

Playing For Peace

Presented by

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Included here is a collection of games that can be introduced and played with pre-school children. The structure and format of these games is cooperative. There is no competition, no winners or losers, no exclusion as in many other children's games. They are played for the sheer joy of playing and being with friends. The various types of movement promoted in these games also aids in the physical development of the young child. Enjoy yourself and the children as you play these games.

The games are printed here in a format that can be copied onto or pasted on to cardstock, cut into 8" x 6" cards and held together with binder rings. That way you can keep them handy for whenever you are looking for ideas for movement activities with your class. Some games work best with large groups, some with smaller groups, and some are great for birthday parties! Consult the resources at the end of the list for even more great cooperative games and activities or to read more about the importance of cooperative play. You may contact me at Fitzsusan@aol.com if you have any questions.

FROGS and LILY PADS

Need: Music, rugs or mats, CD player and music

Explain that the children are frogs hopping around the pond. The teacher pretends to be the alligator using arms to mimic the large jaws of the alligator opening and closing as it tries to catch a frog for lunch. Play music for the hopping around and chasing time. Each time the music stops the frogs need to land on a lily pad for safety where the alligator cannot catch them. One of the 'lily pads' is removed and the music starts again. Use small rugs or mats for the lily pads. Newspapers work well or make lily pads out of green poster board. In the end there is just one lily pad and everyone crowds onto it, helping each other and hugging each other so that all the children are safe from the alligator. Some children do love to be caught. Instead of excluding them from the next round, give them the roles of removing the mats, turning on and off the music or giving directions to safety for the other children. This game is a favorite, full of silliness and giggles. It promotes hopping, skipping, body awareness and peripheral awareness.

SOUND SEEKING CRAWLERS

Need: Sheet or Parachute, drum or music box

Children gather around the perimeter of a sheet and hold it down to the ground. One child is chosen to be the crawler and goes under the sheet. Unseen by the crawler, another child on the sheet's perimeter is given a drum on which he gently taps. The crawler has to crawl toward the sound of the drum. When she finds who has the drum, the drummer becomes the next crawler. Everyone gets a turn to be a crawler. A music box works well too for the sound and a parachute could be used in place of a sheet. This game can also be a diagnostic activity for hearing difficulties with the little ones.

PARACHUTE GAMES

Need: Parachute or old sheet, wide open space

So many activities can be done with a parachute. It takes everyone cooperating around the perimeter and fun will be shared!

- Have everyone hold the parachute aloft and call out children's names to take turns running underneath, then to take another child's place.
- Make a giant tent for everyone to sit under. This will necessitate billowing the parachute overhead several times to capture enough air. Then have everyone step inside on a signal and sit down holding the edge of the parachute behind them.
- Place a quantity of small plastic balls in the center of the parachute. Have everyone raise the parachute up and down to make them pop up and down like popcorn. See how long the group can keep the popcorn popping before they drain through the center hole or are bounced off of the parachute.
- Using two smaller parachutes or two sheets, or beach towels for the littlest ones, try and pass a ball back and forth between them. Count excitedly to see how many times the teams can make successful catches.

COOPERATIVE SPIDER WEB

Need: Larger ball of string or yarn, circular holders for little ones

Children sit in a small circle, evenly spaced on the rug or around a table. Little children may need a large circular holder to pass the string through. The ball of string is rolled across the circle to one another. Each time a child receives the ball of string he passes it through the holder before rolling it on to someone else.

- To build community, the child passing the ball of string may say something they like or appreciate about the person receiving it, addressing them by name. With little ones it can be as simple as "Latasha is my friend", "Charlie helped me with my work today", "Susie makes cool block cities" or "I like to play with Suruchi".
- To save the spider web, perhaps to illustrate the group's interconnectedness and interdependence, an adult ties the points of the web and then cuts them from the holders. The web can be hung on a wall if everyone holds their corner while the web is moved.
- Another use for the web after making it is to play or sing "One Elephant Came Out to Play" by Sharon, Lois and Bram. One child chooses another to tiptoe along the web's strands with him, then another, then another until all the children are on the web.

MUSICAL KIDS ORCHESTRA

Need; Some space, kids' imaginations

Each child decides on a noise he/ she wants to make (hum, beep beep, raspberries, click a tongue, clap, snap fingers, siren, hee hee hee, boom boom, whistle...) She will make that sound only when a 'player' touches him on the head. Children lay or sit next to each other in a row and everyone takes turns being a player. It is best to begin with three to five children laying side by side and one player until the kids get the idea. Later progress to two players and more in the band. Lots of silly fun! Or, pretend to be a conductor and point to each child to make their sound. Be sure and have a signal so they know when to stop making the sound too.

MUSICAL PARTNERS

This is another stop-and-start the music game. When the music stops, everyone has to find a partner and complete some task or position that is agreed upon before the music even begins. Back touching partner's back, shake hands, sit down feet to feet, bottom to bottom, touch shoulders, link elbows, knee to knee, hold hands and jump around, and so on... These can be changed throughout the game as the players have their own ideas.

CATS AND MICE

A really simple game but enjoyed so much for the sheer joy of running around and racing against time. A timer can be used, or a song that the children know when the end is coming.

All of the children are cats trying to recapture the mice. "Mice" can be any small object that you have a large quantity of – balls, walnuts, peanuts, corks... A 'mouse hole' is established ; a bucket or dish tub. Children sit around the mouse hole while you toss around and loosely hide the mice. They can close their eyes. On the count of three, all the cats race around to bring the mice into the hole as quickly as they can. Give a signal when it is time to come back and sit around the mouse hole. If there are treats, they can be fair shared all around.

HIDE AND SEEKERS

Many children hide trying not to let the others know their hiding place. Establish something to be a home base. The first seeker is closing his eyes and counting to 50 or so. When everyone is ready the seeker starts seeking. When he finds a hider – both of them run to touch home base. Now both of them help to find hidden persons, and each new person found runs to touch home base and can then become a seeker. Or try:

SARDINES: Have only one person hide while everyone else closes their eyes and counts. The hider has to find an especially good hiding place big enough for everyone to fit in. Then one by one the seekers find the hider and scrunch in together until everyone is together again. Read Playing Sardines by Beverly Major.

HUMAN OBSTACLE COURSE

Have children turn themselves into obstacles loosely spaced around an area. Tell each child to decide how they are going to tell their friends to move around them...over, under, crawl, hop three times, skip, tip-toe, somersault, and so on. With little ones you may have to demonstrate several options for them to get the idea. You can give them hula hoops, balls or other simple equipment to tell their friends how to use. When everyone is ready have one child go through the course. When he gets to the end, he becomes an obstacle and the person at the beginning of the course goes through. The game lasts as long as interest and creativity allow.

WRAP A FRIEND

Need: Large supply of newsprint sheets and masking tape.

By far this is one of the most popular games. Children take turns being 'wrapped'. The rules are to leave faces free and always ask about the comfort of the person being wrapped up. When the wrapping is finished, everyone counts to 10 and the child gets to 'bust out' to the glee of everyone! After clean up, another child gets a turn.

KEEP IT UP

Need: Beach ball, punch ball, large balloon or light weight ball

A large light weight ball is used. Have a smaller group of children stand in a circle (4 to 8). The entire group tries to keep the ball from touching the ground as long as they can by tapping it upward as it comes to each person. You can count out loud each time it is tapped up or use a timer.

BAG HEADS

Need: Paper bags or blind folds

Put a bag over one child's head. Everyone else runs around until the Bag Head says "FREEZE". Everyone then stays where they are while the Bag Head wanders around trying to find someone. When he does he has to guess who it is by touch. If his guess is correct, that person becomes a Bag Head too and they both get to go around looking for new people to identify. If the guess is incorrect, everyone gets to run around again until the Bag Head calls out "FREEZE" again. The game continues until all but one person have bags over their heads. The last person identified becomes the first Bag Head for the next game.

- from Self-Esteem Games by Barbara Sher

GUESS WHO

Need: Paper bag or blind fold

CHANT: Who is this? Who is this?
Can you tell me who is this?

One player is blindfolded or has a bag over her head. Everyone chants the chant as you guide one person in front of the blindfolded player, who feels the person and guesses who it is. You can start with the child's hands first, this is a little less intimidating.

- from Self -Esteem Games by Barbara Sher

SWAY AND BEND

Getting everyone to sway in the same direction takes time, but not words. Just start the movement and eventually everyone will be in harmony.

Hold each other's forearms while in a circle and all bend backwards, supporting each other. If that is too hard for your group, start by sitting in a circle with toes pointing straight ahead to the middle of the circle. Hold forearms and lean back.

While sitting or standing, try all to sway in the same direction so you are like blades of grass being blown back and forth in the wind.

- from Self-Esteem Games by Barbara Sher

COOPERATIVE CHAIR EXCHANGE

Need: One chair for every 2 or 3 children

The chairs are spread out around the room in a circle. Everyone finds a chair to sit on with a friend or two. Then a series of exchanges are called out: "Everyone who has a dog move one chair"; "Everyone who has long hair move two chairs"; "Move over as many chairs as there are people in your family". Later ask children on various chairs to make up their own exchange signal.

- from The Second Cooperative Sports and Games Book by Terry Orlick

BEACH BALL WALK

Need: As many beach balls as players

Begin the game with two people walking around the room with a ball between them, tummy to back. Players can not use their hands on the ball while walking. Then add another ball and person and see how long they can walk joined together. Stop and add another, and another. Challenge the group to see how long of a line they can form and how far they can go!

- from The Second Cooperative Sports and Games Book by Terry Orlick

BEACH BALL BALANCE

Need; Beach ball or small squishy ball for each pair of children

Five year olds can try and balance a beach ball between their foreheads and see just how far they can move cooperatively together before it drops...no hands on the ball! Younger children will need a smaller, squishy type sponge ball. It is okay to hold each other, just not the ball!

-from; The Second Cooperative Sports and Games Book by Terry Orlick

LOGS TO MARKET

Children pretend they are logs and lie beside each other. The child on the end then lies across (perpendicular) on top of the other children's bodies and all the children on the bottom roll continually. Their rolling gives the top person a ride from one end to the other! This is great fun. When the top person rides to the end, she lies next to that person and a new child from the far end gets a ride across the top of everyone. Continue until all have had a ride. Depending on the size of your space, everyone may have to reassemble again at the far end...or if the young children understand, reverse their direction to roll back to the other side.

-from; Self-Esteem Games by Barbara Sher

RUN WILD, RUN FREE

Explain that you are the chief, and the children are members of your family. You have a fine life together running free in the jungle except that there is one danger – tigers. The way the children keep from being eaten by a tiger is to watch the wise chief. Like all chiefs, you have magic ears and hear the tiger before anyone else. When the chief sits down with hand over mouth, everyone else sits down immediately too. This quietness fools the tiger, who goes away. The chief signals the all clear by calling, "Run wild, run free!" Everyone (especially the chief) starts whooping, hollering, jumping, running and having a good time. Then, plop, the chief suddenly sits down again – and instantly so does everyone else. Play until everyone seems sufficiently tired.

Be inconsistent - vary the time intervals between running and sitting. Compliment the behavior you want. "You sat down so fast! Good watching!" Lots of children want to be chief, so take turns for at least one round each.

This game helps to develop peripheral awareness.

- from Self-Esteem Games by Barbara Sher

SHAPES AND COLORS

Need: paper cut-outs in the shapes of circles, squares, triangles, & rectangles in four different colors – two of each shape. Music and CD player.

Place the shapes on the floor and play some music to which all the children skip around. When the music stops, each child picks up a shape and tries to get together with another child in one of the following ways:

1. Find a friend with the same shape.
2. Find a friend with the same color.
3. Find everyone who has the same shape
4. Find everyone who has the same color
5. Find a friend with the same shape and the same color!

Give the instruction for getting together at the beginning of each game before the music starts.

PUZZLED MUSICAL PARTNERS

Need: CD player and music

This is a reverse of the usual musical partner games where everyone dances together! After partners have been chosen, music is played and the children walk and skip away from their partners. As soon as the music stops, the partners rush toward each other, join hands, and squat down. The moment the music starts again they are both up and away. Short intervals cause lots of delight and surprise.

-from; The Second Cooperative Sports and Games Book by Terry Orlick

RUN AWAY TRAIN

An active game that introduces an element of challenge and ends in a common goal: Groups of four or five children form a train by wrapping their arms around the waist of the person immediately in front of them. The front of each train tries to link up to the back of another train while trying itself to be linked from behind by another train. If one train does hook up with another, the two parts continue as one unit trying to join up with the other smaller pieces. Before long, all the small trains will be linked up into one large one. The front engine can then try to catch and link up to the last car.

-from ;The Second Cooperative Sports and Games Book by Terry Orlick

RESOURCES

Games Manual of Non-competitive Games by James Deacove, 1974,
Family Pastimes

Everybody Wins, 393 non-competitive games for young children by
Jeffrey Sobel, 1983, Walker Publishing Co. inc.

Self-Esteem Games by Barbara Sher, 1998, John Wiley and Sons, Inc.

The Second Cooperative Sports and Games Book by Terry Orlick,
1982, Pantheon Books

No Contest by Alfie Kohn, 1986, Houghton Mifflin Company

Parachute Play by Liz and Dick Wilmes, 1985, Building Blocks
Publications