

Session 2

Focusing Attention

OBJECTIVES

- Discuss how paying attention is an important part of getting along with others.
- Practice focusing attention and exercising self-control in both visual and auditory modalities.
- Begin to give and take cues with a partner.
- Increase trust and cohesion among participants.

MATERIALS

Talking stick

Copies of the Home Challenge assignment

PROCEDURE

Warm-up

Repeat the Name Game, described in Session 1, or conduct the following warm-up activity.

ONE LITTLE THING

Have the group form a circle, with one participant standing in the middle. This participant slowly turns around for about a minute so everyone in the circle has a chance to observe the person closely. The participant then leaves the room and changes “one little thing” about the way they look. For example, they might untie one shoe or move their watch from one wrist to the other. When they return, the other participants see if they can spot the change. Guide the participants to raise their hands to make guesses. To make this game more difficult, instruct the person who will leave the room to change two or more small things about the way they look.

Home Challenge Review

Encourage participants to share their responses to the Home Challenge, to describe their feelings about the first session. Normalize the feelings that participants express

and emphasize listening to the speaker when it is the speaker's turn to talk, using the talking stick, as appropriate. As participants share, ask others if they had similar reactions.

It is important not to force anyone to share an experience. If no one wants to volunteer, begin a discussion about what it is like to share their experiences (maybe a little scary?).

Discussion

Lead a discussion about why it is important to pay close attention in social situations. Here are some sample questions to get the discussion started:

- Is it important to pay attention when you're in a group?
- Why is paying attention to others so important?
- What can you learn by paying attention to others?
- What kinds of things should you pay attention to when you're in a group?
- What kinds of things can make it easier or harder to pay attention?
- What do you do to help yourself pay attention?

Clones

Have one leader ask for a volunteer to help model this activity for participants first. The activity is done in silence, without touching.

1. Invite participants to choose partners (or pair them up yourself). One partner is the "original," and the other is the "clone." Have partners face each other, then ask them to look each other in the eyes. The original will, very slowly, start to move. The clone should copy the movement as accurately as possible so it appears that they are moving at the same time.
2. Encourage the original to move slowly at first, using very simple movements and then gradually speeding up, always making sure that the clone can keep up. (Someone observing the pair should have a hard time deciding who is the original and who is the clone.)
3. After a while, have participants switch roles. You can encourage them to be creative. Participants can incorporate facial expressions, sit down, or turn to the side, but they should keep eye contact at all times.

To avoid arguments about who goes first, choose initial roles for the partners based on whose name comes first in the alphabet.

Who Started It?

1. Have participants sit in a circle. One person is the "guesser," who goes out of the room. After the guesser has left the room, someone else in the group is chosen as the "leader." The leader begins a repetitive movement that the rest of the circle imitates (e.g., snapping fingers, clapping, touching toes). From time to time, the leader changes the movement. The object of the game is to have the group copy

the leader and switch movements as fast as they can so the guesser can't tell who is initiating the movement.

2. When it looks as though the group is working together, invite the guesser to return to the center of the circle and try to guess who is leading the motion. The group tries to make it harder for the guesser by not looking directly at the person starting the motion. Allow the guesser to make three guesses.
3. If time allows, give every participant an opportunity to be either leader or guesser.
4. Discuss the activity with the group. Questions may include the following:
 - What did you pay attention to?
 - What clues helped you know who the leader was?
 - What strategies helped you narrow down your choices?
 - How was attention an important part of this game?

Super-Powered Hearing

1. Ask participants to spread out in the room, lie on their backs, and close their eyes. Tell them that they are going to find out how powerful their sense of hearing really is. Ask them to be quiet and listen very carefully—to actually send their hearing out into the room and listen to every noise they can.
2. After a minute, ask participants to send their hearing out beyond the room, into the building. What do they hear outside of the room that tells them about what is going on in other parts of the building?
3. After this, ask them to imagine that they can send their hearing out into the world. Ask participants whether they can hear any sounds from the street. If windows are open, can they hear any sounds from nature or any machines from far away?
4. Have participants sit up and discuss their experience: What did they hear? What did they focus their attention on? Did they hear others breathing? Did they hear voices of other people in the building? Did they hear the hum of the air conditioner or a car passing by? Are they surprised at how powerful their hearing is when they really focus it? Some participants may claim to have heard impossible things (e.g., someone shouting far across town or in another state). Accept all answers, even creative products of the imagination!

Wrap-up

1. Discuss session content. Questions to the group could include the following:
 - Why is it important to pay attention?
 - Did you learn any new ways to help yourself pay attention?
 - When were some times today that you were focusing your attention?
 - What were some things today that made it difficult for you to pay attention?

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2. Give each participant a copy of the Home Challenge and answer any questions the group might have about the assignment. Remind them that they will have a chance to share their responses to the challenge at the beginning of the next session.

Session 2 Home Challenge

Find a spot at home, preferably outside, where you can quietly sit down. Take some time to look at the world around you. Notice the details around you. If you are outside, for example, do you see any bugs on the blades of grass or crawling around? Is there a wind? What do you smell? See how long you can sit quietly, simply observing everything around you. How long can you sit? One minute? Three? Five? What do you notice? Did you surprise yourself?

You can write about your experience, draw a picture, or discuss your thoughts with your parents.

Process Drama 3

Standing in Someone Else's Shoes

Summary and Context

In this drama, a group leader takes on the role of hosting a television talk show called "Standing in Someone Else's Shoes." Each week, the host invites guests with widely different opinions on specific topics and asks them to discuss why they believe what they do. Participants chosen as guests must understand and represent the point of view of the character they are assigned to play. At some point during the game show, a group leader rings a bell or sounds a noisemaker, at which point guests must switch seats, switch roles, and argue from the *other* point of view! Participants not chosen as guests become audience members who will observe the guests' interactions and be asked to comment on how well the guests represented their points of view. However, all participants should have an opportunity to be a talk show guest if time permits.

Roles

Group leaders play the following parts:

Talk Show Host (Flashy Grins or Suzie Smiles)

Callers (*optional*)

Participants take on the roles of talk show guests and audience.

Props and Other Materials

Slips of paper, pencil, and a bag or hat

Microphone (toy or real)

Bell or other noisemaker

Poster board and marker

Desk and chairs

Hat and jacket for host, other costume items for guests and audience members to choose from (hats, jackets, ties, etc.)

Telephone (*optional*)

CD player for theme music (*optional*)

Preparation

Write “The Standing in Someone Else’s Shoes Show” on the poster board and display the sign prominently. Place two or three chairs in a row on one side of the room, forming an impromptu stage. Position a desk and chair slightly to the side for the talk show host, and place the microphone and telephone (if you wish) on the desk. Set up rows of chairs for the remaining participants to sit in, as audience members. Write the talk show topic and roles for the show’s guests on slips of paper and place them in a hat or bag for participants to draw.

Conducting the Drama

One leader can play theme music on the CD player to help establish the context, if desired, just before the introduction.

INTRODUCTION

Host:

Welcome to the talk show that REALLY knows how you feel. Or at least we think we do! Now, we’re not going to really take off our shoes and switch them (that might get very stinky). We’re just using the expression “standing in someone else’s shoes” to explain that we are going to try and see from each others’ point of view. It’s like we’re going to pretend that we ARE them and try to guess what it is like to BE them. Our guests today will be giving their opinions on various topics and trying to convince us that they are right. But if they hear this sound (*ring bell or make noise with noisemaker*), they have to switch points of view!

SAMPLE QUESTION-ANSWER SEGMENT

One leader takes the role of host, while another leader plays the part of the guest. Leaders model a brief question-answer segment to give participants an idea of what the host and guest roles entail.

You might pretend the guest is a celebrity or famous politician or perhaps the school’s principal—someone participants will know—and ask questions accordingly. For example, leaders might model with something like the following.

Host: Principal Miller, thank you for being here. Today we’re going to talk about school lunches. Many people have strong opinions about them. I know I did when I was in school! Lately, some parents want to get rid of the cafeteria because they think that cafeteria food is not healthy. What is your opinion?

Principal: Thanks, Flashy. Well, I can see why parents are worried, but I think closing down the cafeteria would be a bad idea. Our cafeteria provides lots of healthy choices. We have salads, fruit, and lots of protein.

Host: But do kids ever choose the healthy foods?

Principal: Sure they do! And think about it: If we closed down the cafeteria, some kids who aren't able to bring lunch wouldn't get to eat lunch at all.

Host: Let's see what our other guest thinks. Welcome to our show, Mrs. Quigdonald. You have a son in Principal Miller's school. Tell us, what do you think about the cafeteria?

Parent: Well, last week, when I asked my son what he had for lunch, he said a bag of chips, a soda, and four chocolate cookies. That doesn't sound very healthy to me . . . so I think the cafeteria needs to be closed.

(Questions and answers continue.)

CHOOSING TALK SHOW TOPICS AND GUESTS

Leaders let participants know the topic for the talk show, chosen in advance, and draw roles for that topic from the hat or bag. (Alternatively, participants may suggest a topic.) The show's guests then select and dress in costume pieces appropriate for their roles. These may simply consist of hats and/or jackets. They may choose their own guest names, if they wish. Ideally, all participants should have the chance to be guests and to switch perspectives on the same topic as guests. If time doesn't allow for this, you may choose to limit the guests to certain participants by randomly picking their names from a hat or extend the drama to the following session, eliminating some activities from a future session if you think that extending this activity would be more valuable.

Sample topics and guests:

- Topic 1: A Colony on the Moon?
Guest 1: For
Guest 2: Against
- Topic 2: Cell Phones in Classrooms
Guest 1: Teacher (against)
Guest 2: Student (for)
- Topic 3: Let's Bring Dinosaurs Back to Life
Guest 1: Scientist (wants to bring dinosaurs back to life)
Guest 2: Environmentalist (thinks dinosaurs will hurt the Earth's existing habitats)
- Topic 4: Peanuts: Should We Stop Growing Them?
Guest 1: Hates peanuts and is allergic to them
Guest 2: Peanut farmer

PUTTING ON THE SHOW

The host and guests take their positions on the "stage." Almost anything can happen next. For example, if the topic "Peanuts: Should We Stop Growing Them?" is chosen by the group, the drama might progress as follows.

Host: Today's topic is peanuts! Should they be banned? Let's hear from today's guests. First, we have Guest 1, John Doe. Hi, John.

Guest 1: Hi.

Host: What do you think about peanuts?

Guest 1: Um . . . I hate them. They're awful. And I'm allergic to them.

Host: OK, you hate them. What do you think should be done?

Guest 1: Let's get rid of peanuts. Stupid food.

Host: Tell us more.

Guest 1: Um . . . (*Shrugs.*)

Host: (*Trying to help out participant*) If we got rid of them, how would that help you?

Guest 1: I could die if I eat them. I would be safer since I wouldn't have to be around them anymore. I think lots of kids are allergic to them.

Host: Yes, that's true. But I'm not sure everyone agrees with your idea to get rid of them. Let's see what our second guest has to say. Farmer Jones?

Guest 2: Yeah, that's me.

Host: I hear your main crop is peanuts. What do you think about getting rid of peanuts once and for all?

Guest 2: I think that would be a really bad idea. Growing peanuts is how I make money.

Host: (*To Guest 1*) What do you think about that?

Guest 1: Well, he could grow something else, like corn.

Guest 2: (*Turning to Guest 1*) You're stupid! Don't you . . .

At this point, group leaders may say, "Stop" or freeze the drama and remind the participant that name calling is not an OK way to respond. Group leaders ask the participant to come up with a different response. They may ask other participants, "Why is calling him stupid not a good idea?" Possible answers include "It would make him feel bad," "It isn't a good argument for peanuts," "It would cause more conflict," and so forth.

Guest 2: I don't want to grow anything else. There are people who like peanuts. Peanut butter is really popular. Just because he doesn't like it doesn't mean that no one should grow peanuts. My whole family loves them.

A group leader rings a bell, signaling that guests should switch seats and positions.

Host: Ah! There's our signal to *stand in someone else's shoes!* Guests, it's time for you to switch seats and see if you can argue from the other person's point of view. Now switch seats, switch roles, and continue debating this topic, but from the other person's perspective.

If participants look confused, the host clarifies what to do and leaders model it if necessary.

Host: John Doe (*or participant name*), you are now Farmer Jones. Farmer Jones (*or participant name*), you are now John Doe. Farmer Jones, what can you say about peanuts? As Farmer Jones, do you want to get rid of peanuts or keep farming them?

Guest 1: (*Now the peanut farmer*) I want to keep farming them?

Host: Great! Why?

Guest 1: Because . . . I make a lot of money doing that, and lots of people like peanut butter. Not everyone is allergic to it. Some people love it.

Host: And, John Doe, what do you have to say to that?

Guest 2: (*Now John Doe*) It doesn't matter if people love peanuts. If I'm near peanuts, I get really sick. And lots of other kids are allergic to them, too.

Host: What else?

If no one says anything, the host may decide to take a question from the audience, or another group leader may say that someone is calling in with a question.

CALLER AND AUDIENCE QUESTIONS

Calls from viewers and audience questions can serve several purposes. A group leader might choose to insert a call from a viewer as a way to steer the drama back on track, much as the unexpected phone call functions in the detective dramas. For example, if two guests begin to debate something unrelated to the talk show topic, a call from a viewer can bring the show back on topic. Also, if guests are having trouble defending their position and don't know what to say, audience questions or calls from viewers can help provide them with ideas. Finally, audience questions allow all group members to be actively engaged in the drama.

Continuing the previous process drama example, an audience question might function like this.

Host: Do we have any questions from the audience? (*Two audience members raise their hands. Another group leader calls on one of them and stands next to him or her with the microphone. The audience member takes the microphone.*)

Audience Member: Can't you just stay away from peanuts?

Host: Was that question for John Doe?

Audience Member: Yes.

Host: How do you want to answer that, John?

The participant who is playing John Doe answers, and the drama continues.

PROCESSING THE TALK SHOW DRAMA

After a topic has been discussed sufficiently and the show is over, leaders invite the audience members and guests themselves to comment on how well guests supported

their opinions. Guests can also provide feedback to the audience about how well they paid attention. Sample questions might include these:

- Were the guests convincing in their roles? What about when they switched parts?
- If you were a guest, was it hard to switch parts and start arguing from the opposite point of view?
- Did you find your own opinions changing more as you heard more information?

If time permits, conduct another show on another topic. Give as many participants as possible a chance to take on a guest role.