

Building Blocks

Physical:

Perhaps you have some old blocks at home or maybe a fellow staff member does, the wooden blocks are best. (Do not use blocks that have to snap together; the task is too difficult and it would be total frustration!)

Sometimes you can find blocks at second hand stores. A box full would be great!

Dump the blocks on the table. Talk about the noise and then pick them up and show each participant. Many older folks grew up with wooden blocks and they will remember them.

Clear a space in front of each participant and get him or her started building a tower. They may need hands-on help or perhaps some will need you to build the entire tower. Make the towers as tall as possible. Talk about the height about the height and how they start weaving and how soon they will fall. Will it tip with this last block? When it tips, let it go. The fun and the possible involvement of a withdrawn individual might occur when the blocks fall and make the noise of falling and scatter all over the table and the floor. Then start over. Build several towers so that each participant has an opportunity to make the tallest. Remember, there is no hurry. Have fun!

Cognitive:

The physical part of this session is always performed first to help gain the attention of the participants and help them organize their thoughts.

The items required for this half of the session are wooden blocks and prepared shoeboxes.

Remove the lids of three or four shoeboxes and cut two holes in two of them and three holes in the other two. Each lid will include a square hole just a bit larger than the blocks so they will easily fit through. The other holes will be a circle, smaller than the block, and a triangle, also smaller.

Show the participants what you want them to do by placing a block into the appropriate hole so it falls in the box. Then hand a block to an individual and assist them in performing the desired act. When a block falls into the box it's like someone scored a basket! "Hooray, we got one!" Once again, take your time, be pleasant, not rushed. Use participants' first names when encouraging them.

When it becomes clear that everyone has done their best and, with or without help, has placed several blocks into the boxes, it is time to wind things up. Bring out the block box and have participants place or throw the blocks into the box. Set the shoebox inside and thank everyone for playing.

The following song can be sung throughout the activity to enhance it even more:

LONDON BRIDGE IS FALLING DOWN

London Bridge is falling down, following down, falling down
London Bridge is falling down, my fair lady
Build it up with wood and clay, wood and clay, wood and clay
Build it up with wood and clay, my fair lady

Wood and clay will wash away, wash away, wash away
Wood and clay will wash away, my fair lady
Build it up with brick and mortar, brick and mortar, brick and mortar
Build it up with brick and mortar my fair lady

Build it up with iron and steel, iron and steel, iron and steel
Build it up with iron and steel, my fair lady
Iron and steel will bend and bow, bend and bow, bend and bow
Iron and steel will bend and bow, my fair lady

Build it up with silver and gold, silver and gold, silver and gold
Build it up with silver and gold, my fair lady
Silver and gold will be stolen away, stolen away, stolen away
Silver and gold will be stolen away, my fair lady

