Easy-to-use activities that promote group process and enhance social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral competencies
About The Author

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ACTivities For Group Work With Adolescents


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What Is ACTivity Centered Therapy (ACT)?

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS:

The ACT group work model can be viewed as a therapeutic melting pot, since it draws from theoretical concepts and frameworks that include use of program or socio-recreational activities in group work, psycho-education, mutual aid, and cognitive-behavioral therapy.

The Use Of Socio-Recreational Activities In Group Work:

ACTivity Centered Therapy (ACT) is very similar to the use of program or activities in social group work; the central component is the inclusion of group activities such as games, arts and crafts, role-play, and music/lyrical analysis. These activities help the group members work on and achieve individual and group goals in an engaging way. Also, choosing activities that are engaging, multisensory, and reflect members’ interests heightens appeal and encourages participation.

Psycho-Education:

The ACT group work model integrates the purposeful use of psycho-educational activities to teach adolescents to identify, express, and cope with complex feelings and life experiences. ACTivities are also used to help members’ enhance their self-esteem, social skills, and problem-solving skills.

Mutual Aid:

Mutual aid involves offering and receiving help and support as a part of the group’s process and work. Group members share information about themselves and their experiences and listen and respond with empathy when others ask for help with a problem or concern. An “all in the same boat” phenomenon emerges when group members speak about common experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy:

The ACT group work model also integrates such cognitive-behavioral concepts as praise, positive reinforcement, and modeling. The leader consistently models desirable social skills and praises members for desirable behaviors. Some ACTivities also incorporate cognitive restructuring where members are taught to rationalize irrational thoughts and beliefs to help them cope.
### THE USE OF ACTIVITIES AND INTERVENTIONS ACCORDING TO THE PURPOSE OF THE GROUP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PURPOSE OF SOCIALIZATION GROUPS FOR YOUTH</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES AND INTERVENTIONS THAT COMPLEMENT THE PURPOSE OF THE GROUP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enhance Social Competency</strong></td>
<td><strong>ACTivities</strong>: Use cooperative activities that mitigate competition, encourage peer acceptance and praise, build group cohesion, and help build relationships among members (i.e., activities in which members work together toward a cooperative goal). (See <em>ACTivities That Enhance Social Competency</em>, pages 88-119.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(a range of interpersonal skills that help one integrate feelings, thinking, and action in order to achieve social and interpersonal goals; assertiveness; cooperation)</td>
<td><strong>Interventions</strong>: Model acceptance and effective communication skills such as reflection and taking turns talking; praise cooperative and assertive efforts; reach for shared or similar feelings and experiences during group discussions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enhance Emotional Competency</strong></td>
<td><strong>ACTivities</strong>: Use activities that encourage identification and expression of feelings, that build self-esteem, and teach emotional regulation and effective coping skills. (See <em>ACTivities That Enhance Emotional Competency</em>, pages 120-160.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(the ability to appropriately identify, express, and respond to one's own feelings and the emotional reactions of others; coping; self-regulation)</td>
<td><strong>Interventions</strong>: Create and maintain a supportive environment that helps members identify, express, and respond appropriately to their own feelings and the emotional reactions of others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enhance Cognitive Competency</strong></td>
<td><strong>ACTivities</strong>: Use activities that teach effective problem-solving and decision-making skills, help members recognize and monitor social cues and self-talk. (See <em>ACTivities That Enhance Cognitive Competency</em>, pages 161-170.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(self-awareness; a positive attitude toward life; the ability to read and interpret social cues for problem-solving and decision-making; the ability to develop and apply positive self-talk)</td>
<td><strong>Interventions</strong>: Model effective problem-solving strategies; praise effective strategies mentioned during group discussions and group members' self-awareness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Enhance Behavioral Competency</strong></td>
<td><strong>ACTivities</strong>: Use activities that help members become more aware of non-verbal and verbal communication skills. (See <em>ACTivities That Enhance Behavioral Competency</em>, pages 171-180.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(non-verbal and verbal communication skills; taking effective action, which is the outcome of cognitive competence)</td>
<td><strong>Interventions</strong>: Monitor and reflect non-verbal and verbal communication patterns among members and the group as a whole. Praise effective communication styles and effective action taken to address problems discussed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Social Development:

Major developmental tasks of adolescence in the social realm are 1) developing more meaningful relationships with others 2) achieving socially responsible behavior.

Major developmental area: develop self-image; a sense of who they are; social self-efficacy (the ability to set social goals and meet them); peer acceptance and approval.

Adolescents need to feel accepted by others as they work toward self-acceptance and a sense of identity; conforming to peer standards is exceedingly important.

Identity can be found in joining a group or cause (formal classroom groupings, teams, leadership groups, and informal self-selected peer groups).

Adolescents need to experience more independence and rebel against parental and other adult expectations and values to gain a sense of their own identity and competence within their environment.

### ACTivities and Interventions That Complement Developmental Characteristics, Abilities, and Needs

#### ACTivities:

Use activities that help group members get to know each other:

- What’s My Favorite? (page 46)
- Candy Quest (page 49)
- It’s A Small World (page 51)
- All About Me (page 52)
- Getting To Know You (page 55)
- The Group Melting Pot (page 87)

Use activities that enhance communication and friendship building skills, social self-efficacy, socially responsible behavior, and peer acceptance and approval:

- Social Skills Assessment Form (page 40 or CD)
- Interpersonal Goals Form (page 41 or CD)
- A Time And A Place (page 80)
- All For One And One For All (page 85)
- Group Think: Problem Solve (page 86)
- Assert Yourself (page 88)
- Social Goals (page 93)
- A Time Capsule Of Friends (page 96)
- In Someone Else’s Shoes (page 99)
- Bystander Power: Fighting Social Cruelty (page 100)
- Praise Craze (page 102)
- On The Outside (page 103)
- Control Takes Its Toll (page 104)
-Peer Power (page 105)
- What On Earth? (page 106)
- Saying No: Your Rights (page 108)
- Making Connections And Building friendships: Where? (page 110)
- Group Power: Activate (page 118)
- Communication Clinic I (page 171)
- Communication Clinic II (page 172)
- Communication Clinic III (page 174)
- The Powers That “Bee” (page 178)
- No-Gossip Zone (page 180)
What's My Favorite?

Purpose: To help group members get to know each other in an engaging and fun way.

Stage of Group Development: Beginnings

The ACTivity:

This game is similar to Pictionary™, in which one player draws something and other players guess what is being drawn.

Distribute three What's My Favorite? slips and one Categories For What's My Favorite? sheet to each group member. Members choose three different categories, write their name on the first line of each slip and one of the chosen categories on the second line. On the back of each slip, the member writes his/her favorite in that category. Without anyone seeing what he/she has written, the member places the completed slips in the paper bag. Then the game begins.

To demonstrate how the game is played, the leader picks a slip from the bag and says, “I am going to draw Samantha’s favorite dessert on the flip chart/board.” The first person, excluding Samantha, to guess what the leader is drawing picks the next slip.

Continue until all the slips are drawn or the allotted time has elapsed.

Materials Needed:

For the leader:
- Scissors
- Small paper bag
- Flip chart or board
- Markers or chalk

For each group member:
- 3 What's My Favorite? slips (page 47 or CD)
- Categories For What's My Favorite? (page 48 or CD)
- Pencil or pen

Pre-Activity Preparation:

Print/copy What’s My Favorite? slips and Categories For What’s My Favorite? for each group member. Cut the slips apart.
**ACTivities That Promote Group Process**

**ALL ABOUT ME**

**Purpose:** To help group members get to know one another

**Stage of Group Development:** Beginnings

**Materials Needed:**
- For the leader: None
- For each group member:
  - *All About Me* (page 53 or CD)
  - Pen or pencil

**Pre-Activity Preparation:**
Print/copy *All About Me* for each group member.

**The ACTivity:**
Members fill out *All About Me*, then share their answers to each question.

Commonalities that become evident can lead to interesting discussions.
Purpose: To show that social cruelty/bullying is a serious problem and that an assertive bystander can alter a socially cruel situation

Stage of Group Development: Middles

Materials Needed:
For the leader: None
For each group member: None

Pre-Activity Preparation: None

ACTivities That Enhance Social Competency

Bystander Power: Fighting Social Cruelty

The ACTivity:

Say:

Social cruelty is a problem in our society, especially in schools. Today we will examine ways we hurt each other and how differences can divide people. Let’s try to do this quietly. Strong feelings may emerge, so be respectful toward each other. Can we agree to not laugh or talk during this activity so we all feel safe? You will have a chance afterward to talk about your experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

Please stand and make a circle. I am going to make a statement. If you agree with the statement, step inside the circle. If you don’t agree, don’t move. If you feel uncomfortable or unsure, stay where you are and be aware of the feelings you are experiencing.

Pause after reading each of the following statements. Then say:

Look at who stepped inside the circle. Now, everyone, move back into the circle.

Statements:

• Enter the circle if you have ever been teased or ridiculed.
• Enter the circle if you or someone you care about has a disability that you can
**STRESS BUSTERS: ORGANIZE AND PRIORITIZE**

**Purpose:** To help members cope with stress by learning a time-management strategy that involves creating a daily to-do list

**Stage of Group Development:** All Stages

---

**Materials Needed:**

For the leader:
- **Things To Do Sample** (page 129 or CD)

For each group member:
- 2 **Things To Do** (page 130 or CD)
- Pen or pencil

---

**Pre-Activity Preparation:**

Print/copy **Things To Do Sample** for the leader. Print/copy two **Things To Do** sheets for each group member. Ask group members to bring their school planners/assignment books to the following session so they can complete the things-to-do sheets.

**The ACTivity:**

Say:

*One way to cope with stress is to become more organized. We’re going to learn to use a to-do list to organize your time and your life. Planning for upcoming tests and projects, writing down daily assignments, and making a schedule can help you feel that your workload is manageable and help you feel more in control of what you need to get done. This can help reduce stress.*

Group members complete **Things To Do** by listing tests, projects, and/or papers for the week. Then they list the things to be done today: homework, phone calls/e-mails, etc., and indicate how long they think each task will take. Lastly, they make a rough schedule to follow for that evening based on time estimations they calculated for each task.

Display the **Things To Do Sample** as an example of how to complete the activity sheet.

As an alternative, members may create lists on cell phones instead of paper.

Ask members to share at the next group session whether listing and scheduling tasks helped them feel more in control of what they needed to accomplish.

Distribute another **Things To Do** activity sheet for future use.
GOAL MAPS

Purpose: To enhance self-efficacy and self-awareness by helping group members set personal goals

Stage of Group Development: Beginnings

Materials Needed:

- For the leader: None
- For each group member:
  - Goal Map (page 159 or CD)
  - Pen or pencil

Pre-Activity Preparation:

Print/copy Goal Map for each group member.

The ACTivity:

Say that setting goals helps members realize what they want and better understand themselves. As a group, they are going to set goals and identify small, manageable steps they can take to achieve them.

As members look at the Goal Map, say:

- Define the goal in a simple, clear way
- Break your goal into small, manageable, action steps.

Encourage group members to help each other develop goals and smaller steps to achieve their goals. As each group member shares his/her completed goal map, guide members to come up with ways the group can support that member as he/she works toward those goals. These suggestions may be added to the Goal Map.

Collect and copy the Goal Maps. Return them at the next group session.

Check every few weeks on group members’ progress.
THE FOLLOWING SAMPLES ARE REPRODUCIBLE/PRINTABLE PAGES INCLUDED ON THE CD-ROM
INTERPERSONAL GOALS FORM

Name: _______________________________ Date: ________________

Mark an X on YES or NO to help you identify interpersonal goals.

I want to work on my:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>comfort when someone disagrees with me</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interest in others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comfort with expressing feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>comfort with expressing thoughts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>comfort when disagreeing with people</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>self-control</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>patience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>focus and attention when others are talking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ability to plan and carry out activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ability to listen to others' ideas and feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ability to understand others' points of view</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ability to handle disappointment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ability to admit I am wrong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ability to identify my feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ability to manage overwhelming feelings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ability to manage frustration when interacting with others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>ability to “read” others’ emotions</td>
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<td>ability to express empathy</td>
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<td>ability to relate to others on a deeper level</td>
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<td>ability to assert myself</td>
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<td>ability to make personal decisions</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ability to overcome social fears and doubts</td>
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<td>ability to make lasting commitments</td>
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<td>ability to trust others</td>
<td></td>
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<td>ability to communicate more effectively</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ability to build friendships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ability to maintain friendships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>self-esteem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tendency to criticize when interacting with others (sarcasm included)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</table>
GROUP BIRTHDAY LIST

GROUP:

Write your name and birthday below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SEPTEMBER</th>
<th>OCTOBER</th>
<th>NOVEMBER</th>
<th>DECEMBER</th>
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<tr>
<th>JANUARY</th>
<th>FEBRUARY</th>
<th>MARCH</th>
<th>APRIL</th>
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<tr>
<th>MAY</th>
<th>JUNE</th>
<th>JULY</th>
<th>AUGUST</th>
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TALK SHOW SCENARIO #3

A teen who had unprotected sex and is now pregnant.
She is confused and doesn’t know what to do.

The topics:

- Why teen pregnancy occurs
- Why it is difficult for teenage girls to protect themselves from getting pregnant
- What this teen’s options are and the pros and cons of each option
SOCIAL GOALS

Name: _____________________________________________

SOCIAL GOAL:

What I can do to help myself achieve this goal:

1. ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

2. ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

3. ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

What the group can do to support me as I work on achieving this goal:

1. ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

2. ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

3. ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

Date: ___________
HEARTSCAPE

What’s In Your Heart?
1. What objects have you thought would make you happy?

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

2. Do you know people who have those objects? Are they happy? __________

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

3. What life situations have you thought would make you happy?

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

4. Do you know people in those life situations? Are they happy?

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

5. How can you choose to be a happy person now, with what you already have?

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________