

# 100 INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES

for Mental Health and Substance Abuse Recovery



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# HOW TO USE FACILITATOR'S INFORMATION SHEETS

Legend (explained on each topic overview page) indicates the appropriate ages, level of difficulty and number of pages in each activity.

AGE	DIFFICULTY	PAGES

## PURPOSE

PURPOSE states what participants will say and do during group; specifies cognitive and behavioral goals.

## MATERIALS

MATERIALS are commonly available office or household items; 'board' implies blackboard, grease board or flipchart with portable easel; if no 'board' is available, a large piece of paper, taped to the wall suffices. 'Marker' implies chalk or dry-erase magic marker. Some activities have accompanying pages; some do not. Accompanying pages provide game boards, questions, lists, worksheets and reference information for facilitator and/or participants. Answer keys provide required responses but some activities have no right or wrong answers because their purpose is to stimulate thought, discussion, and self-expression in a non-judgemental environment. 'CUT-UP' pages are questions, directions, terms, words or phrases to be cut on the dotted lines and placed in 'container' for CUT-UPS' such as envelope, small box, tray, bowl or cup. 'CUT-UPS' can be used 'as is' or affixed to index cards or photocopied onto heavier card stock for greater durability. Save them in labeled envelopes, plastic sleeves or plastic sealed bags. Play money 'CUT-UP' pages (SKILLS BILLS) are provided.

## ATTENTION GRABBER

ATTENTION GRABBER whets appetite for learning, using props and participant volunteers. They incorporate visual aids, role-plays, writing or drawing on board while peers guess the topic or concept. They require brief coaching before group. Volunteers and facilitators are instructed to *elicit* – or draw out answers from participants. Giving hints and asking leading questions heightens interest; telling the answer destroys the suspense! *Brainstorming* implies people blurting out all possibilities without evaluating their feasibility or worth.

## ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY describes the preliminary discussion and directions for games, role-plays, board work, art, written work, tasks for individuals, dyads (pairs), or teams. These are thought provoking, skill-building activities wherein they 'learn by doing'. The *process* is paramount! Applaud efforts to think, say, do and interact. 'Spotlight Seat(s)' refers to chair(s) at front of room, facing peers, occupied by a 'contestant' and/or 'host', peer leader or person(s) who are sharing answers, drawings, or other work.

## FOLLOW-UP

FOLLOW-UP personalizes and summarizes the activity.

## VARIATION

VARIATION describes alternative methods and/or topics depending on ages, ability levels and temperaments. Example: changing seats or standing under signs engages people exhibiting apathy or lethargy. Hyperactive children or adolescents acting 'antsy' might become overactive with this much movement, or it could appropriately channel their energy.

# THESE GROUPS ARE...

- **Psychoeducation combined with psychotherapy:** Skills acquired augment group therapy. Discussion and disclosure are encouraged. Individual therapy with an audience is discouraged. On-lookers lose interest and dredging up past horrors is counterproductive. Concentrate on coping with current challenges.
- **Interactive versus lectures:** Participants aren't gobbling information with gusto to regurgitate on an exam! Many have poor concentration and short attention spans. Brevity, activity and relevance to immediate needs heighten interest. 'Variety is the spice of life' and learning! Great games become commonplace if overdone. Art, writing, drama and discussion incorporate multiple teaching methods.
- **Exploration of values versus courts of law:** Create a climate for self-acceptance or change, depending on individual needs. Positive peer pressure is more powerful than your authoritative admonishments. Avoid condoning or condemning drugs, dangers and unprotected sex, by asking questions. Giving them 'food for thought' beats 'ramming it down their throats'. You need not be judge, juror, or have the last word.
- **Spiritual growth opportunities:** Neither preach nor delve into doctrines. Life or death may hinge on belief in a Higher Power. Encourage introspection and tolerance for divergent beliefs. Poetry and 'words of wisdom' spark spirituality without specific ideology.
- **Interpersonal skill builders versus social events:** Discourage eating, drinking, and trivial conversation. Fifty-minute activities prohibit wasting time. Direct tangential talkers to stick to the topic. Breaks between groups are for food, beverages, bathroom and socializing.
- **Expression Enhancers:** De-emphasize spelling, grammar, penmanship, artistic and dramatic proficiency. Brainstorming and spontaneity flourish with instructions to "Let it all hang out!" or "Convey your thoughts and feelings whatever way works".
- **Contests where everyone wins:** Prizes promote excitement but don't use them for every game. Knowledge and skills are the most valuable rewards.
- **Flexible:** If you start with one topic or activity and clearly their interest and needs relate to another, do switch midstream. 'Go with the flow', provided it's productive.
- **Lessons that lessen stage fright! (yours and theirs):** Your 'butterflies' disappear when participants are the major players. Keeping them in the limelight enhances their learning, while lowering your self-consciousness. If you're uncomfortable with a topic, read reference material. 'Go with your gut'. If you can't picture something working for you or them, select an alternative. When you're well acquainted with group members and confident in your skills, be more daring!
- **"This Is Your Life" for the participants:** Be cautious about self-disclosure. They think their situation is unique and pitfalls and consequences you experienced "won't happen to me". If they ask personal questions, remind them, "I'm here for you; I want to talk about you". Refer them to support groups for 'people who have been there'. Encourage peers to answer their questions.
- **Nurturing, not parental:** Think, speak and treat in an adult to adult manner versus parent to child. Remember the self-fulfilling prophecy: they'll measure up or down to your expectations.
- **Professional and supportive versus stodgy, chummy or enabling:** This is not 'HELPLESSVILLE' and you are not their caretaker. Generate warmth without favors or familiarity. Don't foster learned helplessness. Elicit peer partnership, self-direction and self-actualization.
- **More than meets the eye:** If, despite your efforts, participants appear apathetic or antagonistic, remember: "Chance is always powerful. Let your hook be always cast; in the pool where you least expect it, there will be a fish" (Ovid, Roman Poet).

## TIPS TO BRING LEARNING TO LIFE AND LIFE TO LEARNING

13. **"Too many cooks spoil the broth"** – Depending on the population, colleagues may need to be present. They should not answer questions for the participants or 'gang up' on someone. They often say what was 'on the tip of the tongue' of a participant. The facilitator may have an excellent reason for 'letting something slide'. When participants have exhausted all possibilities, facilitator may invite staff comments. Remember: The more talkative the professionals, the quieter and less involved are the participants.

Picture this scenario: teens are effectively enlightening their peer who was passive-aggressive in sneaking out at night. A 'heavy' enters the room and reprimands her, "No wonder your parents don't trust you..." The participant shuts down. The peers slouch. They have been dwarfed by an authority figure. The momentum is destroyed.

14. **Set the stage, then get out of the way** – Your role is to plan the activity, prepare the props and materials, and whet their appetite for thinking, talking, doing. You are the 'prime mover.' You 'set the wheels in motion.' You may need to referee or keep them on track (unless their divergent direction is equally or more beneficial) but 'give them the ball and let them run with it.' You sit back and enjoy the show. Let the learning begin!
15. **Location, Location, Location** – if possible, do not have people too 'spread out.' Push tables together to promote eye contact and discussion. Exceptions: doing written work or an art project that warrants privacy and space. If possible, set chairs in a circle (no tables) fairly close for adults but farther apart for paranoid people or for young people (who tend to whisper and touch when too close). For game shows and teams, the chairs face each other in rows. A semicircle is useful for board work or for debates – the two opponents are in front, seen by all, and 'audience' members can see each other for discussion purposes. People generally achieve a comfort level by sitting in the same seat day after day. This should be allowed but can be modified to prove a point. Example: For a discussion about coping with change, put name labels on different chairs. Discuss how changes are usually uncomfortable, but we can adapt and benefit from them.

Do not stand or sit behind a lectern or table – no barriers to communication. Avoid the traditional classroom set-up with Instructor at front and students facing him/her. When possible, place participants in the 'spotlight seat' or at the board. You take a 'back seat' among the members or 'audience'. The 'limelight' leads to learning!

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>RECOVERY</b>	<b>Overview</b> .....	161
	Ace The Quiz .....	163
	Fortune Cookies .....	172
	Save Sandy .....	174
	Tic-Tac-Dope .....	176
	What's A Bar? .....	182
<b>RELATIONSHIPS</b>	<b>Overview</b> .....	185
	Boomerangs .....	187
	Circle Concepts .....	188
	Everything You Always Wanted to Know . . . .....	189
	Q and A .....	192
	Terminators.....	193
	Umbrellas .....	196
	Win With Love.....	198
<b>SELF-DEVELOPMENT</b>	<b>Overview</b> .....	201
	Basic Needs per Maslow .....	203
	Defense Mechanisms .....	206
	KISS .....	209
	Masks .....	211
	Realistic Goal Setting - Accept Half a Loaf .....	212
	Stages .....	213
	Talk Show Host .....	216
	The Mind's Eye.....	217
	This Is Your Life .....	218
	To Tell The Truth .....	220
<b>SELF-ESTEEM</b>	<b>Overview</b> .....	223
	Act As If .....	225
	Go Getters .....	226
	Success .....	228
	Volunteer .....	230
	What's In A Name? .....	231
<b>SELF-HELP</b>	<b>Overview</b> .....	233
	Don't Quit.....	235
	Get Unstuck .....	237
	Lifelines .....	238
	Secondary Gains .....	240
	Self-Help vs. Learned Helplessness .....	243
	The Hole.....	245
	Toxic Nouns .....	248
	Victim vs. Victor.....	250
<b>SELF-REFLECTION</b>	<b>Overview</b> .....	253
	BINGO .....	255
	Coping .....	256
	Coping - Teens .....	257
	Favorites .....	258
	Insight I .....	259
	Insight II.....	260
	Medicine\$covery I .....	263
	Substance Abuse Recovery II .....	264
	Substance Abuse Recovery III .....	265
	<b>Overview</b> .....	267
<b>STRESS MANAGEMENT</b>	Calm In Chaos .....	269
	Comfort Zones .....	271
	Past, Present and Future .....	273
	Practice Makes Better.....	275
	<b>\$KILLS\$ BILL\$</b> .....	277
	<b>REFERENCES</b> .....	279

# ANGER MANAGEMENT

## OVERVIEW

**ANGER MANAGEMENT** is crucial because suppressing or turning anger inward often leads to depression and self-harm. Escalating at slight provocations alienates and endangers others. Feeling angry is acceptable; threats or harm to self and/or others are unacceptable. Participants learn to handle antagonistic people and situations and to deal with underlying feelings.

ACTIVITY	PAGE NUMBERS	AGE	LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY	PAGES
Conflict Resolution	3 - 4	ALL	2	2
Don't Let Them Push Your Buttons	5 - 6	ALL	1	2
Passive, Aggressive, Assertive	7 - 9	ALL, *A, *YP	2	3
The Volcano	10 - 13	ALL, *A, *YP	2	4
Tic-Tac Anger	14 - 16	ALL	2	3
What's Going On With Them?	17 - 19	ALL, *A, *YP	1	3

## LEGEND

**AGES:**  
ALL = ALL ages, 8 or 9 through adults  
YP = YOUNG PEOPLE, ages 8 or 9 through 17  
T = TEENS, ages 13 through 17  
A & T = ADULTS and TEENS, ages 13 and older  
A = ADULTS, ages 18 and older  
\* = SPECIFIC PAGES expressly for this population.

**LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY:**  
1 = EASIER - basic language; minimal reading and writing  
2 = MODERATE - introduces new terminology; incorporates life experiences  
3 = MORE DIFFICULT - requires some prior knowledge or introduction of new information; promotes peer teaching

**PAGES:** The total number of pages related to the activity, including FACILITATOR'S INFORMATION and all accompanying pages.

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION

## WORKSHEET

1. Clear the air. ("We need to talk" or other 'opener'.)
2. Time-out (if necessary) with a time limit. ("Let's wait one hour.")
3. Set ground rules.  
(No physical violence, no name calling, don't bring up the past or hit below the belt.)
4. Listen to the other side first. (Then they will be more receptive to your side.)
5. Summarize what opponent just said, incorporating feelings and/or reasons for his/her position.
6. Share own opinions and/or reasons.
7. Brainstorm all possible options.
8. Eliminate ridiculous or intolerable solutions.
9. Select a few preferable ones.
10. Weigh pros and cons of each.
11. Agree on a solution or sequence of solutions to try.
12. List possible 50/50 or 60/40 compromises.

### PLEASE ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:

What is the purpose of 'time-out'? \_\_\_\_\_

What is 'hitting below the belt'? \_\_\_\_\_

Why should we summarize what opponent said? \_\_\_\_\_

What does 'brainstorm' mean? \_\_\_\_\_

What is a compromise? \_\_\_\_\_

Tell how you resolved a conflict in the past. \_\_\_\_\_

Tell about a current conflict you face:

Who? \_\_\_\_\_

What about? \_\_\_\_\_

When did the problem start? \_\_\_\_\_

When can you talk to the person? \_\_\_\_\_

What does he or she want and why? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you want and why? \_\_\_\_\_

What compromises might work? \_\_\_\_\_

## FACILITATOR'S INFORMATION

# DON'T LET THEM PUSH YOUR BUTTONS

AGE	DIFFICULTY	PAGES
ALL	1	2

### PURPOSE

Identify sources of agitation and prevent angry response.

### MATERIALS

Board, marker, buttons, tape, paper, pencils,  
'DON'T LET THEM PUSH YOUR BUTTONS' WORKSHEET, page 6.

### ATTENTION GRABBER

Give a button to each person. Write on board, "Don't let them push your buttons."  
Ask, "What does 'push my buttons' mean?"  
Each person identifies what pushes his/her buttons.  
(Examples: Criticism, people talking about my family, phoniness.)

### ACTIVITY

Tape buttons to top of worksheets. Participants answer questions regarding most recent time they got really angry at a significant person. Elicit that our buttons get pushed because we allow it. We give someone the power and choose upsetting thoughts. Offer example: People call us "fatso" or unpleasant names. We're upset because we DECIDE to care about that opinion. Our esteem is threatened by being overweight and we think - "This is awful. They shouldn't call me names. I have to punch them." Alternatives: We can DECIDE "Name callers are ignorant and I don't want them as friends. They're cruel or insecure. I am worthwhile and attractive person regardless of my weight. It's unfortunate they said it but not the end of the world. Who is to say they 'shouldn't' do it? People do things they 'shouldn't' do all the time and I can't stop them. Punching them will get me in trouble. I can tell them how I feel, ask them to stop, tell someone in authority and decide to ignore them."

### FOLLOW-UP

Participants discuss their worksheet answers.

### VARIATION

PET PEEVES - people write their pet peeves anonymously on slips of paper - some may apply to peers. Put slips of paper in box. They take turns reading one, writing it on board, leading brainstorming sessions and listing ways to handle the person and/or peeve.





# DON'T LET THEM PUSH YOUR BUTTONS

## WORKSHEET

THE MOST RECENT TIME I WAS REALLY ANGRY AT A SIGNIFICANT PERSON:

Who was it?



What did this person do to 'push my buttons'?

Where did it occur?

When?

Why did this person do it? Why did it upset me?

How did I handle it?

How could I have NOT let this person 'push my buttons'?

(The other person's behavior is the same but I use different thoughts/feelings/actions in response.)

## FACILITATOR'S INFORMATION

# PASSIVE, AGGRESSIVE, ASSERTIVE

AGE	DIFFICULTY	PAGES
ALL *A *YP	2	3



Discuss aggressive, passive, assertive and passive-aggressive behaviors and their outcomes. Practice assertion.



Board, marker, container for CUT-UPS, small carpet, 'PASSIVE, AGGRESSIVE, ASSERTIVE' CUT-UPS, SITUATIONS for ADULTS, page 8, and SITUATIONS for YOUNG PEOPLE, page 9.



Place carpet near door. "What is this?"  
Elicit – "doormat." Elicit/discuss that doormats get stepped on, stuff anger and explode or become depressed and/or harmful to themselves.  
A participant writes on board "DOORMAT = PASSIVE." Volunteers write on board "EXPLODE = AGGRESSIVE", "SNEAKY = PASSIVE AGGRESSIVE" and "NICE BUT FIRM = ASSERTIVE."  
Examples: "I feel...", "Please...", "No" and "Be honest."



Pass around container with CUT-UPS. They take turns reading a situation and giving an example of each response with its expected outcome. (They should recognize assertion as effective and the others as maladaptive.) This activity is preferable for hyperactive and/or gregarious people. See variation below for people exhibiting lethargy.



Personalize concepts by each group member:  
1. telling a time s/he was passive, aggressive, passive-aggressive and assertive – and the outcomes.  
2. role playing a current situation requiring assertion.



Use terms "STUFF", "ESCALATE", "SNEAKY", "HANDLE" – one on each of four walls. Tape bag with papers overflowing to one wall (STUFF); a picture of a tornado on the second wall (ESCALATE), a mask (SNEAKY) on the third wall; a diagram of a hand or handle on the fourth wall (HANDLE). When a situation is read, everyone goes to the wall representing his/her initial inclination. Each describes the behavior and its likely outcome. Let the 'handlers' be 'the voice of reason' – peers learn from them. If no one selected 'handle,' a volunteer must go to that wall/sign and describe assertive behavior and its benefits specific to the situation.

# PASSIVE, AGGRESSIVE, ASSERTIVE

## SITUATIONS for ADULTS

1 Your family disapproves of your partner.	2 People behind you at the movies are talking loudly.	3 You bought a defective product.	4 Your car was repaired but continues to malfunction.
5 You are being physically, emotionally, sexually or financially abused.	6 A friend calls during your favorite TV show.	7 Your in-laws continually intrude.	8 Your partner listens to phone calls or goes through your mail or personal belongings.
9 Your friend, family or partner continually puts you down.	10 You want to be clean and sober but people push you to drink and/or use.	11 People ask to borrow money or cigarettes or items you do not want to lend.	12 People borrow and do not repay.
13 Friends want you to help them move and you do not want to injure your back.	14 Someone asks about your age, weight, illness or other personal questions.	15 You are unjustly accused of wrongdoing.	16 Someone is flirting with your partner.
17 You think your partner may be having an affair.	18 Your roommate or partner is sloppy.	19 You want a new job, raise or promotion.	20 A partner requests time alone.
21 A boss or co-worker takes credit for your idea.	22 People (whose friendship you seek or with whom you must work) ignore you.	23 You want to return to school or work and friends or family try to discourage you.	24 Your partner, roommate or family does not help with household chores.
25 Your children are defiant and/or disobedient.	26 You suspect your teenager is sexually active.	27 You suspect your teenager drinks and/or uses drugs.	28 Your kids dislike your partner or your partner dislikes your kids.

# PASSIVE, AGGRESSIVE, ASSERTIVE

## SITUATIONS for YOUNG PEOPLE

1 Someone borrows something and does not return it or breaks it.	2 You are asked to baby-sit and the kid gets on your nerves.	3 Someone cuts in front of you in line.	4 Someone you dislike wants friendship or a relationship.
5 You want friendship or a relationship with someone who seems to ignore you.	6 You want to be clean and sober and people are urging you to use drugs or drink alcohol.	7 Someone cheats at a game.	8 Someone asks to copy your answers on a test or homework.
9 You are asked your weight and don't want to tell.	10 You do not understand a school assignment.	11 Someone asks to borrow something you don't want to lend.	12 Someone is listening to your phone conversation, reading your mail or going through your things.
13 You are called a nasty name.	14 Someone takes your seat.	15 Someone asks nose questions about your family or your health/medication.	16 Teachers or parents accuse you of something you
17 Someone is trying to turn your friend against you or trying to break-up a relationship.	18 You are being emotionally, financially, physically or sexually abused.	19 Someone tries to start a fight.	20 Someone says mean things about you or your family.
21 You want to see a TV program or video and your friend or family wants to see another.	22 People say you can't join their club, game or clique.	23 People whisper, talk or laugh around you.	24 It upsets you to see your parents fight.
25 Your parents have a substance abuse problem.	26 Your grades are dropping.	27 Friends want you to ditch school with them.	28 You have trouble reading/writing and fear people will make fun of you.

## FACILITATOR'S INFORMATION

# THE VOLCANO

AGE	DIFFICULTY	PAGES
ALL *A *YP	2	4

### PURPOSE

Identify feelings and/or issues underlying anger.

### MATERIALS

Board, marker, paper, crayons, pencils, container for CUT-UPS.  
For Follow-Up II, use 'THE VOLCANO' CUT-UPS, FOR ADULTS, page 12,  
FOR YOUNG PEOPLE, page 13,  
and 'THE VOLCANO' CARDS, page 11.

### ATTENTION GRABBER

Show one member a picture of a volcano. S/he draws it on board and asks peers "What is this?"



### ACTIVITY

Discuss - Anger is the visible eruption of the volcano. Brainstorm and list the underlying feelings on board. Discuss three basic fears:

1. ABANDONMENT
2. LOSS OF CONTROL (of a situation or person)
3. LOSS OF FACE (feeling stupid or inadequate).

Have people share a time they were angry related to each fear and ways to cope. Ideas:

1. Recognize fear of ABANDONMENT, vulnerability to abuse just to avoid loneliness. Choose reliable people. Have more than one support person. Know when to end a relationship despite this fear.
2. To cope with LOSS OF CONTROL: Know we do control our body, thoughts, and feelings. Know our rights and practice assertion skills.
3. Ways to cope with fear of LOSS OF FACE: Know you may fear taking risks, speaking up, or trying new things (fear failure). Do reality checks - Realize "What people think is none of my business and can't hurt me." People who put us down are insecure themselves.

### FOLLOW-UP

- I. Participants draw the volcano with 3 sections underneath and write and depict situation(s) wherein they feared ABANDONMENT, LOSS OF CONTROL, LOSS OF FACE. Discuss better ways to handle each fear.
- II. Each member gets 3 cards (page 11): one is labeled - 'FEAR OF ABANDONMENT', one is labeled - 'FEAR OF LOSS OF CONTROL' and one is labeled 'FEAR OF LOSS OF FACE'. Participants take turns reading the CUT-UPS exemplifying the fears. For each situation, people hold up the applicable card(s) and defend their selection. Opinions may vary. There are no right or wrong answers and some situations require all three cards.

# THE VOLCANO

CARDS

FEAR OF  
ABANDONMENT

FEAR OF  
ABANDONMENT

FEAR OF  
LOSS OF CONTROL

FEAR OF  
LOSS OF CONTROL

FEAR OF  
LOSS OF FACE

FEAR OF  
LOSS OF FACE