

QUOTES ON FLEXIBLE THINKING

"The bend in the road is not the end of the road unless you refuse to take the turn."

—Unknown

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"To the man who only has a hammer, everything he encounters begins to look like a nail."

—Abraham H. Maslow

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"Nothing is softer or more flexible than water, yet nothing can resist it."

—Lao Tzu

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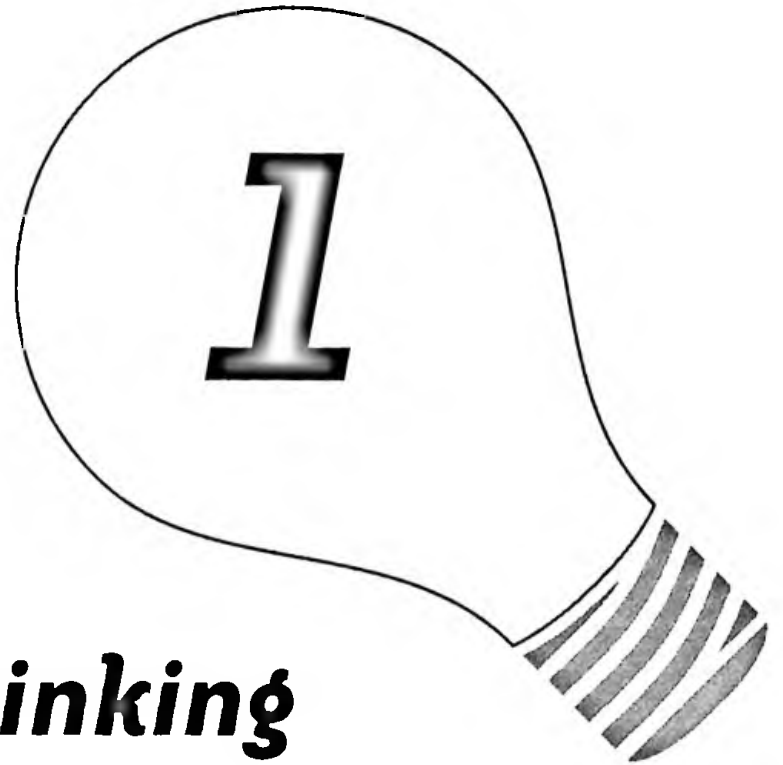
"There are things known and there are things unknown, and in between are the doors of perception."

—Aldous Huxley

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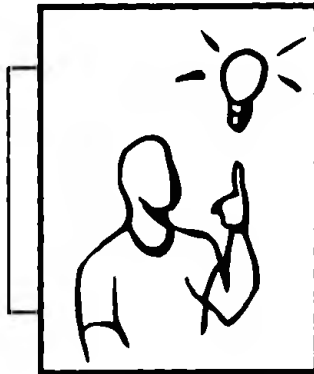
"All our knowledge has its origin in our perceptions."

—Leonardo Da Vinci



Flexible Thinking

T.I.P.s #1 and #2 — Hands-On Exercises for Flexible Thinking	13
T.I.P.s #3 Through #5 — Exercises to Open Your Mind!	15
T.I.P. #6 — Visual Activity: Looking at Things in a Different Way	17
T.I.P. #7 — Brainteaser: Even the Most Puzzling Situations Have Answers!	19
Handout: Puzzling Situations Brainteasers	20



T.I.P.s #1 & #2

“HANDS-ON” EXERCISES FOR FLEXIBLE THINKING

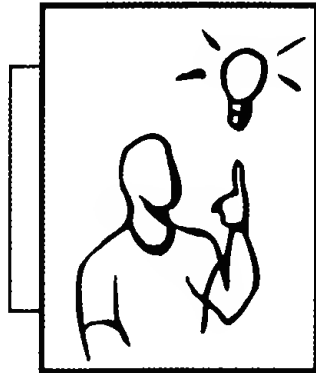
THEORY: These simple exercises are two of my favorites, and they go literally “hand in hand” to start a group thinking creatively. They are great warm-ups for a therapeutic group, workplace wellness workshop, or training seminar. In a group situation, this is a short but very powerful exercise that involves everyone. Although you can do this exercise with clients in individual treatment and make a very compelling case for the importance of flexible thinking, the group experience is ideal so that individuals can see firsthand that what is natural for us is not always natural for others. This focus of being flexible in slightly shifting one’s perspective is demonstrated powerfully yet simply in these two exercises.

T.I.P. #1 Finger Exercise—Get a Grip!

T.I.P. #2 Arm Folding Activity

T.I.P. #1 IMPLEMENTATION: Ask participants to clasp their hands so that their fingers interlock. Ask them to note which thumb is on top. In a group situation, ask them to raise their hands if they had their left thumb on top like me (noting to them that they can unclasp their hands now to raise their hands!). Usually roughly half the group raises their hands, regardless of right- or left-handedness. How many had their right thumb on top? Note the percentage now raising their hands. Note that what feels natural for some is not natural for others. Relate that idea to the idea of our perceptions; for example, we think people should see things the same way we do, and through this hands-on exercise we realize this is not true! Now have the group shift their fingers in the opposite way (make sure they clasp all their fingers differently, not just the thumbs). Ask the group how this feels. You likely will get responses such as, “weird, strange, uncomfortable.” Apply this hands-on exercise as a metaphor for the importance of how we often need to shift our thinking just so slightly—even though it might seem unnatural—in order to look at a situation in a different way. This can be a visual reminder of the importance of being flexible and changing one’s perspective, and to realizing that some people may struggle with something that might come naturally to you! In short, this exercise helps people “get a grip!”

T.I.P. #2 IMPLEMENTATION: Following the exercise in T.I.P. #1, have participants perform a more “advanced version.” In this exercise, have everyone fold their arms, noting which arm is on top. Ask for hands (urging them to let go first, of course) for those who had their right arm on top, etc. Bring to their



T.I.P. #6

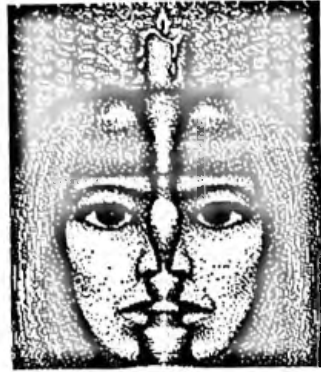
VISUAL ACTIVITY: LOOKING AT THINGS IN A DIFFERENT WAY

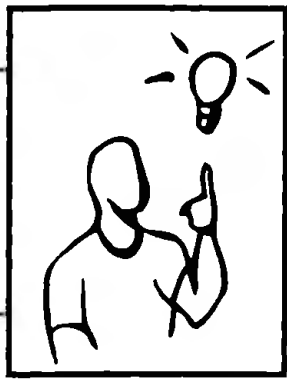
THEORY: We all can agree that there are different ways of looking at the same thing. These examples of famous visual drawings highlight this idea. These optical illusions bring home the point that there is more than one way of perceiving things around us. Being stuck in one-dimensional thinking can indeed be limiting!

IMPLEMENTATION: (Before group, photocopy the images on the following page to pass around the group.) Ask group members to look at the images. What do they see? Most often they will see one picture first, and some need no help quickly seeing the other figure. Others, however, have a great deal of trouble seeing the two pictures within the same picture.

PROCESSING: Encourage the group to view this visual activity as a way to emphasize the importance of flexible thinking skills. At times we are so stuck on one way of looking at something that we at times find it difficult to shift perspective slightly to see another equally valid interpretation of a situation. Rigid, one-dimensional thinking will only serve to cause one to miss out on important information, causing one to lose sight of the "whole." This tends to render us at times ineffective and inflexible in our thinking.

Flexible Thinking





T.I.P. #7

BRAINTEASER: EVEN THE MOST PUZZLING SITUATIONS HAVE ANSWERS!

THEORY: We restrict our potential by thinking in habitual ways. Clients who are depressed or anxious can be encouraged that by thinking in creative new ways, new insights can be achieved. This is a fun brainstorming exercise for a group situation, training, or teambuilding. It also gives one hope that, as the title in this exercise suggests, even the most puzzling situations have answers!

T.I.P. #7 Handout: Puzzling Situations Brainteasers

IMPLEMENTATION: Have group members break up into groups of twos or threes. Give participants three minutes to decipher the messages in the riddles found in the "Puzzling Situations Brainteasers" handout. Or, you can consider them as a whole group without pairing off, depending on if you want this to be a small group exercise or a whole group exercise. (Answers are seen at the bottom of this page.) This exercise encourages creative, "out of the box" thinking, which can be key in successfully dealing with psychological and relationship problems.

PROCESSING: Encourage individuals to see these "puzzles" as representations of their puzzling life situations. Ask participants how they felt and what this taught them about the importance of thinking in different ways. Encourage them to realize that thinking creatively and changing their perspectives often presents untapped potential. Creative and flexible thinking expands awareness to problem-solve in ways that can challenge and conquer even the most daunting dilemmas.

Answers: 1. Tea for two 2. Mayonnaise 3. Misunderstanding 4. Full back, halfback, quarterback 5. Once upon a time 6. Painless Operation 7. Are you lonesome without me? 8. Car in reverse gear 9. Mixed drinks

PUZZLING SITUATIONS BRAINTEASERS

1.

1T3456789

2.

MAY
AA

3.

Standing
UNDER

4.

BACK
BA
B

5.

11
TIME

6.

O-ER-T-I-O-

7.

Areyouloneso

8.

RcAaErG

9.

dknisr
krinds
rknisd

“GROUPIE” QUOTES

“The well-run group is not a battlefield of egos.”

—Lao Tzu

* * *

“Individuals play the game, but teams win championships.”

—Unknown

* * *

“Good communication is as stimulating as black coffee, and just as hard to sleep after.”

—Anne Morrow Lindbergh

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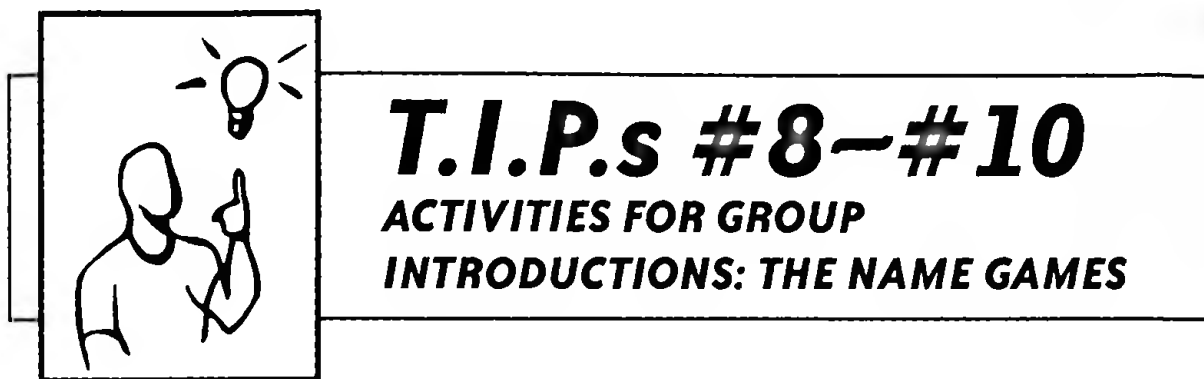
“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

—Margaret Mead



Group Beginnings

T.I.P.s #8 Through #10 — Activities for Group Introductions: The Name Games	25
T.I.P. #11 — Group Activity: Getting to Know You	27
T.I.P. #12 — Activity: Truths and Untruths	28
T.I.P. #13 — Icebreaker Activity: Catch!	29
T.I.P. #14 — Activity: Initially Created	30
T.I.P. #15 — Activity: Human Scavenger Hunt	31
Handout: Human Scavenger Hunt	32
T.I.P. #16 — Activity: The Circle Game	33
T.I.P. #17 — Activity: Colorful Group Survey	35
Handout: Sample Group Survey Questions	36



THEORY: Introductions set a tone for the ongoing group process. First impressions often have long-lasting effects! Creative, fun ways to help members bond and disclose in a non-threatening manner tend to start a group off on the right foot. This creative method of introducing oneself to others encourages members to participate right off the bat.

T.I.P. #8 Name Association Activity

T.I.P. #9 Learning and Remembering Names

T.I.P. #10 Yet Another “Name Game” Activity

T.I.P. #8 IMPLEMENTATION: Begin the group session by explaining that you would like group members to **1.** introduce themselves with first name only, **2.** use the first letter of their first name to describe something about themselves, and **3.** use the first letter of their last name to name something they like. For example, in the case of someone with the initials G.I., a response could be, “My name is Gina, and I am Gracious, and I like Ice Cream.” Once everyone has had a turn, use T.I.P. #9 to ensure that all names are remembered.

T.I.P. #9 IMPLEMENTATION: With so many names to remember, it is often difficult to keep names straight when embarking on a new group experience. This activity offers a very effective way to help group members remember names. Ask for a volunteer to try to go around and say as many names as possible, while encouraging group members to chime in to correct or help out. After the first volunteer, ask for another volunteer, repeating this exercise until all names are stated correctly at least a couple of times.

T.I.P. #10 IMPLEMENTATION: This is another variation of a “name game.” Using a large, soft ball, such as a beach ball, start the “ball rolling” by saying your name and the first thing that comes to mind to describe something about yourself. By asking for the “first thing,” participants are not likely to feel too put on the spot, as there is no expectation to have something prepared. Suggested topics participants can choose could be a like or dislike, thought, interest, occupation, or how they feel at the moment. Have all members take a turn at having the ball thrown to them. Once it goes back for a second round, say your name again and this time respond to something someone else had said. This 2nd version makes for an entertaining and interactive way to introduce oneself while listening to others.

Group Beginnings

PROCESSING: These three introduction activities set an interactive tone right from the start. You might brainstorm with participants on how to remember people's names for future group sessions—perhaps associating their names with something mentioned in T.I.P. #8. Talk about first impressions and discuss what they learned about one another from the adjective each participant chose. After using any of the three T.I.P.s, ask how the group felt about introducing themselves in these ways and what they learned about others.



T.I.P. #11

GROUP ACTIVITY: GETTING TO KNOW YOU

THEORY: Personal introductions are a way to start the group off on a positive note. This activity sets the stage for active participation and small group sharing right from the beginning. It also encourages the use of listening skills and gives participants an opportunity to glean important information about their fellow group members while getting a chance to express themselves.

IMPLEMENTATION: In the first session, do a self-introduction, and then request that all members pair up in twos or threes to introduce themselves to one another. Request that they find out the following: The person's first name, how they describe themselves, something about themselves that they think might be of interest to others, and what they hope to get out of the group experience. The partners might want to take notes in order to introduce these members to the group afterward. Give group members five to eight minutes (depending on if you pair into twos or threes), and then have the small groups take turns introducing one another to the whole group.

PROCESSING: This activity emphasizes active listening, learning, and sharing with one another. It gives everyone a chance to participate in the group experience. It has many advantages over the more traditional manner of self-introduction, as this activity is very interactive and requires listening and learning.





T.I.P. #12

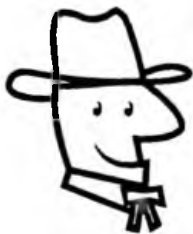
ACTIVITY: TRUTHS & UNTRUTHS

THEORY: This is a fun and potentially intriguing activity for a newly formed group, and a way to get to know one another while getting a chance to play detective!

IMPLEMENTATION: In this activity, have all group members write down two things about themselves that are true and one or two “untruths.” Items can include something that seems plausible or something outlandish—that is up to each individual. Then go around and have each person say the two truths and one or two untruths, and ask group members to guess which are true and which are not. After a minute or so of guessing, the “real” answers are shared. Have them explain their deductive reasoning. Make sure all participants get a turn.

PROCESSING: Ask group members what they found out about each person from the “true” statements and what they found about each person by the “untruths.” This is a good activity for self-disclosure and for developing group cohesiveness.

I have been skydiving,
I've been to Alaska,
and I am a lawyer.





T.I.P. #13

ICEBREAKER ACTIVITY: CATCH!

THEORY: This is a light-hearted, informal exercise in which members are given an opportunity to share about themselves with the group. This need not only be for Introduction purposes. This activity also can be used in an ongoing group to give all members a chance to express.

IMPLEMENTATION: Using a beach ball or other large, soft ball, start the “ball rolling” by having members take turns throwing the ball to one another. Upon receiving the ball, each member makes a self-disclosure (such as something he/she did that week, something on his/her mind, etc.), and then throws the ball to someone else. After everyone gets a turn, the leader could have another topic for the next round, for instance, naming a favorite song and why; the next round could be another question such as, “What is the best (or worst) thing that happened to you this week?” Questions can be tailored to the type of group and what issues you would like addressed in the group.

PROCESSING: This informal activity encourages even the quietest member of the group to participate and can be a springboard for addressing issues relating to the leader’s questions. The playfulness symbolized by the ball can underlie very serious disclosure in a relatively non-threatening manner.

