable lag and decreased availability of body cues makes it difficult if players are not working in person together.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 70.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: families and groups

difficulty: advanced

training functions: enactment for skill improvement

misc: players must be together in person, primarily action or movement,

shared control of a character

Simultaneous Speech


See Verbal Mirrors.

Slo-mo Commentator

Usage Notes: In this game, an on-stage athlete moves extremely slowly while an off-stage sports-style commentator gives significance to the minimal stage activity: "He's using the Von Schlaubenheim knee-bend here—hasn't been used since Englehart won a silver medal in the '56 Interzonals—Wait! His right foot is turned inward—he's losing control!" and so on. This game is great for families.

The activity may be utterly prosaic (e.g., "Olympic chair-sitting"), yet the commentator's spiel imparts drama to the event. It is possible to have two athletes on stage, or to use two commentators. The dynamics of the two commentators might be: one main commentator and one "color" commentator or sidekick, or stylistically contrasting commentators such as sympathetic/unsympathetic, emotional/intellectual, or bored/excited.

The commentator idea can be applied to any scene as a device and is a good way to involve players who are reluctant to be on stage. To be effective, commentators need to appear to be visibly and strongly affected by the minimal action on stage and must focus on what the on-stage player is doing. At the same time, the commentator can coach by anticipating (e.g., "He's about to touch that chair—") and can advance action by calling blocks, looping, cancelling ideas, and other similar indirect guidances.

 Online Tip: When used online, it is best to have the athlete start far away from camera to show full body movement.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 107, 114, 247; *Collected Papers I*, 179-180.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: advanced

misc: control over another player's movement, control over another player's speech, multistage

Smart, Sexy, Funny

See Endowment Lists.

Soap Scene

Usage Notes: This exercise uses a brief and banal script around which the two players, by their choices of movement, timing, vocal inflection, and other indicators improvise the status, intentions, and relationship between their characters. The script may go something like this:

A: Hi!

B: Hello.

A: Go anywhere last night?

B: No. How about you?

A: Stayed home and watched a little TV.

B: Anything good on?

A: No, not really.

B: Well, gotta go.

A: See you.

This scene can be played in a well-nigh infinite number of ways and is useful clinically to heighten awareness of the many possibilities people have to co-create meaning in their relationships. It can be combined with *Emotional Lists* or [Status Transfer](#) to highlight the emotional or status features without the variability or distraction of improvised dialogue.

Actors must have the opportunity to collaborate off scene. When utilized in an online environment, a breakout room is useful for this.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, **96**, 137.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups


difficulty: beginner

training functions: story-making, multistage

Sound and Movement

Usage Notes: This is good for warming up a therapeutic group. In the in-person version, a group of players facing inward, make a large circle around one player in the center, who moves and makes sound randomly. At some point this player spontaneously develops a short, repetitive pattern of sound and movement and makes eye contact with one of the encircling players. The contacted player imitates the sound and movement in full detail, moving as a mirror image and vocalizing simultaneously. Gradually, while both continue the sound and movement, they exchange places. Without any break in the action, the player in the center gradually changes the sound and movement, developing her own pattern. She makes eye contact with another player on the circle, and the exercise continues until each player has been in the center at least once.

A preferred version of this exercise is to have everyone around the circle always imitating the central player; this heightens concentration and group involvement. A more advanced version has the moving central player begin with nonverbal sound and then develop a phrase with an accent, giving character to himself. The player replacing him in the center drops the phrase and vocalizes nonverbally until she develops her own phrase with an accent.

 Online Tip: The usual in-person way for a players in the circle and the center to make contact cannot be done in an online environment, but a suitable alternative would be as follows: A player in the center can call out the name of a border player, who begins the exchange. Note that there is no transition time online, but a director could choose to implement a predefined time delay.

Variations on this exercise include [Pass the Sound](#) and [Pass the Object](#).

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 67.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [beginner](#)

training functions: [accepting and blocking offers](#), [opener/warm-up](#)

Space Jump

See [Freeze Tag](#).

Speaking in One Voice

See [The Blob](#).

Spoon River Game

Usage Notes: There are three players in this narrative game. The premise is that all three characters are dead, having died in the same location at nearly the same time. The audience gives a name to player one, who then starts talking in the first person, past tense. This goes on for one or two minutes then stops. The same process repeats with player two, but with a different story. Ditto for player three. Then, it comes around to player one, who now adds to his or her earlier story for the purpose of converging all the stories together. This goes for three turns. The ultimate goal is for the story to end with all the players' narratives revealing how their characters died in the same place.

This game gives players the satisfaction of working together, and it trains players to blend offers during their narratives. It can be good to warm up with [Narrative/Color/Emotions](#).

In the in-person form, three players are seated in a row, looking straight out into the audience, with the same staging as *Simultaneous Leaving*. Each is given an occupation, a mood or attitude, and a physical endowment.

At first, each character speaks in turn, establishing his or her identity. As the story unfolds, the players, speaking in the same order, interweave their narratives so that the other players' characters enter and become central in their own stories. By the last turn, each story must end with the death of the narrator's character, in the same location as the other characters, and at about the same time.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, **99-100**, 163.

Categories:

type: game

population: families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

training functions: story-making, enactment for skill improvement

misc: primarily verbal, coordination of storytelling

Stage-Hand

See Torture a Teammate.

Standing/Sitting/Lying

Usage Notes: This is a three-player scene in which there is always one, and only one, player standing, one sitting, and one lying down at all times. As one player changes posture, the other two must change theirs, all justifying the postural change their respective characters are making.

Two skills are tested: quickly accepting the body offers of the two other players and coming up with a timely justification for changing position.

Source: Performance Game adapted for clinical use.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: players must be together in person, not in literature, primarily action or movement, control over another player's movement

Status Conflict

Usage Notes: This is a relatively short scene that escalates to absurdity quickly. Two players are each given enough information to start a scene (e.g., character, occupation, setting) with the further instruction that each one play lower (or higher) status than the other. The conflict is immediately palpable to all observing; the effect of playing the conflict to the hilt is absurd and comic. The value of this game lies in discovering what it takes to fully commit to a status position. One version, comparable to the motion of two hands first ascending and then descending a ladder, is to get to an extreme status position by steps, each player going further than the other. A player reverses the status direction at the point where he cannot go further, whereupon the other player also switches direction competitively.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, **116**, 157, 201; *Collected Papers II*, 114-115, 117-118, 121.

Categories:

type: [game](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

training functions: [status-improvisation and power](#)

misc: [status game](#)

Status Cues

Usage Notes: This is a steppingstone to taking on a character in a game. In the basic variation, two players take poses with status meaning and judges or an audience call out which player is higher in status, and which is lower in status. The players now change poses, and the judges or audience make the corresponding calls. This can also be done with one player where the player takes a pose, and the judges or audience call out the perceived status of the player: high, neutral, or low. The player now changes pose, and the judges or audience make the responding call as to whether the pose change resulted in the raising, lowering or unchanging of the observed player's status.

The director should debrief the players afterward: How did it feel (regarding status) to take a pose and react to the other person's pose?

A common question that arises is, What is the difference between *Status Cues* and Comparative Status Cues? The answer is that *Status Cues* examines status in a vacuum, whereas Comparative Status Cues examines the interplay of status during competition, with individual players maneuvering against one another to indicate higher (or lower) relative status to the other.

Other variations:

- Players can repeat a phrase with a different inflection or tone.
- The director can give instructions about poses to take and have players notice the impact of doing the pose and seeing others do the pose, which may change status perception.

💡 Online Tip: When used online, players should stay farther back from the camera to allow others to see more of their body for poses below.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: status-improvisation and power

misc: not in literature, primarily action or movement, opener/warm-up, status game, multistage

Status Encounter

Usage Notes: This exercise requires two players. Each player goes in incremental stepwise fashion toward higher or lower status than the other player. Eventually, they hit a nadir or zenith and have to switch to go in the opposite direction, with one player following the other in backing off from the extreme. When the players hit the other extreme, they can switch and reverse again.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

training functions: status-improvisation and power

misc: not in literature, status game

Status Instructions

Usage Notes: This game gives a quick taste of status. The director invites a brief two-player scene in the form of just two scripted lines:

A: [approaching B] "What time is it?"

B: [mimes looking at a wristwatch] "It's two o'clock."

The director should encourage players to play each micro-scene with different statuses, emotions, expressive speech tones, and movements in order to convey different status choices.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: status-improvisation and power, enactment for skill improvement

misc: not in literature, primarily verbal, status game, multistage

Status Party

Usage Notes: This exercise is something like Status Speed Dating. It is less a distinct enactment and more a good way to practice blending multiple games and factors into a single enactment.

The in-person version is as follows: In a group of four or more, players individually create a character for themselves with a fictional name, occupation, life ambition, and so on. They then mill around the room as if at a cocktail party, catching one another's eye, greeting and briefly interacting with other characters while assuming a variety of status positions (benevolent high, oppressive high, friendly equal, shy equal, submissive low, hurt low, to name a few). This packs a lot of experiencing of status into a short amount of time and allows for less self-conscious exploration of status (since there is a lot of movement and rapid change and a fictional identity to lead with). It also teaches that status is independent of ascribed rank and is conveyed instead by the way character is played.

Knowing your own status helps you break off interactions more smoothly. You can also siphon other players off from ongoing interactions. Players decide just before going into each encounter what status they will play without knowing what status their new partner will play.

When used as a condition rather than an exercise, consider the scenario of a party in which the initial rules are satisfied, and people satisfy certain premises and intentions set up at the beginning of the scene. Sometimes these scenarios and attributes are discovered through the scene, such as "where are we?" These attributes can be given at the beginning, as directions, or they can be discovered through scene development as a way to get into trouble in

new or interesting ways or as a way of creating adventure. In this regard, the word *suddenly* is a magic word for aberration from the norm.

💡 Online Tip: The spontaneity of this interaction is not well reproduced in the online format. Assembling players randomly into breakout rooms for limited time can give structure to the encounter, but it is best if players are in person together.

For more information, see *Devices, Conditions, and Resources in Rehearsals for Growth*, pp. 254-256.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 118-119.

Categories:

type: game

population: families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

training functions: status-improvisation and power, enactment for skill improvement

misc: players must be together in person, status game

Status Perception

Usage Notes: In this exercise, two players face one another, looking into each other's eyes without speaking or moving for between ten and thirty seconds. The players concentrate on the feeling of the status relationship; on a signal from the director, they begin to move and speak based on their felt sense of relative status. It is possible for the first spoken line to be scripted (i.e., decided in advance); the way the line is delivered conveys the speaker's status position.

All scenes can be analyzed in terms of status, but this game's benefit is the discovery of status not initially provided. Players pick up how they will interact with status in the foreground.

💡 Online Tip: When used online, have everyone except two players on stage turn cameras off to highlight the active players.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 117.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [beginner](#)

training functions: [status-improvisation and power](#)

misc: [status game](#)

Status Transfer

Usage Notes: The scene starts with inequality in status between two players, A and B. A starts high; B starts low. The scene will end with a reversal of relative status. Gradual change is preferable, but abrupt change is better than nothing. This game may seem reminiscent of [Status Encounter](#); the main difference is that this scene as a whole *must* have plot and coherence.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, **116**, 157, 200.

Categories:

type: [game](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

misc: [The Big 8](#), [status game](#)

Status Triangulation

Usage Notes: This is a three-person scene. Use the script in *Rehearsals for Growth*, either the print or PDF versions. Status maneuvers constantly change players' statuses. Enactment helps players deepen their understanding of status as not a fixed position but occurring and changing in a dynamic and fluid social context, with alliance building and putting others down, where no one stays on top permanently.

Each player in this three-person status game is assigned an intention that carries status implications for each of the other players. For example:

- Player A is instructed to elevate his own status in relation to player B by boasting while lowering player C's status by ignoring or belittling C's opinions.
- Player B, meanwhile, is to play equal status toward A by showing that they're equally important and low status toward C by deferring to C's opinions.
- At the same time, C plays low status to A by trying to win A's approval and equal status to B by seeking sympathy for the treatment he is receiving from A.

The scene can be played as a social gathering of friends, a business meeting, a love triangle, and so on and is useful for the effect it produces on the players' felt self-status. For more intensive relational or clinical training it is instructive to replay this game with the players rotating the roles of A, B, and C so that the same status positions can be experienced from different perspectives.

💡 Online Tip: This scene is at its best when players are working together in person. In the online format, players may need to clarify to whom they are talking when they engage, perhaps by calling the person's name before engaging.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 118.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: families and groups

difficulty: advanced

training functions: status-improvisation and power, enactment for skill improvement

misc: status game

Stealing Game

Usage Notes: This game requires at least two players: a shopkeeper and a compulsive shoplifter. There should be props scattered on stage for use. Whenever the shopkeeper turns his or her back, the thief starts to abscond with various objects. Whenever *almost* caught, the thief lies quickly and cheerfully, making things up until caught.

Player A starts a scene in a room where it is established that he is the owner of numerous physical props there. Player B enters, wearing a long, oversized coat. As the scene is played, A finds a number of pretexts to turn away from B. Whenever he does so, B grabs a prop or two and stuffs it under his coat. A's job is to allow B to steal but will try to catch him. Perhaps, A will turn back abruptly and demand to know what B is doing with his arms wrapped around himself, why something is bulging under (or sticking out from) the coat, etc. B attempts to justify his actions or the suspicious circumstances yet continues to take every opportunity to keep stealing more. What makes this scene so funny is B's insane persistence in stealing.

The servant in this scenario is the shoplifter. This is a chance for a player in the servant role to take risky chances in scenes. The roles can be altered slightly (the shopkeeper can be a doctor in an office containing his supplies and instruments and the thief is a patient presenting for an appointment).

Only the director can be online. Players must be together in person because as in [Making Faces](#), the game depends on actions taken out of the line of sight of one of the active players.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 120.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

misc: players must be together in person, primarily action or movement,

status game, master-servant game

Stop and Go

Usage Notes: In brief, *Stop and Go* is a game of blocking: One person blocks; the other doesn't. It can be especially useful in assessing diagnosis. This exercise is practice in being more yielding and flexible without getting stuck on ego. It is a lesson in co-creating without full cooperation. Still, it would be wise to keep in mind that this game can activate frustration.

The following is an example of a scene. Here, player A *accepts* all of player B's offers, while B *blocks* all offers of A and *adds offers* of her or his own:

A: Hello, Mary!

B: [stiffly] I'm not Mary, I'm her sister Janet.

A: Oh, yes, Mary told me she was a twin. Glad to meet you.

B: No, you're not. You were hoping for a night of hot romance!

A: Er, well, it's true. So Mary will be coming over soon, then?

B: Of course not. She sent me to tell you it's over.

Notice that B is equally responsible for co-creating this scene and that both players are advancing the action. Another version is to have the accepter (player A) make negative offers, the blocking of which (by player B) becomes positive:

A: Hello, Mary!

B: [brightly] I'm not Mary, I'm her sister Janet.

A: Yes, you don't really sound alike.

B: [reassuringly] Oh, yes, we do. I happen to have a cold.

A: You don't think I'll catch it from you, do you?

B: [triumphantly] Why, yes, you will. My colds are infallibly contagious!

💡 Online Tip: The game can be done equally easily online and in person. Doing the game online with cameras off serves as an interesting variation.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 73.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: primarily verbal, blocking rule/premise

Stories from Feelings

Usage Notes: This is a simple and valuable clinical intervention when a client, whether initially in role or not, becomes emotionally distressed in a stuck, repetitive sense. The director, wishing to assist the client become unstuck emotionally, asks him to focus on his emotional state, using it as a springboard to begin a third-person fictional narrative. The client is instructed to allow the story to come, to not steer it, but to let the principles of good storytelling operate. If the storyteller gets stuck, the director may interject "Suddenly ..." to help him advance the action. When successful, the result is a story that begins with a character in the same emotional distress as the client. That character goes on an adventure that ends on an emotionally positive note, although the story itself need not have a happy ending. It can be even more potent in combination with a proxy scene designed to reflect additional aspects of the client's life.

Related to [Dream Story](#).

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 95-96, 174.

Categories:

type: [device](#)

population: [individuals](#), [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#), [significant emotional risk game](#)

misc: [primarily verbal](#), [inner landscape](#)

Story Spine

Usage Notes: This is a useful tool for teaching about the structure of a good story. The instructions are fairly formulaic by design, providing structure without stricture. It can be used with one player, two players alternating, or with a group. It works a little like *Mad Libs*.

The director guides a player to tell a structured story, supplying the opening phrase of each sentence, as follows:

1. Start with Phrase 1: "Once upon a time..." Have the player repeat the phrase, filling in the blank. This creates a specific starting point for storytelling, establishing a setting/location, character(s), etc.
2. Phrase 2: "Every day..." The player fills in the blank. This establishes a baseline or routine. This phrase may be prompted two or three times to emphasize the routine.
3. Phrase 3: "But one day..." The player fills in the blank. This breaks the routine and advances the action.
4. Phrase 4: "Because of that..."
5. The player fills in the blank. This creates at least one logical consequence to the breaking of the routine. You can certainly do more than one round of this phrase!
6. Phrase 5: "Until finally..." Player fills in the blank. This creates a resolution and an ending for the story.
7. Phrase 6: "The moral of this Story is..." Player fills in the blank. This commentary on the story adds allegorical or metaphorical meaning.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: device

population: individuals, couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner


training functions: story-making

misc: not in literature, primarily verbal

Tag Improv

Usage Notes: This exercise is a high-energy group warm-up that has the additional advantage of having the entire group create the scene without pressure on individual members. Players are also freer to make bold offers, since they won't be around very long as that character to reap the consequences of how they advanced the action! It teaches rapid flexibility and is useful to help players practice making bold offers.

In this group exercise a two-player scene is begun. As the scene progresses, a succession of off-stage players come on stage, tapping the shoulder of either one of the players, assuming the same posture and continuing the scene as that character. When the replacements come on in rapid succession, perhaps less than every ten seconds, even every two seconds, the effect is that of a standing wave where the characters are constant and the players are interchangeable. Particularly in a small group, each player may get to appear on stage two or three times before the scene gets too frenetic.

 Online Tip: This exercise does not transfer online easily; doing so requires that the *tag* be verbal. The tagging can also be done by the director calling one player off stage to take the place of a player on stage. A director might also direct players to turn cameras and microphones on and off to simulate on- and off-stage.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 106, 244.

Categories:

type: [game](#)

population: [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

Tapestries

See [Spoon River Game](#).

Take Five

Usage Notes: In scenes played with this device, each speech turn is preceded by a five-second pause. The pause reduces over-reliance on dialogue to advance the plot and encourages players to generate physical action within the scene.

Source: Attributed to David Shepherd.

Categories:

type: [device](#)

population: [individuals](#), [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [beginner](#)

misc: [not in literature](#), [primarily verbal](#)

Take One, Give Two

Usage Notes: This exercise, though difficult to teach and demanding to do correctly, produces high-energy fun for everyone, especially when done as fast as possible. Although a player can see his turn coming, he has no time to think up an offer that will be useful, since his full attention is given to accepting someone else's offer. Also, his part of the action is over so fast that no one will remember it to analyze it, which frees him to let go of self-evaluation.

The simultaneity that really makes this exercise come alive is attenuated or absent online due to inevitable lag. Further, when performed online, the game requires some setup in either renaming players to indicate sequence of turn taking or using other tools to indicate lineup before starting the exercise. The director should provide a moderate-to-slow steady beat to maintain the group's rhythm.

In the in-person form, the players form two lines facing one another. Player A, at one end, makes eye contact with B, the player opposite him, and makes a large gesture involving his entire body with an accompanying vocal sound. A immediately repeats identically the sound and gesture (A "gives" the offer twice). B observes A the first time, remaining motionless; on A's repeat, B fully matches A's action, moving as A's mirror (B "takes" this offer). Now B makes eye contact with C, the player next to A, and gives an entirely different offer twice. C observes the first offer and takes the second. Changing the offer, C gives her offer to D, the player next to B, and so the offers zigzag down the lines, ending with the player at the other end. Then the offers zigzag back up the lines to the beginning player, A.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 67.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

difficulty: opener

training functions: enactment for skill improvement

misc: primarily action or movement, opener/warm-up

Team Insults

Usage Notes: This game involves a group divided into two teams standing in facing lines. One player steps forward and flings a verbal insult to the opposing team as a whole, with the insult word in gibberish and accompanied by appropriate gestures, for example, "You're just a bunch of Roonaps!" delivered in a sneering manner.

He is cheered on and congratulated by his teammates, while the insulted team reacts visibly, incensed and perhaps shocked. Then one member of the just-insulted team steps forward and, to the delight of her team, similarly insults the first team: "Oh yeah? Well, you're all SPIGBLOCKERS!!"

The intensity of these exchanges, amplified by the teams, grows to the point where teams may have to mock-restrain their members from charging physically at the opposing team.

Insults can be used as both assessment and intervention. *Team Insults* is only for intervention.

You may have to be more directive to set up the scene when using this game online. Once the scene is underway the director must also stay alert to the possibility that things may escalate to the point where players forget that they are in role (if the insults change from gibberish words to actual insults, for example) and stop the action promptly.

See also [Insults](#).

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 132-133, 211.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

training functions: expanding emotional expressiveness

misc: primarily verbal

Three Persons Leave the Stage for the Same Reason

See Simultaneous Leaving.

Three-Word Sentence

Usage Notes: This device essentially comprises scenes in which each speech turn consists of exactly three words. The result is a decrease in verbiage leading to accelerated action.

See the variation [One Word at a Time](#).

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#), [device](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

misc: [not in literature](#), [primarily verbal](#)

Tiger-Martian-Salesman

See [Elephant-Giraffe](#), with distinctive phrases and gestures.

Torture a Teammate

Usage Notes: This is a variation of *Puppets* in which one player, the Mover, is in charge of moving the bodies of all other players on stage. Other players as characters have to remember to say things that indicate their desire to move without moving their bodies themselves. The director actively coaches players during the scene to keep all physical movement performed only by the Mover.

In the simpler version, the Mover does not take a dramatic role. In the more demanding version, the Mover is also in-role as a character.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 232.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: players must be together in person, primarily action or movement, control over another player's movement

Touch the Wall

Usage Notes: In the in-person version, a large, open room is used, with the participant group seated in a line at the back wall. Players are called, or they self-select, one at a time, to stand up, walk to the opposite wall, touch it with some part of their body, turn and walk back to their seat. Players will do this one at a time, which heightens self-consciousness (e.g., thinking, “I’m now the one everyone is looking at”). As a player turns from touching the wall, the rest of the group applauds. The applause rewards the risk-taking, making this a no-fail exercise, and brings the group closer together: “We’re all in this together. We’re all going to do the same thing.” This exercise is used to lessen performance anxiety by socially rewarding (the applause) a performance (touching the wall).

The director might give the opening instructions in the following manner: “We will play an enactment: Everyone will get out of their seat, go up and touch the wall, and then come back to their seat. Everyone will get a turn. Go touch the wall. And when that person comes back to their seat, everyone else applauds them.” It is best if the director can allow people to choose when they want to do that. This creates tension (i.e., “When do I go?”).

This exercise is good for beginning a workshop, getting buy-in from players, and transitioning from talking to moving and action. It is also good for helping people get over self-consciousness and other inhibitions toward performance.

It also illuminates differences in how individuals from different cultures navigate standing out from the crowd. In the western world, everyone tends to touch in a deliberately individual or idiosyncratic way. In Japan, the social

rule is that imitation is safe, so people will touch the wall in the same exact way as is done by the first player when presented with the same instructions.

💡 Online Tip: In the online environment, everyone is a bit more isolated, since they are each in their own individual room. When a person decides to touch the wall, ask everyone to remain on mute during that time. During the ensuing applause, there is a possible decision about whether to have people clap on mute, or unmute and then clap, but the latter requires some coordination. It is also possible to have the player touch the camera instead of a wall, as an alternative action. Advise players against using clapping emoticons and other symbolic stand-ins.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: enactment for skill improvement

misc: players must be together in person, not in literature, opener/warm-up

The Trial

Usage Notes: In this clinically useful group game, each player gives character to one central player, who then reincorporates the information in a final monologue. It needs at least two players and allows one player to create character from others' offers.

As an example: Player A sits on a chair at center stage while players B, C, and D stand alongside one another, facing A. The director or audience offers the character the name "Cynthia," who is an alcoholic housewife secretly writing a novel. B begins by addressing A in character as follows:

"Cynthia! It's me, Mrs. Willits, your fourth-grade teacher! I remember when you wrote that essay on your neighbor's dog . . ." C and D then take turns stepping forward, perhaps as Cynthia's high-school sweetheart and as her older sister, offering character to themselves and to A. Finally, Cynthia stands and addresses each of the other players in turn, reincorporating the information from B, C, and D in a brief monologue to the audience.

One therapeutic use of this game is to give the central player a chance to answer back to those others who defined her in "life." This can be very empowering for clients who find it hard to construct comprehensive stories in a coherent fashion, but who can more readily reply "face-to-face." When used with autobiographical material this game is similar to psychodramatic encounters of protagonists with figures from their past, played by auxiliaries.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, **99**, 173-174; *Collected Papers I*, 228-229.

Categories:

type: game

population: families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

misc: primarily verbal

Truth Exercise

Usage Notes: A lot of improv is done without looking into yourself, for the purpose of avoiding warnings from survival mind. This exercise can help players overcome that tendency toward avoidance. The exercise starts with the active player noting bodily sensations; ambient sensations; interoceptive and proprioceptive cues; internal, external, and emotional cues.


The single player starts by standing with eyes closed, stretching and taking a few deep breaths, making sound on the exhalation. After this relaxation and centering of attention she then opens her eyes and reports truthfully on any present experience, whether sensation, perception, or emotion (e.g., "My right elbow itches. There's a faint humming noise behind me. There's some paint that's peeling off that wall to my left. That's an ugly-looking dog across the street. I'm feeling sad," etc.).

The director instructs the player to remain receptive to these experiences and gently directs the player to begin a third-person narrative that incorporates any current sensations, perceptions, and emotions. Whenever any such experience cannot be integrated into the story, the player is to step out of role briefly to report it in a theatrical aside and then return directly to the role of narrator. The director should instruct the player to remain receptive to cues as the story is created.

The director attends to the player's breathing, vocal inflection, body tension, and movement in order to remind the player to stay present (a problem of under-involvement) or (rarely) to break a nightmare-like trance (a problem of over-involvement). The story that results, punctuated occasionally by these asides, is usually quite cohesive; players readily become fully absorbed

in their stories and typically report having had an abundance of details from current experiencing that supplied their imaginations.

This exercise is one in which the players are particularly emotionally vulnerable. Be prepared for a certain amount of disclosure resulting from this exercise. Do **not** use it in a group without developing an element of trust first. Journal writing is excellent adjunctive or post-exercise work.

 Online Tip: When used online, other players besides the director and active player should turn off microphones and cameras to limit distractions to the active player.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 93; *Collected Papers I*, 228-229.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [individuals](#), [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#), [significant emotional risk game](#)

training functions: [freeing the imagination](#), [story-making](#)

misc: [inner landscape](#), [enactment not in the playspace](#)

Tug-of-War

Usage Notes: In the in-person version, two players are positioned facing one another, three to six feet apart, with some room behind each of them. The participants are told that there is an imaginary rope on the ground between them and that, on the director's signal, they are to pick up the rope and have a tug-of-war with their partner. The director instructs the players to make eye contact, make sounds without using words, and states that there is to be a winner and a loser within 30 seconds of the start. The director waits for players to get into rope-pulling position and then signals the start of the contest by saying, "One, two, three, go!"

As this exercise involves physical movement, participants are asked to take responsibility for any physical limitation they might have (e.g., sprained wrists, bad backs), and to inform their partner(s) of such limitations. It is preferable for participants to wear loose casual clothing and flat-heeled shoes.

Following whatever outcome, the exercise is repeated twice, with the predetermined outcome of each participant winning once and losing once. In this way, the game is transformed from a contest into a scripted theatrical performance, where the aim now becomes to make the enactment convincing.

For the exercise to look realistic the players need to treat the rope as a reality of their interaction; one's hauling in rope implies the other's being pulled toward the center. Blocking often takes the form of a "rubber rope" which is seen as stretching or going slack when the players are inattentive.

Another version: The exercise can have multiple rounds in which the director tells players to enact one specific winner or loser and to make it look realistic (i.e., players should change the goals of the enactment).

💡 Online Tip: In the online environment, players can signal rope pressure by miming holding the rope going directly into the screen or toward the camera. This exercise can also be done facing sideways to the camera, but only if players' pictures line up in the remote environment. You can also instruct players to lift one elbow up to one side and to stand at an angle to the camera to increase visibility of movement.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 121-122, 197; *Collected Papers I*, 3, 37-43, 108-109, 123-125, 136-138; *Collected Papers II*, 3, 109; Beauregard, 2022.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: accepting and blocking offers, enactment for skill improvement

misc: The Big 8, primarily action or movement, opener/warm-up, multistage

Uncle Jack

See Family Story.

Unknown Status

Usage Notes: This status game is good for three or four players; more than that becomes too complex. Prior to enacting a scene, the director privately assigns each player both their character's status ranking and a status ranking to each of the other players (collectively, a status hierarchy). The director may assign different status hierarchies to different players, leading to unstable conflicts and coalitions. The scene is set in which their characters are in interaction over some common task, decision or problem (e.g., a family planning a vacation). The ensuing status battle creates a lively and often funny scene that is also experienced as emotionally realistic. It is equally useful for spectators and players, especially to teach status and experience status.

💡 Online Tip: When used in an online environment, in lieu of privately talking to each player, the director can use private messaging to assign status to individual players. One example could be that the director says, "You're the most important person in this scene with regard to status, and these are the statuses of the other people in the scene."

Similar in form to [Hidden Pecking Order](#).

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 117-118, 209, 245.

Categories:

type: [game](#)

population: [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

training functions: [status-improvisation and power](#)

misc: [status game](#)

Verbal Mirrors

Usage Notes: This game has the form of the [Mirrors](#) game, but with the addition of speech. It aligns two players, a leader and follow-partner, with mood and prosody. It can be done with speech alone or speech *and* movement, and when used with movement, it may be whole-body movement or isolated movement. It can also be performed with commentary.

Facing one another, the designated leader begins a story while the follower-partner simultaneously mimics her in facial expression, vocal inflection, and words. The director calls, "Change!" from time to time, whereupon the leadership switches while the same story is continued. When the director calls, "Mutual!" both players continue the story without either leading or following.

Some players will get jammed up. If the players slow down slightly and fully concentrate on their partner, mutuality and a powerful sense of closeness will ensue.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 70.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [beginner](#)

training functions: [enactment for skill improvement](#)

misc: [primarily verbal](#)

Voices from the Grave

See [Spoon River Game](#).

Volume Control

Usage Notes: This device is less a distinct enactment and more a good way to practice blending multiple games and factors into a single enactment. It is used for playing scenes using vocal volume as a variable controlled by rules.

In the basic version, the director calls out "Soft!" "Normal!" or "Loud!" at frequent random intervals while an ordinary dyadic or group conversation is held by the players. Upon hearing the call, the speaking player instantly shifts to the volume level named; the conversation continues at this level until the next call.

There are multiple versions possible:

- The *"Digital" Version*: The director signals loudness using 1, 2, or 3 fingers. This is well suited to the online environment.
- The *Easy Version*: The director signals the volume verbally using three levels.
- The *Advanced Version*: Players initiate signals to one another during interactions. This can be done by having the player hold up a number of fingers at (or near the end) of his or her speaking turn.
- There may be more than three volume levels.
- Players can be assigned fixed volume positions.

- A rule can be established that one responds to soft with normal, to normal with loud, and to loud with soft.
- One player can be instructed while the other player varies volume spontaneously.
- All players can vary their own levels spontaneously.
- In another version, gibberish can be substituted for some or all of the meaningful words in the conversation (see [Gibberish Lists](#) and [Insults](#)).

This condition is better when used with two players rather than three players. The goal is not to draw attention to the change in value, but simply to get louder or softer. Three levels is a good starting point, five levels is a good upper limit for complexity. This condition enriches offers because emotional cues are associated with loudness.

For more information, see *Devices, Conditions, and Resources in Rehearsals for Growth*, pp. 254-256.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, **129-130**, 199.

Categories:

type: [device](#)

population: [individuals](#), [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [beginner](#)

misc: [primarily verbal](#)

Wallpaper Drama

Usage Notes: This game is best for more experienced players. Similar in form to [La Ronde](#), four players are assigned a location where a number of people might meet and are instructed to begin an emotionally neutral scene between two on-stage players. The four players enter or leave the scene so that there are never more than two characters on stage for more than a moment during exits and entrances.

For a dimension of positivity-negativity: At some point the director calls out, "Positive!" and the on-stage players gradually shift the emotional tone of the scene in this direction. The director calls out changes from time to time, switching the emotional tone through neutral from positive to negative and back again. The players have the option to time the shifts of emotional tone to coincide with an exit or entrance.

Focus on slow, gradual changes in emotion or status. It is best to stick to just one dimension or kind of universal change, such as positivity-negativity or more-less intensity.

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 134-135, 196.

Categories:

type: [game](#)

population: [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [intermediate](#)

misc: [primarily emotional](#)

What Are You Doing?

Usage Notes: Two players, A and B, stand alongside each other. A begins a repetitive motion and B asks, "What are you doing?" A immediately names some activity *unrelated* to the motion he is doing (thereby blocking his own body offer), and B begins to move in accordance with A's stated activity.

Now A asks, "What are you doing?" and B must instantly answer with a verbal self-block of his movement. The exercise continues until one player breaks the rule, usually by answering with the activity his body is currently carrying out or by being unable to answer at once.

This game can be played competitively. Whoever cannot both answer verbally and do the actions required at the same time "loses."

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 72.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

misc: primarily verbal, blocking rule/premise, opener/warm-up

What Comes Next?

Usage Notes: Keith Johnstone lists twelve ways actors (or writers, here) defeat or prevent story development (cited in *Rehearsals for Growth*, digital edition, 79). This is a training exercise to learn how to create action narratives and thereby overcome such tendencies to stall development.

A single actor onstage takes direction from a panel of three writers offstage. The scene is created step by step by the actions suggested by the writers. After each suggestion, the actor carries out the suggested action, then asking, "What comes next?" The director supervises the process, overriding the panel when the suggestion compromises the progress of the narrative.

An example:

Actor: "What comes next?"

Panel: "The phone rings!"

Actor: "What comes next?"

Panel: "You pick it up!"

(Actor picks up the phone) "What comes next?"

Panel: "It's a wrong number. Hang up!"

Director (to Panel): "You've just cancelled the progress of the story.

New Choice!"

Panel: "It's your Aunt Sally. Ask her to come over." And so on.

It is also noteworthy that observers of this exercise other than the panelists have far less difficulty in thinking up offers that advance the plot, suggesting that the pressure to come up with suggestions in real time undermines good narrative construction.

Source: Attributed to Keith Johnstone and adapted to clinical use.

Categories:

type: game

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: intermediate

training functions: story-making, enactment for skill improvement

misc: not in literature, control over another player's movement, control over another player's speech

Who? Where? What?

See Body Freezes.

Who am I? Where am I? What am I doing?

See Who? Where? What?

“Yes” Game

Usage Notes: This is really just an energizing group warm-up, not a real stand-alone game. It is good for getting people out of chairs, especially in online work. It starts with one of a group of standing players spontaneously calling out: "Let's all be . . ." followed by any plural or collective noun (e.g., nuns, motorcycles, horses, the ocean, etc.) Everyone shouts "Yes!" at once and proceeds to physicalize that offer, each in their own way. After a short while someone else shouts out, "Let's all be [the next offer]!" and the group switches to enacting that offer.

Anyone can jump in after the starting offer and give subsequent offers after the leader's first.

There are important reasons to focus on “let's all *be*” rather than “let's all *do*.” The *being* version of the exercise is preferable to one where an activity is called out, since the latter version may lead to objectionable offers (e.g., "Let's all masturbate") or physically risky ones (e.g., "Let's all punch a hole in the wall with our heads”).

Sources: *Rehearsals for Growth*, 69; *Collected Papers I*, 167.

Categories:

type: exercise

population: couples, families and groups

difficulty: beginner

training functions: accepting and blocking offers,

misc: primarily action or movement, opener/warm-up

You Will/I Won't

See [Line Repetition](#).

Zip! Zap! Zop!

Usage Notes: This exercise helps people feel more engaged in group work and helps them get over the shame of winning and losing. In in-person group use, the players stand in a circle. One player starts by calling one of the three words (“zip,” “zap,” or “zop”) while looking at another player in the circle, simultaneously thrusting his clapping hands toward that person. The recipient must use one of the other two words while passing the clap to a different player. As the clap is passed, any recipient who uses the same word as was passed to him or her is eliminated from the circle. In the online environment, instead of looking at a potential recipient, a player can call the name or a preassigned number of the recipient to initiate the transfer.

In another variation, the rest of the group keeps the time or beat using finger snaps or clapping. The implicit lag of online work may make keeping time in this way difficult.

Source: Developed in clinical use.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [families and groups](#)

difficulty: beginner

misc: [not in literature](#), [opener/warm-up](#)

Zoom In, Zoom Out

Usage Notes: There are two players on stage. One player starts to narrate a first-person fictional story. At intervals of from one to three sentences, the other player calls, “Zoom In,” or “Zoom Out.”

After a “Zoom In,” the storyteller shifts the narrative to describe the feature currently being described in greater detail, going into even further (microscopic) detail if the next call is another “Zoom In.” “Zoom In,” in some contexts, can refer to temporal as well as physical scale. “Zoom Out,” of course, takes the narrative in the opposite direction.

This exercise is similar in form to [Narrative/Color/Emotion](#).

Source: Attributed to David Shepherd.

Categories:

type: [exercise](#)

population: [couples](#), [families and groups](#)

difficulty: [beginner](#)

misc: [not in literature](#), [primarily verbal](#), [inner landscape](#)

Access Guides

Groups of enactments organized by shared elements.

[8] The Big 8

As a set of assessments, the Big 8 comprise a battery of enactments to assess both personal and interpersonal functioning. They are simple to instruct, making them feasible for even novice therapists and treatment-naïve clients. Because they demand few if any prior skills on the part of the players, they lead to successful experiences that lead people to continue the work. The teaching and observation of Big 8 enactments highlight client proficiencies (or lack thereof) across a broad swath of interpersonal skills and dynamics. There can be other combinations of enactments that perform this function, but they are seldom as applicable as this set.

[Line Repetition](#)

[Mirrors, Mirroring, or Mirror](#)

[Exercise](#)

[One Word at a Time](#)

[Poet's Corner](#)

[Presents](#) †

[Puppets](#)

[Status Transfer](#)

[Tug-of-War](#)

† *Presents* is possibly the most useful enactment in the entire RfG repertoire. All cultures have rules and customs pertaining to gift giving and receiving, and the enactment provides a window into the space between two individuals and the ways those individuals interact not just with one another but also the cultures they both bring to the proverbial table.

Enactments Not Described in the RfG Literature

The exercises below are specifically not to be found in [Rehearsals for Growth: Theater Improvisation for Psychotherapists](#) or other prior publications by Daniel J. Wiener. Of those that are available in other books or media, source notes will indicate where they are available.

[Blob Dating](#)

[Character Encounter](#)

[Comparative Status Cues](#)

[Conducted Story](#)

[Dimensions of Blocking](#)

[Dr. Know-It-All](#)

[Dubbed Identities](#)

[Dueling Keyboards](#)

[Elephant-Giraffe](#)

[Emotional Symphony](#)

[Essences](#)

[Expert Debate](#)

[Expert Lecture](#)

[Family Sculpting](#)

[Forbidden Letter](#)

[Four-Person Status](#)

[Foreign Movie](#)

[Gibberish Diplomacy](#)

[Gibberish Relay](#)

[Give and Take](#)

[Inner Monologue](#)

[La Ronde](#)

[Movie Critic](#)

[New Choice](#)

[One Sentence at a Time](#)

[Pass the Object](#)

[Pass the Sound](#)

[Play the Script](#)

[Questions Game](#)

[Reverse Trash-Talk](#)

[Role Reversal](#)

[Set up the Room](#)

[Standing/Sitting/Lying](#)

[Status Cues](#)

[Status Encounter](#)

[Status Instructions](#)

[Story Spine](#)

[Take Five](#)

[Three-Word Sentence](#)

[Touch the Wall](#)

[What Comes Next?](#)

[Zip! Zap! Zop!](#)

[Zoom In, Zoom Out](#)

Enactments by Difficulty Level

A quick way to assess a client's readiness is to ask yourself how confident you are of the levels of trust and supportiveness between individuals who will engage in the exercise either as players or directors and how well each individual is able to avoid emotional shutdown when confronted with stressors. In making that assessment, you might consider the variety of alternative means of diffusing strong emotions, general ego strength, ability to regulate emotions, and the supportiveness of the individual's biopsychosocial niche.

Attempts to categorize risk come with the caveat that risk is primarily assessed as (1) an aspect of the trust and support within the relationships in the room; (2) the therapist's familiarity with clients' emotional triggers; and (3) the therapist's level of confidence that clients are able to correctly interpret what is being asked of them. That being said, the lists below give exercises that generally fall within their descriptive rubrics.

Beyond direct emotional risk, there is also the question that a client may have: "What will you think of me if I do this (even if it is in a role other than self)?" Pretense is sometimes not enough protection for those who may be especially concerned with losing face or respect from others. The fig leaf of taking on a role for a performance is sometimes insufficient to protect clients from their anxieties.

Honor your clients' hesitation and take it seriously. Sometimes it is simply not the right time to take a particular risk. Once you run around in public squawking like a chicken, the chicken is out of the bag, so to speak, whether that means that spectators have greater or less respect for you-as-chicken.

Beginner ◆

Accepting in Gibberish

Address through the Telephone

Blocking and Accepting Offers

Body Freezes

Body Offers

Calling Objects (by) the Wrong Name

Character Encounter

Circle Gibberish

Comparative Status Cues

Crazy Eddie

Dimensions of Blocking

Directed Story

Dr. Know-It-All

Elephant-Giraffe

Emotional Lists

Essences

Excuses

Family Story

Forbidden Letter

Foreign Movie

Fortunately/Unfortunately

Freeze with a Line

Gibberish Emotions

Gibberish Group Story

Gibberish Lists

Gibberish Relay

Give and Take

Hands Out

He Said/She Said

Hitchhiker

How We Met

Imposing Status

It's Tuesday

Line Repetition

Making Faces

Mirrors

Narrative/Color/Emotions

No, You Didn't

Object Relations

One Word at a Time

Overaccepting

Own the Object

Pass the Object

Presents

Soap Scene

Sound and Movement

Status Cues

Status Instructions

Status Perception

Stealing Game

Story Spine

Take Five

Touch the Wall

Tug-of-War

Verbal Mirrors

Volume Control

What Are You Doing?

"Yes" Game

Zip! Zap! Zop!

Zoom In, Zoom Out

Intermediate ◆◆

Arms-Through Puppets

Behavioral Lists

The Blob

Blocking or Accepting

Blob Dating

Boring Scene/Serious Scene

Boris/Doris

Character Relay

Cooperative Storytelling

Conducted Story

Couples with Contrasting Emotions

Dream Story

Dubbing

Emotional Symphony

Emotional Zones

Endowment Lists

Expert Debate

Expert Lecture

Exclusion

Family Legend

Family Sculpting

Four-Person Status

Freeze Tag

Gibberish Diplomacy

Gibberish Encounter

Giving Character

Hidden Pecking Order

Inner Monologue

Insults

King/Queen Game

La Ronde

Little Voice

Mantra

Monsterpiece Theater

Monster Party

Moral Choices

New Choice

One Knows, the Other Doesn't

One Sentence at a Time

Overaccepting Together

Overconfessing Servant

Poet's Corner

Puppets

Questions Game

Reverse Trash-Talk

River Exercise

Role Reversal

Set up the Room

Spoon River Game

Standing/Sitting/Lying

Status Conflict

Status Encounter

Status Party

Status Transfer

Stop and Go

Stories from Feelings

Tag Improv

Take One, Give Two

Team Insults

Three-Word Sentence

Torture a Teammate

The Trial

Truth Exercise

Unknown Status

Wallpaper Drama

What Comes Next?

Advanced ◆◆◆

Accepting in Mime

Backward Scene

Combined Lists

Dubbed Identities

Dueling Keyboards

Emotional Short-Circuit

Hat Game

Inviting a Character

Movie Critic

Play the Script

Play the Monster

Simultaneous Leaving

Slo-mo Commentator

Status Triangulation

Enactments by Client Population

Individuals 👤

[Accepting in Gibberish](#)

[Address through the Telephone](#)

[Blocking or Accepting](#)

[Body Freezes](#)

[Calling Objects \(by\) the Wrong Name](#)

[Cooperative Storytelling](#)

[Dimensions of Blocking](#)

[Directed Story](#)

[Emotional Short-Circuit](#)

[Expert Lecture](#)

[Forbidden Letter](#)

[Hands Out](#)

[Inner Monologue](#)

[Inviting a Character](#)

[Monsterpiece Theater](#)

[Overaccepting](#)

[Set up the Room](#)

[Stories from Feelings](#)

[Story Spine](#)

[Take Five](#)

[Truth Exercise](#)

Couples 👥

[Accepting in Gibberish](#)

[Accepting in Mime](#)

[Arms-Through Puppets](#)

[Backward Scene](#)

[Behavioral Lists](#)

[The Blob](#)

[Blob Dating](#)

[Blocking and Accepting Offers](#)

[Blocking or Accepting](#)

[Body Freezes](#)

[Body Offers](#)

[Boring Scene/Serious Scene](#)

[Boris/Doris](#)

[Calling Objects \(by\) the Wrong Name](#)

[Character Encounter](#)

[Character Relay](#)

[Circle Gibberish](#)

[Cooperative Storytelling](#)

[Couples with Contrasting Emotions](#)

[Dimensions of Blocking](#)

[Directed Story](#)

[Dream Story](#)

Dubbed Identities

Dubbing

Emotional Lists

Emotional Zones

Endowment Lists

Essences

Excuses

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Family Legend

Family Sculpting

Forbidden Letter

Foreign Movie

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Freeze with a Line

Gibberish Diplomacy

Gibberish Emotions

Gibberish Encounter

Gibberish Group Story

Gibberish Lists

Giving Character

Hat Game

How We Met

Imposing Status

Insults

It's Tuesday

Line Repetition

Little Voice

Making Faces

Mantra

Mirrors

Monsterpiece Theater

Moral Choices

Narrative/Color/Emotions

New Choice

No, You Didn't

Object Relations

One Knows, the Other Doesn't

One Sentence at a Time

One Word at a Time

Overaccepting

Overaccepting Together

Overconfessing Servant

Own the Object

Pass the Sound

Play the Monster

Play the Script

Poet's Corner

Presents

Puppets

Questions Game

Reverse Trash-Talk

River Exercise

Role Reversal

Set up the Room

Slo-mo Commentator

Soap Scene

Status Conflict

Status Cues

Status Encounter

Status Instructions

Status Perception

Status Transfer

Stealing Game

Stop and Go

Stories from Feelings

Story Spine

Take Five

Team Insults

Three-Word Sentence

Torture a Teammate

Touch the Wall

Truth Exercise

Tug-of-War

Verbal Mirrors

Volume Control

What Are You Doing?

Zoom In, Zoom Out

Families and Groups



Accepting in Gibberish

Accepting in Mime

Arms-Through Puppets

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Body Freezes

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Character Encounter

Character Relay

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Combined Lists

Comparative Status Cues

Conducted Story

Cooperative Storytelling

Crazy Eddie

Dimensions of Blocking

Directed Story

Dr. Know-It-All

Dream Story

Dubbed Identities

Dubbing

Dueling Keyboards

Elephant-Giraffe

Emotional Lists

Emotional Symphony

Emotional Zones

Endowment Lists

Essences

Exclusion

Excuses

Expert Debate

Family Legend

Family Sculpting

Family Story

Foreign Movie

Fortunately/Unfortunately

Four-Person Status

Freeze Tag

Freeze with a Line

Gibberish Diplomacy

Gibberish Emotions

Gibberish Encounter

Gibberish Group Story

Gibberish Lists

Gibberish Relay

Give and Take

Giving Character

Hands Out

Hat Game

Hidden Pecking Order

Hitchhiker

How We Met

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Line Repetition

Little Voice

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Mantra

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Moral Choices

Movie Critic

Narrative/Color/Emotions

New Choice

Object Relations

One Knows, the Other Doesn't

One Sentence at a Time

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Overaccepting

Overaccepting Together

Overconfessing Servant

Own the Object

Pass the Object

Pass the Sound

Play the Monster

Play the Script

Poet's Corner

Presents

Puppets

Reverse Trash-Talk

Role Reversal

Set up the Room

Simultaneous Leaving

Slo-mo Commentator

Soap Scene

Sound and Movement

Spoon River Game

Standing/Sitting/Lying

Status Conflict

Status Cues

Status Encounter

Status Instructions

Status Party

Status Perception

Status Transfer

Status Triangulation

Stealing Game

Stop and Go

Stories from Feelings

Story Spine

Tag Improv

Take Five

Take One, Give Two

Team Insults

The Trial

Three-Word Sentence

Torture a Teammate

Touch the Wall

Truth Exercise

Tug-of-War

Unknown Status

Volume Control

Wallpaper Drama

What Are You Doing?

What Comes Next?

"Yes" Game

Zip! Zap! Zop!

Zoom In, Zoom Out

Enactments by Type

(See the section [About Games and Names](#) or the [Glossary](#) for definitions.)

Games

[Accepting in Gibberish](#)

[Arms-Through Puppets](#)

[Backward Scene](#)

[Behavioral Lists](#)

[The Blob](#)

[Blob Dating](#)

[Body Freezes](#)

[Boring Scene/Serious Scene](#)

[Boris/Doris](#)

[Character Encounter](#)

[Character Relay](#)

[Combined Lists](#)

[Couples with Contrasting Emotions](#)

[Crazy Eddie](#)

[Dr. Know-It-All](#)

[Dubbed Identities](#)

[Dubbing](#)

[Dueling Keyboards](#)

[Emotional Lists](#)

[Endowment Lists](#)

[Excuses](#)

[Expert Debate](#)

[Expert Lecture](#)

[Family Legend](#)

[Family Story](#)

[Foreign Movie](#)

[Four-Person Status](#)

[Freeze Tag](#)

[Gibberish Diplomacy](#)

[Gibberish Encounter](#)

[Giving Character](#)

[Hidden Pecking Order](#)

[How We Met](#)

[Inviting a Character](#)

[It's Tuesday](#)

[King/Queen Game](#)

[La Ronde](#)

[Little Voice](#)

[Making Faces](#)

[Monsterpiece Theater](#)

[Monster Party](#)

[Moral Choices](#)

[Movie Critic](#)

[One Knows, the Other Doesn't](#)

[Overaccepting Together](#)

[Overconfessing Servant](#)

[Pass the Sound](#)

[Play the Monster](#)

[Play the Script](#)

[Poet's Corner](#)

Puppets

Reverse Trash-Talk

Slo-mo Commentator

Soap Scene

Spoon River Game

Status Conflict

Status Party

Status Transfer

Stealing Game

Tag Improv

The Trial

Torture a Teammate

Unknown Status

Wallpaper Drama

What Comes Next?

Exercises

Address through the Telephone

Accepting in Mime

Accepting in Gibberish

Blocking and Accepting Offers

Blocking or Accepting

Body Offers

Calling Objects (by) the Wrong Name

Circle Gibberish

Comparative Status Cues

Conducted Story

Cooperative Storytelling

Dimensions of Blocking

Directed Story

Dream Story

Elephant-Giraffe

Emotional Short-Circuit

Emotional Symphony

Emotional Zones

Essences

Exclusion

Family Sculpting

Fortunately/Unfortunately

Freeze with a Line

Gibberish Emotions

Gibberish Group Story

Gibberish Lists

Gibberish Relay

Hands Out

Hat Game

He Said/She Said

Hitchhiker

Imposing Status

Insults

Line Repetition

Mirrors

Narrative/Color/Emotions

No, You Didn't

One Word at a Time

Overaccepting

Own the Object

Pass the Object

Presents

River Exercise

Set up the Room

Simultaneous Leaving

Sound and Movement

Standing/Sitting/Lying

Status Cues

Status Encounter

Status Instructions

Status Perception

Status Triangulation

Stop and Go

Take One, Give Two

Team Insults

Three-Word Sentence

Touch the Wall

Truth Exercise

Tug-of-War

Verbal Mirrors

What Are You Doing?

“Yes” Game

Zip! Zap! Zop!

Zoom In, Zoom Out

Devices ✂

Accepting in Mime

Forbidden Letter

Give and Take

Inner Monologue

Mantra

New Choice

Object Relations

One Sentence at a Time

Questions Game

Role Reversal

Stories from Feelings

Story Spine

Take Five

Three-Word Sentence

Volume Control

Enactments by Primary Dimension

These identify enactments that are characterized by emphasis on players' use of only one of three dimensions (action or movement, emotional, and verbal).

Primarily Action or Movement

Accepting in Mime

Body Freezes

Body Offers

Boris/Doris

Elephant-Giraffe

Exclusion

Family Sculpting

Freeze Tag

Freeze with a Line

Give and Take

Hat Game

Hitchhiker

Making Faces

Mirrors

Object Relations

Pass the Object

River Exercise

Set up the Room

Simultaneous Leaving

Standing/Sitting/Lying

Status Cues

Stealing Game

Take One, Give Two

Torture a Teammate

Tug-of-War

“Yes” Game

Primarily Emotional

Accepting in Gibberish

Conducted Story

Couples with Contrasting Emotions

Emotional Lists

Emotional Short-Circuit

Emotional Symphony

Emotional Zones

Gibberish Diplomacy

Gibberish Encounter

Gibberish Group Story

Gibberish Relay

Line Repetition

Overaccepting

Overaccepting Together

Reverse Trash-Talk

Wallpaper Drama

Primarily Verbal

Address through the Telephone

Arms-Through Puppets

The Blob

Blob Dating

Blocking or Accepting

Boring Scene/Serious Scene

Calling Objects (by) the Wrong Name

Cooperative Storytelling

Crazy Eddie

Dimensions of Blocking

Directed Story

Dr. Know-It-All

Dream Story

Dubbing

Essences

Excuses

Expert Debate

Expert Lecture

Family Legend

Family Story

Forbidden Letter

Foreign Movie

Fortunately/Unfortunately

Four-Person Status

Give and Take

Hands Out

How We Met

Inner Monologue

Insults

It's Tuesday

King/Queen Game

La Ronde

Little Voice

Mantra

Moral Choices

Narrative/Color/Emotions

New Choice

No, You Didn't

One Knows, the Other Doesn't

One Sentence at a Time

One Word at a Time

Play the Script

Questions Game

Spoon River Game

Status Instructions

Stop and Go

Stories from Feelings

Story Spine

Take Five

Team Insults

The Trial

Three-Word Sentence

Verbal Mirrors

Volume Control

What Are You Doing?

Zoom In, Zoom Out

Skills Training and Training Functions

These enactments may serve the dual purpose of clinical utility and enhancing competence both of clients and during the training of clinicians.

Training functions: Accepting and Blocking Offers

Blocking and Accepting Offers

Blocking or Accepting

Body Freezes

Body Offers

Dimensions of Blocking

Directed Story

Fortunately/Unfortunately

Freeze with a Line

Gibberish Group Story

Hitchhiker

Mirrors

No, You Didn't

One Word at a Time

Pass the Object

Sound and Movement

Tug-of-War

“Yes” Game

Training functions: Freeing the Imagination

Arms-Through Puppets

Body Freezes

Body Offers

Boris/Doris

Calling Objects (by) the Wrong Name

Cooperative Storytelling

Dream Story

Essences

Family Story

Hands Out

How We Met

Inviting a Character

Narrative/Color/Emotions

Presents

River Exercise

Truth Exercise

Training functions: Story-Making

Address through the Telephone

Body Offers

Backward Scene

Boring Scene/Serious Scene

Cooperative Storytelling

Directed Story

Dream Story

How We Met

Narrative/Color/Emotions

Soap Scene

Spoon River Game

Story Spine

Truth Exercise

What Comes Next?

Training functions: Status-Improvisation and Power

Comparative Status Cues

Four-Person Status

Hidden Pecking Order

Imposing Status

King/Queen Game

Status Conflict

Status Cues

Status Encounter

Status Instructions

Status Party

Status Perception

Status Triangulation

Unknown Status

Training functions: Expanding Emotional Expressiveness

[Accepting in Gibberish](#)

[Arms-Through Puppets](#)

[Circle Gibberish](#)

[Couples with Contrasting Emotions](#)

[Emotional Lists](#)

[Gibberish Emotions](#)

[Gibberish Encounter](#)

[Gibberish Group Story](#)

[Gibberish Lists](#)

[He Said/She Said](#)

[Hitchhiker](#)

[Insults](#)

[It's Tuesday](#)

[Line Repetition](#)

[Overaccepting Together](#)

[Team Insults](#)

Enactments for Skill Improvement

[Blocking or Accepting](#)

[Body Freezes](#)

[Comparative Status Cues](#)

[Dimensions of Blocking](#)

[Exclusion](#)

[Fortunately/Unfortunately](#)

[Gibberish Relay](#)

[Giving Character](#)

[Hands Out](#)

[Imposing Status](#)

[Inviting a Character](#)

[Mirrors](#)

[New Choice](#)

[One Knows, the Other Doesn't](#)

[One Word at a Time](#)

[Pass the Object](#)

[Set up the Room](#)

[Simultaneous Leaving](#)

[Spoon River Game](#)

[Status Instructions](#)

[Status Party](#)

[Status Triangulation](#)

[Take One, Give Two](#)

[Touch the Wall](#)

[Tug-of-War](#)

[Verbal Mirrors](#)

[What Comes Next?](#)

More Use Options

Shared Control

The enactments in this category provide opportunities for players to share control through a variety of inter- or intrapersonal mechanisms. This category is further divided to clarify the general means of shared control. A further playful and useful possibility is highlighted in this category: the opportunity to get yourself and others playfully into trouble. Gibberish Diplomacy is a cut above all other contenders in this regard. *Other enactments that are especially useful in this regard are noted with an asterisk.

Shared Control of a Character

[Arms-Through Puppets](#)

[The Blob](#)

[Blob Dating](#)

[Dr. Know-It-All](#)

[Dubbing*](#)

[Puppets*](#)

[Simultaneous Leaving](#)

Coordination of Storytelling

[Arms-Through Puppets](#)

[The Blob](#)

[Blob Dating](#)

[Cooperative Storytelling](#)

[Directed Story*](#)

[Dr. Know-It-All](#)

[Foreign Movie*](#)

[Fortunately/Unfortunately](#)

[Hands Out](#)

[How We Met](#)

[Movie Critic](#)

[Poet's Corner](#)

[Puppets](#)

[Spoon River Game](#)

Control over Another Player's Movement

Arms-Through Puppets

Give and Take

Mirrors

Movie Critic

Puppets

River Exercise

Slo-mo Commentator

Standing/Sitting/Lying

Torture a Teammate*

What Comes Next?

Control over Another Player's Speech

Dubbed Identities*

Dubbing

Give and Take

Movie Critic

New Choice

Play the Script

Slo-mo Commentator

What Comes Next?

Control over the Meaning of Another Player's Speech

Accepting in Gibberish

Arms-Through Puppets

Foreign Movie*

Gibberish Diplomacy*

Poet's Corner

Significant Emotional Risk

Enactments in this category often produce scenarios where players may, intentionally or otherwise, enter a state of emotional vulnerability.

Dream Story

Emotional Short-Circuit

Exclusion

Inner Monologue

Inviting a Character

Monsterpiece Theater

Moral Choices

Play the Monster

Stories from Feelings

Truth Exercise

Blocking Rule/Premise

In these enactments, the cardinal rule of improv (i.e., “accept all offers”) is bent so that players may explore the challenge of improvising when the blocking of offers (either by self or other players) is allowed.

Blocking or Accepting

Boris/Doris

Calling Objects (by) the Wrong Name

Exclusion

Forbidden Letter

New Choice

No, You Didn't

One Word at a Time

Stop and Go

What Are You Doing?

Openers and Warm-ups

These enactments help players to get to know one another better; deepen interpersonal connections and group identity; and prepare them to undertake more demanding other enactments.

Blocking and Accepting Offers

Body Freezes

Body Offers

Character Relay

Conducted Story

Dr. Know-It-All

Dream Story

Elephant-Giraffe

Emotional Symphony

Essences

Four-Person Status

Freeze with a Line

Gibberish Relay

Give and Take

Giving Character

Hands Out

Hitchhiker

Line Repetition

Mirrors

Object Relations

Pass the Object

Presents

Sound and Movement

Status Cues

Take One, Give Two

Touch the Wall

Tug-of-War

What Are You Doing?

“Yes” Game

Zip! Zap! Zop!

Inner Landscape

Enactments that heighten focus on the emotional dynamics or sensorium of individual players.

Address through the Telephone

Body Freezes

Character Encounter

Dream Story

Emotional Short-Circuit

Forbidden Letter

Give and Take

Inner Monologue

Inviting a Character

Mantra

Narrative/Color/Emotions

Play the Monster

River Exercise

Stories from Feelings

Truth Exercise

Zoom In, Zoom Out

Featuring or Using Endowments

Address through the Telephone

Endowment Lists

Essences

Giving Character

Monsterpiece Theater

Monster Party

One Knows, the Other Doesn't

Play the Monster

Evoking Imaginary or Unseen Characters

Address through the Telephone

Boris/Doris

Excuses

Family Legend

Family Story

Little Voice

Status Games

Enactments that explore or emphasize the performance of status maneuvers.

[Comparative Status Cues](#)

[Four-Person Status](#)

[Hidden Pecking Order](#)

[Imposing Status](#)

[King/Queen Game](#)

[Overconfessing Servant](#)

[Status Conflict](#)

[Status Cues](#)

[Status Encounter](#)

[Status Instructions](#)

[Status Party](#)

[Status Perception](#)

[Status Transfer](#)

[Status Triangulation](#)

[Stealing Game](#)

[Unknown Status](#)

Master-Servant Games

A sub-set of status enactments in which unequal status is assigned to players prior to performance.

[King/Queen Game](#)

[Making Faces](#)

[Overconfessing Servant](#)

[Stealing Game](#)

Use of Gibberish

[Accepting in Gibberish](#)

[Circle Gibberish](#)

[Foreign Movie](#)

[Gibberish Diplomacy](#)

[Gibberish Emotions](#)

[Gibberish Encounter](#)

[Gibberish Group Story](#)

[Gibberish Lists](#)

[Gibberish Relay](#)

[Poet's Corner](#)

Multistage Enactments

Enactments featuring *either* any preparatory process other than director's instructions prior to performance *or* a sequence of enacted stages.

Body Offers

Character Encounter

Character Relay

Couples with Contrasting Emotions

Emotional Symphony

Endowment Lists

Family Sculpting

Gibberish Emotions

Gibberish Encounter

Hidden Pecking Order

Inviting a Character

Monsterpiece Theater

Monster Party

Movie Critic

One Knows, the Other Doesn't

Pass the Object

Play the Script

Poet's Corner

Slo-mo Commentator

Soap Scene

Status Cues

Status Instructions

Tug-of-War

Use of Lists

Enactments featuring a process of constructing lists prior to performance.

Combined Lists

Emotional Lists

Endowment Lists

Gibberish Lists

Monsterpiece Theater

Play the Monster

Enactments not in the Playspace

Enactments in which the playspace is intentionally *not* evoked prior to performance.

Emotional Short-Circuit

Family Sculpting

Give and Take

Truth Exercise

Players Must Be Embodied (Physically Together In-Person)

Arms-Through Puppets

Backward Scene

Boris/Doris

Dream Story

Dueling Keyboards

Elephant-Giraffe

Exclusion

Family Sculpting

Freeze Tag

Hat Game

Hitchhiker

Making Faces

Own the Object

Puppets

River Exercise

Set up the Room

Standing/Sitting/Lying

Status Party

Stealing Game

Tag Improv

Torture a Teammate

Touch the Wall

Glossary

Accept

(v.): The validation of others' reality by attending to, and aligning with, their *Offers*.

Accepted Offer

A response to a preceding *Offer* that advances the action and that supports the offerer's premise.

Action Technique

In therapy, any psychotherapeutic method that involves the client in physical movement at the direction of the therapist.

Action Within Frame

Particular to online use of *RfG Enactments*, an instruction that all *Player* action be done within view of the *Player's* camera, so that it is visible to others via the online platform.

Adventure Mind

A description of one mode of mental functioning, in which people are absorbed in living fully for the moment. The guiding principle in Adventure Mind functioning is to follow one's interest wherever it goes in the present moment. (The opposite of *Survival Mind*.)

Aesthetic Distance

An optimal degree of personal emotional involvement, situated between under-distance and over-distance.

Audience

Any nonparticipating spectators, including the *Director*, to an *Enactment*.

Authenticity/Acting Controversy

An argument in psychotherapy and philosophy between those who subscribe to one of two conflicting beliefs: (1) An authentic self exists, such that expressive behavior can be determined to be authentic or inauthentic; or (2) all human behavior is acting, so that authenticity is meaningless.

Auxiliary

(n.) A supporting *Player* in an *Enactment*.

Beat

(n.) A moment in a scene when either the onstage action is complete, or when the scene begins to repeat itself.

Block

(n.) or (v.): The invalidation of others' reality by ignoring, negating, or contesting their *Offer(s)*.

Blocked Offer

A response to an *Offer* that prevents the action from developing or wipes out the offerer's premise.

Candidate/Candidacy

A person accepted into the RfG Certificate Program as a trainee. *Trainees* will be considered for Candidacy after they have completed the Basic *Level* (first 15 hours of direct instruction).

Character

Character refers to any specific dramatic interpretation of a *Role*.

Client

Any recipient of clinical treatment. A *Client* can be an individual person, a couple, a family, or a group.

Collective Flow

A *Dimension* on which a group's shared interconnectedness, attentiveness, and energy fluctuate in the here-and-now.

Condition

A defining circumstance or rule for enacting an improv scene, such as being given the location of the scene or speaking only in rhyming couplets.

Conjoint Therapy

An approach to treatment in which two or more clients are seen together in a therapy session.

Debriefing

A former term for *De-Roling*.

De-Roling

A process used at the end of an *Enactment* to mark and accomplish the return of a *Player* or *Client* from a fictional role to an ordinary social role or identity. Formerly termed *Debriefing*.

Device

An instruction or rule added to an enacted *Game* or *Exercise* which does not alter the form of that *Enactment*.

Dimensions

(Dimensions of Accepted or Blocked Offers): One of three channels of expression on which *Offers* may be attended to. These three Dimensions are: (1) Verbal/Denotative, (2) Emotional/Tonal, (3) Movement/Embodied. Response to *Offers* may range from (Fully) *Accepting*, to *Partial Blocking*, to *Total Blocking*.

Director

Anyone in the social role of leader and/or instructor of improvisational *Enactments*.

Discrepancy Hypothesis

Useful in assessing family functioning, the Discrepancy Hypothesis states that family conflict is a likely consequence of each individual family member engaging in behaviors (see *Status Maneuvers*) intended to reduce the discrepancy between the status inferred from the behavior of others in that family and one's own cognitive map of what the family should be (see *Status Hierarchy*). The greater the collective discrepancy is, the greater the intra-familial conflict.

Displacement Scene

A former term for *Proxy Scene*.

Dramatic (vs. Non-dramatic) Action Technique

Occurs whenever players in an *Enactment* are intentionally acting a non-self role or are un-self-consciously acting as themselves (i.e., whether or not the action occurs within the *Playspace*).

Dramaturgic Model

A model within *RfG* that maps both life and improvisational performance in individuals according to the adequacy of five role functions: Producer, Author, Performer, Spectator, and Director.

Dramaturgy

A perspective in sociology that likens social behavior to a theatrical performance, motivated by its actors' desires to shape an audience's view of reality.

Enactment

An action using improv undertaken to carry out a task. Enactments are classified as **Games**, **Exercises**, or both (q.v.).

Endowment

A physical, attitudinal, or emotional attribute or characteristic that is offered by one *Player* to another *Player* to further define that other *Player's Character*.

Emergent Sub-Personality (ES-P)

A distinctive *Character* that emerges and recurs during a *Client's* performances in a sequence of dramatic **Enactments**. (ES-P was previously referred to in *The RfG Book* by "recognizable, enduring character features" and by "Scouts".)

Exercise

An *Enactment* in which *Clients*, onstage as themselves, perform unusual tasks. *Exercises* are non-dramatic *Enactments*. In *The RfG Book*, the term *Exercise* was used to denote an improv *Enactment* without narrative structure.

Game

An enactment in which clients, on stage as characters other than their ordinary selves, perform dramatic enactments. In *The RfG Book*, the term *Game* was used to denote an improv *Enactment* with narrative structure.

Genogram

A kinship diagram depicting the names, ages, interrelationships, and household composition of a family.

Gibberish

Nonsense speech used in the *Playspace* as though it signifies language; that is, syllables not actually intelligible in any language known to those present. Note that repetitive sounds (e.g., “KABA-KABA-KABA”) are not gibberish, as they do not resemble actual speech.

(RfG) Graduate

A *Candidate* who has satisfactorily completed all requirements (Direct Instruction, Written Case Example, and Demonstrated RfG Practice/Leadership) and who has been awarded a certificate as an RfG Practitioner (RfG-CP).

Home-Play

The unsupervised, nonclinical enactment of RfG *Games* or *Exercises*, usually by family members at home.

Improv

abbr. for **Improvisation, Theatre Improvisation, or Theatrical Improvisation.**

Locogram

An *Exercise* in which each group participant places his or herself in a specific physical location according to self-perceived membership based on a criterion communicated by the group leader (e.g., “If you identify as male, go to this corner of the room; as female, go to this opposite corner”).

Mutual Validation

An ongoing process of a couple co-creating a reality, wherein partners interpret their world through a shared lens, contributing to their unique relationship’s worldview.

Mutuality

Simultaneous coordinated interaction without individual leadership.

Negative Explanation

An atheoretical perspective that seeks a solution by posing the question, “What obstructs a desired behavior/attitude/feeling?”

Non-dramatic (vs. Dramatic) Action Technique

An *Enactment* in which *Players* un-self-consciously act as themselves, whether or not the action occurs within the *Playspace*.

Offer

Broadly, any detectible stimulus; in both improv and RfG, most relevant offers originate from other players. Some offers are generated by internal cues or by one's imagination. Offers may be *Accepted* or *Blocked* (either fully or partially).

Overcontrol

Refers both to the intention and to the actions taken either to control others or to defeat the control of self by others. Overcontrol goes well beyond the normal human preference for having influence with others and autonomy from them; at its extreme, it supersedes all other social motives and becomes an identity-defining "master motive."

Partial Block (Partially Blocked Offer)

A response to an *Offer* that ignores or negates in part the premise of that *Offer*. Multidimensional *Offers* can be Partially Blocked by *Accepting* on some *Dimensions* and ignoring or negating that *Offer* on other *Dimensions*.

Performative Frame

A perspective that interprets all behavior as performed for others as spectators, whether or not the performer consciously intends to perform or is aware of spectators. The Performative Frame perspective is an intrinsic element of *Dramaturgy*.

Person

An individual who is neither on stage nor in a *Role* as anyone other than his or her social self.

PEP

Abbr. for *Post-Enactment Processing*.

Play

(n.) Non-serious or non-purposeful activity, conducted while in *Adventure Mind*. (v.) To engage in activity without purpose other than intrinsic interest or enjoyment.

Player

A term for an onstage *Client* or *Trainee* performing in an *Enactment*.

Playspace

(1) An interpersonal field in an imaginative realm set off from the real world by the participants, in which any image, interaction and physicalization has a meaning within the drama; (2) A mutual agreement among all participants that all activity is a representation of real or imagined being.

Post-Enactment Processing (PEP)

A therapist-initiated discussion with *Clients* following an *Enactment*. A PEP includes current reactions, observations regarding the recently performed enactment and insights linking that performance to previous experiences.

Praxis

The process by which a theory, lesson, or skill is enacted, practiced, embodied, or realized.

Proxy Scene

A therapist-constructed dramatic *Enactment* offered to a *Client* to explore, experiment with, or practice change. Formerly termed *Displacement Scene*.

Resource

In theatrical production, the use of music, sound effects, lighting, costumes, props, and sets to heighten dramatic effect. *RfG* minimizes the use of resources during *Enactments*.

Role

When unmodified by descriptors, such as *social, somatic, or psychological*), a dramatic part, rather than a socially prescribed pattern of behavior.

RfG

abbr. for **Rehearsals for Growth**.

The RfG Book

Author Daniel J. Wiener's 1994 book. Full title: *Rehearsals for Growth: Theater Improvisation for Psychotherapists*.

SAQ

abbr. for **Self-Assessment Questionnaire**.

Self-Assessment Questionnaire

A written set of questions answered by a *Trainee* after completing a particular Training Level.

Self-Esteem

The status of oneself, as experienced by that same individual (see *Status*).

Social Atom

A diagram representing one person's social world depicting the perceived importance and closeness of significant others to that one person.

Social Constructivism

A sociological theory not necessary for applying *RfG* techniques in practice, but a foundational paradigm used in *The RfG Book*, mainly useful in underscoring how we co-create realities and mutually validate others both in life and in improvising.

Spontaneity

(1) An ability to experience and express fully without inhibition; (2) an ability to respond externally to new situations in an immediate, creative, and appropriate manner.

Status

(1) The importance a person is perceived as having, on at least one specified *Dimension*, in relation to someone else. In *RfG*, Status is an important construct and is applied both to assessment and constructing interventions. Status, as played or performed, signifies and signals social dominance or

submission in all social interaction. (2) A *Role* or identity that confers honor, esteem, or influence upon those believed to hold it.

Status Terms Sub-Glossary

A Status-specific sub-glossary of terms. [Go to page](#)

Survival Mind

A description of one mode of mental functioning, in which people focus their attention (both purposefully and automatically) toward the future in order to achieve desired results, scan for dangers, and promote the feeling of being in control of that future. Survival Mind functioning also draws on associating present cues with past experience and applying prior solutions to present circumstances. (Opposite of *Adventure Mind*.)

Systemic Thinking

As used in Marriage and Family Therapy, or Family Systems Therapies, a theoretical perspective with two basic consequences for clinical observation: (1) Attending to what goes on between people rather than theorizing as to what occurs inside them; (2) viewing observers as themselves being part of larger systems that include those being observed, rather than being outside the system being observed.

Total Block, Total Blocking

A response to a multidimensional *Offer* that ignores or negates the premise of that *Offer* across all *Dimensions*.

Trainee

Any participant in a RfG training workshop attending for the purpose of learning.

Training Level

In RfG Practitioner Certificate Training, one of four stages of training corresponding approximately to the number of hours of direct instruction received. These Levels are: Basic (1–15 hours), Beginner (16–30 hours), Intermediate (31–45 hours), and Advanced (46–60 hours).

Triangulation, Triangling

A pattern or process describing the interaction among three persons, such that at least one of these persons is emotionally invested in the relationship between the other two. Triangles are often viewed by Family Systems therapists as dysfunctional or as evidence of dysfunction in the system in focus, yet triangulation occurs in all social systems.

Validation

In improv, the process of confirming or approving of another's presentation of reality. Validation of others' reality (either stage or social) results from *Accepting* their *Offers*.

Variation

(n.): An alternative set of instructions for an *Enactment*. In this Reference Guide, a Variation will have its own name, distinct from that of the original *Enactment*.

Version

An addition or alternation of an instruction for an *Enactment*. Unlike *Variations*, Versions are unnamed in this Reference Guide.

VF

abbr. for video feedback.

Status Terms Sub-Glossary:

Audience

An observer of a *Status Act* whose own *Status* is unaffected by that *Status Act*.

Status Act

Behavior, the performance of which communicates to an observer the *Status* of its performer, relative to that of certain other persons, called *Targets*.

Status Hierarchy

A ranking of the perceived or actual *Status* of each member of a defined social group.

Status Maneuver

A *Status Act* in which its performer intends to alter the *Status* of self in relation to a *Target*.

Director's Use of Status Maneuver:

1. Tactical use of Status Maneuvers is applied in-the-moment;
2. Strategic use is planned, based on assessment of the system.

Status Matrix

A representation of both the actual *Status Hierarchy* and that hierarchy from the perspective of each member of a social group. Usually presented in tabular form.

Complementary Status Matrix: A Status Matrix in which all members stand in agreement regarding their group's *Status Hierarchy*.

Conflictual Status Matrix: A Status Matrix in which not all members stand in agreement regarding their group's *Status Hierarchy*. Status Matrices may be conflictual to varying degrees.

Status Transaction

A reciprocating sequence of *Status Acts* by two or more *Players* who alternate in taking the roles of status act performer and *Target*.

Target

An observer of a *Status Act* whose own *Status* may be altered relative to that *Status Act's* performer.

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








APPENDIX - Access Guides Matrix

The Access Guides Matrix, found on the following pages, facilitates comparison and visualization across both enactments and their categories.

The enactments are listed alphabetically in the first column, and those marked with an asterisk (*) have one or more alternate names; these names can be found in the **Enactment Descriptions** section.

The header rows list the Access Guides categories. Enactments falling into each category are indicated by a symbol.

The key for these symbols follows below:

NOTES	DIFFICULTY		POPULATION		DIMENSION		TYPES	
* Has Alternate Name	◆	Beginner		Individual		Emotional		Exercise
[8] The "BIG 8"	◆◆	Intermediate		Couple		Action/ Movement		Game
 Not in the Literature	◆◆◆	Advanced		Family/Group		Verbal		Device

Access Guides Matrix

ENACTMENTS	ENACTMENT CATEGORIES				TRAINING FUNCTIONS & SKILL IMPROVEMENT						
	DIFFICULTY	POPULATION	PRIMARY DIMENSION	ENACTMENT TYPES	EMBODIED / IN-PERSON	OFFERS	FREING IMAGINATION	STORYMAKING	STATUS	EXPRESSIVENESS	FOR SKILL IMPROVEMENT
Accepting in Gibberish	◆									☑	
Accepting in Mime [8]	◆◆◆◆										
Address through the Telephone	◆						☑	☑			
Arms-Through Puppets	◆◆				☑		☑			☑	
Backward Scene	◆◆◆◆		n/a		☑			☑			
Behavioral Lists	◆◆		n/a								
Blob Dating	◆◆										
Blocking and Accepting Offers	◆		n/a			☑					
Blocking or Accepting/Lists	◆◆					☑					☑
Body Freezes *	◆					☑	☑				
Body Offers	◆					☑	☑	☑			
Boring Scene/Serious Scene *	◆◆							☑			
Boris/Doris *	◆◆				☑		☑				
Calling Objects (by) the Wrong Name	◆						☑				
Character Encounter	◆										
Character Relay	◆◆		n/a								
Circle Gibberish	◆									☑	
Combined Lists	◆◆◆◆		n/a								
Comparative Status Cues	◆								☑		
Conducted Story	◆◆										
Cooperative Storytelling	◆◆						☑	☑			
Couples with Contrasting Emotions *	◆◆									☑	
Crazy Eddie	◆										
Dimensions of Blocking	◆					☑					☑

Access Guides Matrix

SHARED CONTROL ENACTMENTS						MORE USE OPTIONS										
... OF A CHARACTER	STORYTELLING COORDINATION	... OF ANOTHER'S MOVEMENT	... OF ANOTHER'S SPEECH	... OF ANOTHER'S MEANING	SIGNIFICANT EMOTIONAL RISK	BLOCKING RULE / PREMISE	WARM-UPS & OPENERS	INNER LANDSCAPE	USING ENDOWMENTS	UNSEEN CHARACTERS	STATUS	MASTER-SERVANT GAMES	USING GIBBERISH	USE OF LISTS	MULTI-STAGE	NOT IN THE PLAYSPACE
				↘									↘			
								↘	↘	↘						
↘	↘	↘		↘												
↘	↘						↘									
						↘	↘	↘								
							↘								↘	
						↘				↘						
						↘									↘	
							↘						↘			
								↘								
							↘				↘					
											↘					
	↘						↘									

Access Guides Matrix

ENACTMENTS	ENACTMENT CATEGORIES				TRAINING FUNCTIONS & SKILL IMPROVEMENT						
	DIFFICULTY	POPULATION	PRIMARY DIMENSION	ENACTMENT TYPES	EMBODIED / IN-PERSON	OFFERS	FREING IMAGINATION	STORYMAKING	STATUS	EXPRESSIVENESS	FOR SKILL IMPROVEMENT
Directed Story *	◆					☑		☑			
Dr. Know-It-All	◆										
Dream Story	◆◆				☑		☑	☑			
Dubbed Identities	◆◆◆◆										
Dubbing	◆◆										
Dueling Keyboards *	◆◆◆◆		n/a		☑						
Elephant Giraffe *	◆				☑						
Emotional Lists	◆		♥							☑	
Emotional Short-Circuit	◆◆◆◆		♥								
Emotional Symphony	◆◆		♥								
Emotional Zones	◆◆		♥								
Endowment Lists *	◆◆		n/a								
Essences	◆						☑				
Exclusion	◆◆				☑						
Excuses	◆										
Expert Debate	◆◆										
Expert Lecture	◆◆										
Family Legend	◆◆										
Family Sculpting	◆◆				☑						
Family Story *	◆						☑				
Forbidden Letter	◆			✖							
Foreign Movie	◆										
Fortunately/Unfortunately	◆					☑					☑
Four-Person Status	◆◆								☑		

Access Guides Matrix

ENACTMENTS	ENACTMENT CATEGORIES				TRAINING FUNCTIONS & SKILL IMPROVEMENT						
	DIFFICULTY	POPULATION	PRIMARY DIMENSION	ENACTMENT TYPES	EMBODIED / IN-PERSON	OFFERS	FREING IMAGINATION	STORYMAKING	STATUS	EXPRESSIVENESS	FOR SKILL IMPROVEMENT
Freeze Tag *	◆◆				☑						
Freeze with a Line	◆					☑					
Gibberish Diplomacy *	🚫◆◆		♥								
Gibberish Emotions	◆		♥							☑	
Gibberish Encounter	◆◆		♥							☑	
Gibberish Group Story	◆		♥			☑				☑	
Gibberish Lists	◆		n/a							☑	
Gibberish Relay	🚫◆		♥								☑
Give and Take	🚫◆			✖							
Giving Character	◆◆										
Hands Out	◆						☑				☑
Hat Game	◆◆◆◆				☑						
He Said/She Said	◆		♥							☑	
Hidden Pecking Order	◆◆								☑		
Hitchhiker	◆				☑	☑				☑	
How We Met	◆						☑	☑			
Imposing Status	◆		n/a						☑		☑
Inner Monologue	🚫◆◆			✖							
Insults	◆◆									☑	
Inviting a Character	◆◆◆◆		n/a				☑				☑
It's Tuesday	◆									☑	
King/Queen Game	◆◆								☑		
La Ronde	🚫◆◆										
Line Repetition *	[8]◆		n/a							☑	

Access Guides Matrix

ENACTMENTS	ENACTMENT CATEGORIES				TRAINING FUNCTIONS & SKILL IMPROVEMENT						
	DIFFICULTY	POPULATION	PRIMARY DIMENSION	ENACTMENT TYPES	EMBODIED / IN-PERSON	OFFERS	FREEDOM OF IMAGINATION	STORYMAKING	STATUS	EXPRESSIVENESS	FOR SKILL IMPROVEMENT
Little Voice *	◆◆	👤👤👤	👄	👤							
Making Faces	◆	👤👤👤	👤	👤	☑						
Mantra	◆◆	👤👤👤	👄	✖							
Mirrors * [8]	◆	👤👤	👤	👤		☑					☑
Monster Party	◆◆	👤👤👤	n/a	👤							
Monstertea Theater	◆◆	👤👤👤	n/a	👤							
Moral Choices	◆◆	👤👤👤	👄	👤							
Movie Critic 🚫	◆◆◆◆	👤👤👤	👄	👤							
Narrative/Color/Emotions *	◆	👤👤👤	👄	👤			☑	☑			
New Choice 🚫	◆◆	👤👤👤	👄	✖							☑
No, You Didn't	◆	👤👤	👄	👤		☑					
Object Relations	◆	👤👤👤	👤	✖							
One Knows, the Other Doesn't	◆◆	👤👤👤	👄	👤							
One Sentence at a Time 🚫	◆◆	👤👤👤	👄	✖							
One Word at a Time [8]	◆	👤👤👤	👄	👤		☑					☑
Overaccepting	◆	👤👤👤	❤️	👤							
Overaccepting Together	◆◆	👤👤👤	❤️	👤						☑	
Overconfessing Servant	◆◆	👤👤👤	👄	👤							
Own the Object *	◆	👤👤	👤	👤	☑						
Pass the Object 🚫	◆	👤👤👤	👤	👤		☑					☑
Pass the Sound 🚫	◆	👤👤👤	❤️	👤							
Play the Monster	◆◆◆◆	👤👤👤	n/a	👤							
Play the Script 🚫	◆◆◆◆	👤👤👤	👄	👤							
Poet's Corner [8]	◆◆	👤👤👤	👄	👤							

ENACTMENTS	ENACTMENT CATEGORIES					TRAINING FUNCTIONS & SKILL IMPROVEMENT					
	DIFFICULTY	POPULATION	PRIMARY DIMENSION	ENACTMENT TYPES	EMBODIED / IN-PERSON	OFFERS	FREING IMAGINATION	STORYMAKING	STATUS	EXPRESSIVENESS	FOR SKILL IMPROVEMENT
Presents	[8] ♦	👤👤👤	👤	👤			☑				
Puppets	[8] ♦♦	👤👤👤	n/a	👤	☑						
Questions Game *	🚫♦♦	👤👤	👤	✖							
Reverse Trash-Talk	🚫♦♦	👤👤👤	❤️	👤							
River Exercise	♦♦	👤👤	👤	👤	☑		☑				
Role Reversal	🚫♦♦	👤👤👤	n/a	✖							
Set up the Room	🚫♦♦	👤👤👤	👤	👤	☑						☑
Simultaneous Leaving *	♦♦♦♦	👤👤👤	👤	👤							☑
Slo-mo Commentator	♦♦♦♦	👤👤👤	n/a	👤							
Soap Scene	♦	👤👤👤	❤️	👤				☑			
Sound and Movement	♦	👤👤👤	👤	👤		☑					
Spoon River Game *	♦♦	👤👤👤	👤	👤				☑			
Standing/Sitting/Lying	🚫♦♦	👤👤👤	👤	👤	☑						
Status Conflict	♦♦	👤👤👤	n/a	👤					☑		
Status Cues	🚫♦	👤👤👤	👤	👤					☑		
Status Encounter	🚫♦♦	👤👤👤	n/a	👤					☑		
Status Instructions	🚫♦	👤👤👤	👤	👤					☑		☑
Status Party	♦♦	👤👤👤	n/a	👤	☑				☑		☑
Status Perception	♦	👤👤👤	n/a	👤					☑		
Status Transfer	[8] ♦♦	👤👤👤	n/a	👤							
Status Triangulation	♦♦♦♦	👤👤👤	n/a	👤					☑		☑
Stealing Game	♦	👤👤👤	👤	👤	☑						
Stop and Go	♦♦	👤👤👤	👤	👤							
Stories from Feelings	♦♦	👤👤👤	👤	✖							

Access Guides Matrix

SHARED CONTROL ENACTMENTS						MORE USE OPTIONS										
... OF A CHARACTER	STORYTELLING COORDINATION	... OF ANOTHER'S MOVEMENT	... OF ANOTHER'S SPEECH	... OF ANOTHER'S MEANING	SIGNIFICANT EMOTIONAL RISK	BLOCKING RULE / PREMISE	WARM-UPS & OPENERS	INNER LANDSCAPE	USING ENDOWMENTS	UNSEEN CHARACTERS	STATUS	MASTER-SERVANT GAMES	USING GIBBERISH	USE OF LISTS	MULTI-STAGE	NOT IN THE PLAYSPACE
							↘									
↘	↘	↘														
		↘						↘								
↘															↘	
		↘	↘													
							↘									
	↘															
		↘									↘					
							↘				↘				↘	
											↘					
											↘					
											↘					
											↘					
											↘	↘				
						↘										
					↘			↘								

Access Guides Matrix

ENACTMENTS	ENACTMENT CATEGORIES					TRAINING FUNCTIONS & SKILL IMPROVEMENT					
	DIFFICULTY	POPULATION	PRIMARY DIMENSION	ENACTMENT TYPES	EMBODIED / IN-PERSON	OFFERS	FREING IMAGINATION	STORYMAKING	STATUS	EXPRESSIVENESS	FOR SKILL IMPROVEMENT
Tag Improv	◆◆	👤👤👤	👤	👤	☑						
Take Five *	🚫◆	👤👤👤	👤	✖							
Take One, Give Two	◆◆	👤👤👤	👤	👤							☑
Team Insults	◆◆	👤👤👤	👤	👤						☑	
The Blob *	◆◆	👤👤👤	👤	👤							
The Trial	◆◆	👤👤👤	👤	👤							
Three-Word Sentence	🚫◆◆	👤👤👤	👤	✖👤							
Torture a Teammate *	◆◆	👤👤👤	👤	👤	☑						
Touch the Wall	🚫◆	👤👤👤	👤	👤	☑						☑
Truth Exercise	◆◆	👤👤👤	n/a	👤			☑	☑			
Tug-of-War	[8]◆	👤👤👤	👤	👤		☑					☑
Unknown Status	◆◆	👤👤👤	n/a	👤					☑		
Verbal Mirrors *	◆	👤👤	👤	👤							☑
Volume Control	◆	👤👤👤	👤	✖							
Wallpaper Drama	◆◆	👤👤👤	👤	👤							
What Are You Doing?	◆	👤👤👤	👤	👤							
What Comes Next?	🚫◆◆	👤👤👤	n/a	👤				☑			☑
"Yes" Game	◆	👤👤👤	👤	👤		☑					
Zip! Zap! Zop!	🚫◆	👤👤👤	👤	👤							
Zoom In, Zoom Out	🚫◆	👤👤👤	👤	👤							
SYMBOLS KEY: NOTES		DIFFICULTY		POPULATION		DIMENSION			TYPES		
* Has Alternate Name		◆	Beginner	👤	Individual	👤	Emotional	👤	Exercise		
[8] The "BIG 8"		◆◆	Intermediate	👤👤	Couple	👤	Action/Movement	👤	Game		
🚫 Not in the Literature		◆◆◆	Advanced	👤👤👤	Family/Group	👤	Verbal	✖	Device		

Access Guides Matrix

SHARED CONTROL ENACTMENTS						MORE USE OPTIONS										
... OF A CHARACTER	STORYTELLING COORDINATION	... OF ANOTHER'S MOVEMENT	... OF ANOTHER'S SPEECH	... OF ANOTHER'S MEANING	SIGNIFICANT EMOTIONAL RISK	BLOCKING RULE / PREMISE	WARM-UPS & OPENERS	INNER LANDSCAPE	USING ENDOWMENTS	UNSEEN CHARACTERS	STATUS	MASTER-SERVANT GAMES	USING GIBBERISH	USE OF LISTS	MULTI-STAGE	NOT IN THE PLAYSPACE
							✓									
✓	✓															
		✓														
							✓									✓
					✓			✓							✓	
							✓				✓					
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