

Big Deal or No Big Deal: A Framework for Co-Counselors

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Objective: session will include activities designed to give co-counselors an opportunity to establish and grow their working relationship.

1) **“Twin/Triplet Day” Costume Contest:** co-counselors will come to session dressed as much alike as possible to show how important it is for staff to appear to be on the same page on the outside, even if there are differences in individual opinion on the “inside”. Prizes for best dressed!

2) **Ice Breakers:**

- **Hog Call:** Co-counselors are given words that go together in “2’s or 3’s” and are to find each other after the entire group is mixed up; eyes are closed or use blindfolds and “bumpers up” (red-white-blue, planes-trains-automobiles, lions-tigers-bears, A-B-C, 1-2-3, New York City, etc.) *Variation: use animal sounds (laminated hog call cards can be ordered from www.training-wheels.com)
- **Songs by Syllables:** Pick a song everyone in the group knows (Row, Row, Row Your Boat) and alternate back and forth singing one syllable at a time so that it sounds like one voice singing. Sing through a couple of times and then choose a new song. (Playfair, p. 94)
- **Pairs Tag:** 1 person is “it”, try to “tag” co-counselor(s) by staying in a contained area and moving at a fast walk. (see Quicksilver, p. 90 or Playing with a Full Deck, p. 31)
- **1-2-3-4:** group of three counts together and on “4” holds out 1-5 fingers on one hand; goal is to get a sum of “11”. Once successful, group tries to get a sum of “23” by holding out 1-10 fingers using 2 hands. (Playfair, p. 128)
- **1-1 Interviews:** Each person gets a minute to tell his/her life story to a partner. Afterward, partners take turns introducing each other to the group and telling as much as they can remember about the partner’s “autobiography.” (The Caring Classroom, p. 38) **Four of a Kind:** an exercise to discover as many similarities (can’t be physical traits or stating the obvious) in co-Counselor groupings as possible (Playing With a Full Deck, p. 12)
- **Story of Your Name:** Tell your partner the meaning behind your name (who/what you were named after, origin, name you would be given if born opposite gender, middle name, nicknames, etc.) What do you like to be called? (Essential Staff Training Activities, p. 23)
- **“Newlywed Game”:** co-counselors spend 7-10 minutes getting to know as much about each other as possible using list of questions (handout). Have trio sit facing away from each other and give 5 questions to answer based on what they know of this person (see below); award points for each correct answer. Repeat 5 new questions for each co-counselor.

CO-COUNSELOR QUIZ GAME

Does your co-Counselor like:

Floss regularly? (yes or no)
Mountains or the beach?
Aisle, window, or middle seat?
Pulp or no pulp?
Baked or fried?

Solids or stripes (or other pattern)?
Glass or plastic?
Shade or sun?
Math or art?
Country or rock music?

Panic or relaxed?
Gel or paste?
Fact or fiction?
Peanut or plain?
Likeliness to take a risk on a scale of 1-5?

Counselor or follower?
Interstate or scenic route?
Cup or cone?
Silver or gold?
Pick up a penny found on the ground
(even if heads is not facing up - yes or no)?

3) Problem Solving Activity: co-counselors will work through a challenge together

- Number Game/Group Number Game: try for world record time on touching numbers in sequence first individually and then with co-counselor(s). What strategies evolved when working together? (Games and Other Stuff for Teachers, pp. 29-36)
- Don't Spill the Beans: co-Counselors carry a "child" through obstacle course - use taut bandana or piece of paper and cup of water or dry beans balanced on top. (Games and Other Stuff for Teachers, p. 125)
- Shoelace Tie: try to tie the shoelace of one person's shoe using only the right hand of each counselor. Repeat using only the left hand of each counselor. Try tying shoelace blindfolded for the third attempt! (Laurie Frank)
- Kids and Martians or other logic puzzles (<http://www.jimloy.com/puzz/cannibal.htm>)
- Putting Body Through Index Card: try to make a hole in an index card so that it forms an opening you can put your entire body through without tearing the card. (201 Amazing Mind Beggars, p. 56)
- Magic Bracelets: Partners are "tied up" with two ropes and must figure out how to separate the ropes without taking them off their hands. (see "human handcuffs" activity for description and solution on Training Wheels website: www.training-wheels.com)

4) Communication Activity: Need index cards with different designs to draw. One person is observer (only person allowed to see design on index card), another is translator (takes directions from observer and translates them to drawer), third person draws design. Repeat with each person playing a different role. Can do similar exercise with just two people. (Quicksilver, p. 174)

5) Trust Activity:

- Mousetrap Sequence: practice setting and unsetting a mousetrap with a partner (eyes open first then try eyes closed). Work up to having one person verbally guide hand of blindfolded partner to hover just above loaded mousetrap. (Bullying Prevention Field Guide, p. 61)
- Trust Walk: one person is blindfolded, other two people assist and can speak but not touch or can touch but not speak (Jeffrey Leiken, Evolution Mentoring)
- Come To Me: partners stand about 10-15 feet apart (one has eyes closed) and the sighted person moves towards partner until told to stop. (Quicksilver, p. 222)
- Backseat Driver: partner who is "driving" has control of speed, but eyes are closed; partner who is in the "backseat" (hands on shoulders of driver) has GPS navigational capabilities and can see to guide driver through "traffic". Switch positions at some point to give each partner a chance to drive. Goal is to get to "destination" safely (without having an accident). (Essential Staff Training Activities, p. 31)
- Obstacle Course: have head staff set up an obstacle course using available resources that co-Counselor pairs will guide each other through while one partner is blindfolded. Switch partners midway through the course or if short enough, have each partner go through it once.

6) "Big Deal" or "No Big Deal": staff will find out where their co-counselor(s) stand on various issues (continuum scale or hold up objects to cast "vote", etc.). See handout.

7) Quest for Best Practices: exercise (see handout) for co-counselors to get started thinking through group expectations and routines for start of day, activities, lunch, end of day, etc.

References:

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