



ShabbaTTogether

Mental Health Activity Games

Goals:

Bring groups together to play games and inspire empathy and creativity.

Target Audience:

These activities are appropriate for children, teens, and adults

Time:

Each game below will outline time

Medium:

All of these games are made for in person or virtual adaptation. **Virtual adaptations are written in red below.**

Note to Facilitator:

The COVID-19 pandemic has upended family life around the world. School closures, working remotely, physical distancing, and financial uncertainty can be worrying for men, women, and children in gender and age-specific ways. At the same time, the pandemic offers opportunities for sensitivity, playfulness, and togetherness. By spending time together, families can discover unidentified strengths and unappreciated possibilities. These activities are meant to inspire your empathy and creativity.

Before you begin the activities, take a moment to read through the Five Tips for Facilitators. Facilitators can be anyone from a rabbi to a parent.

Five Tips For Facilitators

1. Trust the process:

- a. Group activities help people to recognize and gain more understanding of their own thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. They help people gain feedback from others which in turn, allows them to learn more about themselves.
- b. Group activities help people to communicate with others, gain support, alleviate isolation, gain trust, and learn how to relate positively to other individuals.

2. Be honest:

- a. Effective facilitation requires that you be honest with yourself and with the group. This includes being honest about the limits of one's own abilities and knowledge. If the facilitator doesn't know the answer to the group's questions, s/he should admit it and work on finding the answer. Honest facilitators gain the trust of the group and model the importance of honesty from all participants.

3. You are not an expert:

- a. Keep in mind that your goal is to moderate and guide communication, not make personal contributions to it, or push your own agenda. Remain flexible and responsive to the group, and encourage participants to be open and honest.
- b. An effective way to avoid voicing your personal opinion is to reflect questions back to the group. For example, "What do you think?" By responding in this way the facilitator has remained neutral and encouraged further reflection by the group.

4. Be prepared:

- a. When possible, familiarize yourself with the types of challenges people in your group might have and with the materials and technology you will be using for your activities.

5. Recognize your strengths:

- a. Focusing on your strengths allows you to facilitate effectively. Understand the skills you possess and use them to bring a group of people together. For example: patience, humor, wisdom, and flexibility can help you to develop rapport and promote successful interventions.

Game #1

Candy Compliment Go Around

Ages: Child through Adult | Approximate time: 30 - 45 minutes

Game Summary and Goal

- Gather information about the individual and/or family
- Increase open communication
- Identify areas of change or improvement to be addressed

Set up & Materials

- Purchase packs of candy with assorted colors, such as jelly beans
- Print out the Candy Compliment Questions Chart
- Choose a group leader to ask questions from the **Candy Compliment Questions Chart** (below)

Virtual Adaptation

- Ask everyone to buy colored candy in advance

Instructions

1. Distribute 10-15 candies to each person
2. Have each person sort their candy by color
3. Instruct each person not to eat the candy
4. In a clockwise direction, ask the first person to pick up any color piece of candy
5. The Group leader will ask the person the question based on color and age from the **Candy Compliment Questions Chart**
6. After the person answers they question, they can eat that candy
7. Go to the next person until everyone has been asked a question
8. *Be sure each person has the floor when speaking and there is no interrupting or side conversation*
9. After every person has answered all of the questions, open the floor for discussion with possible discussion questions:
 - What did you learn?
 - Did anything surprise you?
 - How will you work towards making changes/improvements?

Candy Compliment Questions Chart
 (print out chart or share on your screen)

| Colors | Children | Teenagers | Adults |
|-----------------|------------------------|--|--|
| Green | What makes you happy? | Words to describe yourself? | Something you worry about? |
| Purple | What makes you sad? | Ways you have fun? | Something you feel good about? |
| Orange | What makes you scared? | Things you wish were different about yourself? | Something you want to change about yourself? |
| Red | Favorite animal? | Favorite song? | How do you relax? |
| Yellow | What makes you angry? | What makes you angry? | What makes you angry? |
| Any other color | Favorite food? | Favorite food? | Favorite food? |

Game #2

Cards to Know You

Ages: Child through Adult | Approximate time: 30 - 45 minutes

Game Summary and Goals

- Cards To Know You is an activity that engages families/groups and facilitates open communication and interaction
- The question cards have been specifically designed to facilitate communication and to help individuals to express difficult feelings

Set Up and Materials

- A standard 52-card deck
- Printable question cards (see below) based on age group: child, teenager, adult
- Cut out question cards and stack them up

Virtual Adaptation

- Each person will need their own deck of cards or use this [online card deck](#)
- The facilitator should draw for each person from the Cards To Know You and read it out loud

Instructions

- Take turns picking the top card from the deck of cards
- If you draw an even number, pick a card from the question card pile and answer the question
- If you draw an odd number, pick a card from the question card pile and ask someone in your family or group to answer the question
- If you draw an ace, ask someone in your family or group for a compliment
- If you draw a Jack, Queen, or King offer someone in your family or group a compliment
- Parents can read questions for children who cannot read

[Click Here for Printable Question Cards for Children](#)

[Click Here for Printable Question Cards for Teens](#)

[Click Here for Printable Question Cards for Adults](#)

Game #3

Toss Me Some Kindness

Ages: Child through Adult | Approximate time: 30 - 45 minutes

Goals and Summary

- This activity begins with playful positive interactions that foster family cohesiveness
- In addition, expressing nice things directly to each other offers the potential of establishing an increased level of emotional intimacy and a change in communication style
- The second goal of the activity focuses on change for improving family life
- The facilitator must carefully guide the family in a discussion about how changes could be made and the advantages of making these changes
- During the discussion of changes, the family works together as a problem-solving team with common goals

Set Up and Materials for In-Person

- Any soft ball or object that can easily be tossed around
- **During the Covid pandemic, Toss Me Some Kindness should only be played in-person with immediate household members or pod to avoid contagion**

Instructions

- **Part 1: Words of Kindness**
 - Explain that for five minutes family members will take turns gently tossing the ball to other members
 - As they toss the ball to someone they are to say something nice to that member
 - The pattern is repeated for five minutes and/or until every person has heard at least two nice things about themselves
 - Ask each person to describe their experience of what other family members said that was nice to them
 - For example, ask:
 - What was it like to say nice things to everyone?
 - How did you feel when another member in your family said something nice to you?
 - Did you receive any unexpected comments?
- **Part 2: Enjoyment**
 - Begin the activity again, however, this time ask them to say something they would enjoy doing (but are not currently doing) with the person to whom they throw the ball

- Allow this to continue for five minutes, followed by discussing the experience
- **Part 3: Change**
 - The person who catches the ball is instructed to answer:
 - What two things do you want to change in your life?
 - On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is this change?
 - In what ways would your life be improved after these changes were made?
- **The game is completed when everyone gets a turn**

Game #4

How Am I Coping?

Ages: Child through Adult | Approximate time: 45 - 60 minutes

Summary and Goals

- This activity aims to help children, teenagers, and adults recognize common effects of stress and to match common stress reactions with positive coping skills
- This activity is not an interactive game

Set Up and Materials

- Two sets of custom cards: [Common Stress Reactions](#) and [Healthy Coping Skills](#)
- Download and print out the two sets of cards
- Sort the Common Stress Reactions Cards into five piles:
 - Behavioral
 - Physical
 - Emotional
 - Cognitive
 - Social
- Arrange Healthy Coping Skills Cards into one pile

Virtual Adaptation

- Email the participants: [Common Stress Reactions](#) and [Healthy Coping Skills](#)
- Instruct participants to print the cards and cut them out in advance

Instructions

- **Part 1**
 - Participants choose a card from each of the five Common Stress Reaction piles and read them aloud until finding five cards that match how they sometimes feel
 - Continue the round until each participant has chosen five cards
 - Cards can be shared
- **Part 2**
 - Next, participants choose five cards from the Healthy Coping Skills pile and read them aloud until finding five cards they can imagine implementing
 - Continue the round until each participant has chosen five Positive Coping Skill cards
 - Cards can be shared
- **Part 3**

- Ask participants, if they are comfortable, to give an example of one of their Common Stress Reactions and Positive Coping skills they have implemented in the past