# TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE CREATIVE COMMUNITY .................................................................................................................. 3
GOALS & AGREEMENTS .......................................................................................................................... 5
WHY THE ARTS? ....................................................................................................................................... 6
THE BIG IDEAS .......................................................................................................................................... 7
A RECIPE FOR ENGAGING ....................................................................................................................... 9
TIPS FOR FACILITATION .......................................................................................................................... 10
SETTING THE STAGE ............................................................................................................................... 13
OPENING ARTS ACTIVITIES .................................................................................................................... 14
CREATIVE NAMETAGS, I-AM POSTERS ............................................................................................ 14
NAME GAMES ........................................................................................................................................ 16
WALK INTO THE CIRCLE ......................................................................................................................... 16
PATTERNED NAME GAMES ................................................................................................................... 17
EXPLORING YOUR CREATIVITY ........................................................................................................... 19
VISUALIZATION ...................................................................................................................................... 19
CREATIVE WRITING ............................................................................................................................... 21
DRAWING YOUR CREATIVE SPIRIT ......................................................................................................... 21
CREATING METAPHORS .......................................................................................................................... 23
STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS ............................................................................................................... 24
GROUP POEM & PERFORMANCE ........................................................................................................... 25
PASS AROUND POEM ............................................................................................................................. 26
RULES OF THEATER IMPROV ............................................................................................................... 27
IMPROV GAMES .................................................................................................................................... 28
MAGIC WORD ......................................................................................................................................... 28
THIS IS NOT A ....................................................................................................................................... 29
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? ......................................................................................................................... 30
PASS THE BALL ..................................................................................................................................... 31
MAGIC CLAY .......................................................................................................................................... 32
NON-VERBAL FREEZE TAG ...................................................................................................................... 33
VERBAL FREEZE TAG .............................................................................................................................. 34
STORIES & PUBLIC SPEAKING ............................................................................................................... 35
YES, AND .............................................................................................................................................. 35
TELL ME ............................................................................................................................................... 36
CONDUCTED STORY ............................................................................................................................... 37
SENSITIVITY LINE ................................................................................................................................. 38
SENSITIVITY LINE WITH STORIES ...................................................................................................... 39
SENSITIVITY LINE ON A THEME ......................................................................................................... 40
MY LIFE AS A STREAM ............................................................................................................................ 41
THEMES THROUGH THEATER .............................................................................................................. 42
COLUMBIA HYPNOSIS ............................................................................................................................ 42
FOLLOW THE SOUND ............................................................................................................................. 43
FAMILY PHOTOS ..................................................................................................................................... 44
MIRRORING ........................................................................................................................................... 45
SCULPTING EMOTION ............................................................................................................................ 46
GROUP SCULPTURES ............................................................................................................................... 47
TALKING SCULPTURES ........................................................................................................................... 48
MOVEMENT ACTIVITIES ......................................................................................................................... 49
DANCE CIRCLE ..................................................................................................................................... 49
TEAM BUILDING .................................................................................................................................... 50
MAKE AN OBJECT .................................................................................................................................. 50
GROUP QUILT ......................................................................................................................................... 50
GROUP SINGING ..................................................................................................................................... 51
THE TWO ESSENTIALS ............................................................................................................................ 52
PERSONAL & GROUP VISION ................................................................................................................ 52
GROUP MANDALA ON A THEME ............................................................................................................. 53
LETTER FROM THE FUTURE ................................................................................................................ 54
THE BULLSEYE PROCESS ....................................................................................................................... 55
A note from PYE Co-Founders Charlie Murphy and Peggy Taylor

Thank you for attending the Creative Facilitation Training, and welcome to the PYE network of social artists. This handbook contains activities from a range of art forms to use while facilitating youth and adult groups. We hope that you will use them in your work, whether it be in schools, youth programs, NGO’s, businesses, or community events. The aim is to bring deeper connection, effectiveness, and meaning to the groups you work with.

The seeds of PYE were sewn back in the mid 1990s with a simple vision. We imagined a world in which every young person, regardless of age, religion and culture, receives the tools and encouragement to unleash his or her creative potential.

With that in mind, in the summer of 1996 we ran an experimental arts/empowerment camp for 29 teenagers and 15 adult mentors in North America’s Pacific Northwest. At that first gathering we caught a glimpse of what’s possible when teens and adults spend time together in a supportive, arts-rich, creative community. A new sense of empowerment, confidence, and a desire to serve the world emerged in both the youth and adults. Those days marked the beginning of an exciting journey—one that is still unfolding today.

To build the work, in 1997 we founded an organization called Power of Hope: Youth Empowerment through the Arts. Power of Hope continues to provide arts/empowerment camps in Washington State and British Columbia each summer. In 2008, we formed PYE in order to take this work to communities around the world. Since then we’ve partnered with people and organizations on five of the world’s continents, setting up lasting collaborations with hundreds of youth workers, artists, facilitators and social change agents. As we look back, we could never have anticipated the many wonderful people and projects PYE would introduce us to. People like you are the lifeblood of this work.

We have articulated a proven methodology that helps to condense and communicate what it is that we do. We call it The Creative Community Model. This model combines the expressive arts, experiential learning, and creative facilitation to provide transformative learning experiences for teens and adults. The principles and practices can be used to lead multi-day residential camps, day camps, workshops, trainings, community gatherings or on going classes. This body of work is always evolving, and we’re updating all the time as we learn from and are inspired by the people that we meet and work with—and that includes you.
In 2011 we developed a digital space where people doing arts empowerment work around the world can meet, discuss their projects, and learn new practices. We invite you to join us online - visit us at www.pyeglobal.org to find out where to connect. Whatever you take away from the training and handbook, and however you use it, we’d like to welcome you to our network of creative collaborators and to say thank you for being part of this unfolding journey.
GOALS & AGREEMENTS

WORKSHOP GOALS
• Explore your relationship to your creativity
• Learn ways to build a safe learning environment
• Learn arts-based activities that enliven learning and build group trust
• Explore ways to weave a variety of art forms into a program
• Have fun!

COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS
• Avoid put downs of self or other
• Be willing to try new things
• Listen well
• Participate fully
• Be willing to share your reflections
WHY THE ARTS?

ELICITS JOY: Creative expression in a judgment-free environment is simply a lot of fun. Worries about the past or future disappear, and we find ourselves in the flow of the present moment. When we express ourselves without trying to be perfect, we experience happiness regardless of our circumstances.

PROMOTES HEALTH: Numerous studies point to the benefits of creative expression for health. Notable is the work of Dr. James Pennebaker, who found that writing with emotion about one’s life experiences increases immune function and decreases reliance on healthcare.

BUILDS CONFIDENCE: Arts-rich learning communities provide opportunities for everyone to shine and be seen and appreciated by one another. When people take creative risks and are appreciated by peers and mentors, their confidence jumps. Through repeated opportunities to take creative risks, self-confidence develops quite naturally.

DEVELOPS EMPATHY: Neuroscientists have discovered that our brains have mirror neurons that fire off when we witness emotions in another. Young people drop into empathetic resonance when they hear their peers expressing authentic feelings through poetry, music and other arts.

BRINGS LEARNING ALIVE: Creative expression creates relevance by putting us in touch with our thoughts and feelings. It creates excitement by putting us on our creative edge. It creates a sense of vitality by bringing our imaginations into play. Human beings are designed to make meaning of our lives and much of this happens in the inner world of our imaginations where heart and head work together.

STRENGTHENS HUMAN CONNECTION: Daniel Goleman, the author of a series of popular books on social and emotional intelligence, says that the first job of a leader is to create emotional resonance with his or her group. Creative expression brings down the walls and builds trust, connecting us across cultural, religious, socioeconomic, and generational divides.

PROVIDES OPPORTUNITIES TO TAKE CREATIVE RISKS: Young people love to take risks. The arts provide an adventure with no right or wrong answers and an outlet for positive risk-taking without physical danger.

TEACHES 21ST CENTURY LEADERSHIP SKILLS: Through the arts we learn how to see the big picture, synthesize information, live with paradox, collaborate with others, tell our stories, and so much more. These are all right-brain skills that leading thinkers claim are crucial for success in the modern world.
**THE BIG IDEAS**

**We are all creative.** Creativity is one of our primary human capacities, and we use it everyday. And yet, too many of us don’t think we are creative. We suspect this is because creativity has been over identified with art making—at least in Western culture. Very early on, parents and teachers begin to identify the “artistic” children and point them in the “creative” direction. The rest of us grow up to join the great mass of adults who think we are not creative.

Creativity is simply the ability to think things up and make them happen. Cooking breakfast, planting a garden, or coming up with a budget for an organization are all creative acts. Most of us express our creativity in large and small ways throughout the day.

Creativity, of course, also has to do with artistic expression, and we believe that each of us has a birthright to express ourselves through the arts—without having to be good at it. In many traditional cultures dance, song, music, visual art, and drama are woven into the fabric of everyday life. Expressing ourselves creatively without trying to be perfect leads to a flow state. As psychologist Rollo May put it, “Self-expression is most often accompanied by a feeling of shimmering joy.”

**You don’t have to be a professional artist to use the arts in your work.** You don’t have to be an experienced painter to use visual arts activities with youth or an experienced actor to lead theater games. You don’t have to be an experienced writer to engage young people in creative writing. All you need are some easy-to-lead activities and the courage to present them. As you become proficient in leading arts-based activities, the enthusiastic response from your participants will reinforce your desire to lead more. Before you know it, you will be searching for more and more activities to add to your toolbox.

You also don’t have to worry about taking opportunities away from professional teaching artists by working with the arts yourself. Quite the contrary, we’ve found that when teachers and youth workers use arts-based practices themselves, they are more inclined to partner with teaching artists. As one youth worker said, “After I started using the arts with my youth, I became less intimidated by artists. I had more confidence in my own creativity, and I could speak their language.”

3. We all have a valid desire to be seen and heard. When we play with babies, what do we do? The baby smiles, we smile. The baby frowns, we frown. As we mirror the baby’s actions, the feeling of love literally explodes in us and the baby is bathed in love, connection, and validation. Studies show that babies
who do not receive attention eventually fail to thrive. As we grow older, we need to be seen and validated as well. The unheard child or adult suffers and often either shuts down or acts out.

In arts-infused cultures people are seen and appreciated through their shared participation in the arts. Through drumming, dancing, singing, or storytelling, everyone gets to be part of the game. In Western cultures, however, performance is reserved for those who can play, sing, or dance well. Performance is all about mastery and with that comes the heavy hand of judgment. Certainly there is a place for fine art, but not at the exclusion of the participatory arts.

When you encourage a young person to take a creative risk by making something up and sharing it, you give them a chance to be seen and heard. The cycle of affirmation that develops through taking risks and “performing,” builds self-confidence and the courage to put one’s voice out in the world.

4. The arts are the doorway to the inner life. “The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance,” wrote Aristotle. When we engage in creative expression we enter the inner world of imagination. It is in this inner realm that we make meaning of our lives. It is here that motivation takes root helping us to make core decisions about our lives.

Young people are capable of profound thought and deep compassion. Creative expression—in a judgment-free context—tills the soil. At arts/empowerment camps we often find that the most broken youth flock to the art barn where they have the chance to express themselves privately. As they make meaningful objects using paper and pastels, glue and magazine pictures, paints and sparkles, it’s as if you can see their scattered inner selves move into coherence. As Karl Paulnak, pianist and director of music at Boston Conservatory has said, “Music [and we would add all of the arts] has a way of finding the big, invisible moving pieces inside our hearts and souls and helping us figure out the position of things inside us.”
A RECIPE FOR ENGAGING

In our trainings, we are often asked questions like: “How do I get youth to participate?” “How do I deal with difficult participants?” or “How do I keep everyone engaged?” Our first suggestion is to use activities that call on the imagination.

Here is a basic model of group formation that informs what to do at the start of a program and what to return to whenever the group energy falls flat.

IPC stands for:

**IMAGINATION**
When you engage participants in an activity that invokes their imaginations, you are letting them know that their whole selves are welcome—their personalities, their quirkiness, and their ideas. This leads to P:

**PARTICIPATION**
When people’s imaginations are activated, they are simply more inclined to participate. This in turn leads to C:

**COMMITMENT**
When people participate with their imaginations engaged, they tend to commit to the process or the program. Once participants are committed and fully involved, you are on well on your way to success.
TIPS FOR FACILITATION

Keep the IPC model in mind during the course of your camp, class, or program. Whenever the group energy falls flat, move to an activity that brings in the imagination. This will reengage the cycle of Imagination, Participation and Commitment.

1. USE RHYTHM
We advocate starting your time together as a group with a shared rhythm activity. This gets people out of their heads and into their bodies. Rhythm games have huge benefits in terms of focusing energy and getting group members in sync with one other.

2. DETERMINE WAYS FOR THE GROUP TO GET QUIET
Having agreed-upon ways to get your group’s attention saves time and frustration and avoids the need to yell over the crowd, which can be jarring for everyone. Here are a few effective methods.
• Raise your hand, close your mouth: Ask people to imagine they have a string attached to their chin. When they hold the end of the string and raise their hand, it pulls their mouth closed. When the leader raises his or her hand, everyone else does the same. Mouths close and it’s quiet.
• If you can hear me, clap once: Call out in a loud voice: “If you can hear me, clap once.” Some people will clap. “If you can hear me, clap two times.” More people will clap. “If you can hear me, clap three times.” By this time everyone should be clapping. Be sure to say, “Thank you,” and then move on.
• And a hush fell over the crowd: Call out to the group, “And a hush fell over the crowd!” Everyone responds with a long, “Hushshshshshshshsh,” and then falls silent.

3. START WITH A BLANK PAGE
When leading activities, avoid giving participants prepared sheets with prescribed images to fill in with their thoughts and feelings. Also avoid providing premade images like stickers for decorating their work. The blank page can be intimidating for a moment, but the results will be far more creative. We are ever surprised by the amazing art that even the most inexperienced visual artists create.

4. STRUCTURE ACTIVITIES SO EVERYONE CAN TAKE CREATIVE RISKS
Whether through a theater game, a movement activity, or creative writing, when you give each person a chance to take a risk and be seen and appreciated by the group, you set up a positive energy that encourages further risk taking.

5. Warm the group up slowly: Start with an activity that gives participants a very non-threatening creative risk. Build your sequence of activities so that
you slowly increase the level of risk taking. By warming up the group slowly, participants will feel freer and freer to express themselves as time goes on. If the group energy falls flat, chances are you have increased the level of risk too quickly.

6. KEEP YOUR INTENTION IN MIND
Be clear about your intention when you choose activities. If you want the group to learn names, for example, choose name games that use memory aids like rhythm, repetition, and associative thinking. Practice identifying the benefits of each activity in your toolbox. You’ll then be able to mix and match activities to achieve your goal at any particular time.

7. ENGAGE THE BODY
Studies show that the optimum attention span is between 12 and 20 minutes. Youth are conditioned in school to sit for very long periods of time. This leads them to drift off or act out. Body movement decreases resistance and helps participants get out of their heads to contact emotions and intuition.

8. USE MIRRORING
When you structure activities so that participants copy each other’s movements, two things happen. Everyone gets to increase their movement vocabulary—possibly moving in ways they never have before. And the person being copied gets the satisfaction of having his or her creative idea reflected back by the group.

9. GIVE INSTRUCTIONS QUICKLY AND CLEARLY
Nothing will bog a group down more quickly than boring, drawn-out instructions. Give your instructions clearly and quickly, assuming people will understand. Model whenever possible. If they don’t get it, you’ll know. It’s good to get people in position to do the activity before giving instructions.

10. TIP YOUR HAT TO RESISTANCE
Don’t assume everyone is going to be as enthusiastic about every activity as you may be. A good way to cut through resistance is to tip your hat to it with words like, “I’ll admit this next activity may sound really corny, but I’m just going to ask you to go along with it and try it out.” Once resistance is recognized, people are more likely to let go of it.

11. VARY THE SIZE OF GROUPINGS
When doing a series of creative activities, move between whole group, circles of 8-10, groups of 3-4, and pairs. This changes up the energy and gives people lots of chances to participate. Shy people may be more comfortable in the smaller groups, but once they get warmed up, they might be ready to take a risk in front of the entire crowd.

12. PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES TO PERFORM
Throughout your program, find low-risk ways for participants to perform for each other. At the first night of camps, for example, we ask “family” groups—reflections groups that meet over the course of the week—to come up with a
group name and cheer and perform it for the whole group. It’s fun, not too scary, and gets everyone in the mode of taking risks and being seen.
SETTING THE STAGE

The beginning is the most important part of any program. If you start off well, you will likely succeed. If you don’t, you’ll be making up for it throughout your program. Your first task is to create a safe atmosphere for your participants. Assume that they will be uncomfortable and that you will need to gain their trust. Here are some things to keep in mind:

Prepare the space. When participants first walk into a workshop room, everything speaks to them. Is the room messy and cold? Or is it warm and welcoming? Youth workers often have to work in some very sketchy places, but with care and ingenuity, you can make the most uninviting place welcoming. Begin by creating as much open space as you can. If you can move extra tables, boxes, etc. out of the room, great. If not, see if you can stack them in an orderly way. This may require some heavy lifting, but it is well worth it. Once you’ve cleared the space, clean it. A freshly swept floor or carpet will make a big difference.
OPENING ARTS ACTIVITIES

Make colorful signs: Include enough time to make colorful signs that point the way to the room, identify the registration table, and welcome people. Colorful signs tell participants, “We care about you.” To insure high quality signage, we ask for volunteers who consider themselves to be good sign makers to take the lead. Once the signs are drawn, others can join in to add color. If youth arrive at a program early, participating in the sign making will help them feel comfortable and useful.

Place chairs in a circle: This lets people know that there will be equity in the group and a shared sense of power.

Greet participants as they arrive: Introduce yourself right away and begin to get to know your participants. This will make them feel valued and relaxed, and it will help counter any pre-program jitters you may have.

CREATIVE NAMETAGS 10-15 minutes

Purpose: Icebreaker, imagination, creative risk

Materials: Card stock; glue or glue sticks; scissors; yarn or string; a variety of colorful materials such as glitter, glitter glue, marking pens, oil pastels, crayons, feathers. If you don’t have access to these materials, you can use old magazines, scraps of paper, leaves, sticks, pencils—anything you can find.

Instructions: This activity is such an effective icebreaker that we use it at all of our trainings and youth programs. Invite participants to make a creative nametag using card stock and a variety of materials. When the nametags are finished, punch two holes in them, thread some yarn or string through, and hang around the neck. The nametag table is a place where people can begin the process of getting to know each other through casual conversation.

Tips: Avoid providing stickers and other pre-made images as they restrict the imagination.

Application for adult groups: At adult conferences, we invite participants to decorate their premade nametags taking care to not obscure their names. The activity is always met with great enthusiasm. Admiring each other’s nametags provides an opportunity for conversation.
I-AM POSTERS 15-25 minutes

**Purpose:** Icebreaker, imagination, creative risk, optional self-disclosure

**Materials:** 17”x 24” poster paper; oil pastels; marking pens; crayons; glue or glue sticks; scissors; magazines for collage; digital camera; and photo printer.

**Instructions:** Take individual pictures of participants as they arrive and print out a 3 X 5 photo of each person. After registration, invite them to create a personal poster that incorporates their picture and answers a series of questions in words and images. We usually include: Your name, where you are from, something you love about where you live, something you love to do, and one of the hardest things you’ve ever had to do. That final question is a gentle invitation for self-disclosure. Don’t worry if not all participants choose to answer it. Once the posters are complete, make a gallery in a central location so everyone can put names to faces.

**Tips:** At intergenerational programs make sure adults make posters right along with the youth. Remind participants to use lots of images along with their words.

**Application for adult groups:** We have used this activity for adult conferences of four or more days. You can come up with questions that cover basic information as well as relate to the theme of the conference. The I-Am poster table becomes a place of respite from the intensity of the conference and gives people a chance to express themselves in a unique way.
NAME GAMES

WALK INTO THE CIRCLE 10 min for groups of 8-12

Purpose: relaxation, mirroring, creative risk, learn names

Instructions: This is a good opening game because it decreases self-consciousness and generates a lot of laughter. Begin by warning people that there is a part of this activity that might seem very corny, but encourage them to get into it anyway. Model the activity by doing it yourself first. Be sure to use a walk that is creative but fairly easy to copy.

• Ask participants to form circles of 8-12 people.
• The first person walks into the center of the circle doing a special walk she makes up. The walk can be simple or fancy. An example would be skipping into the center. Once in the center, the person looks around the entire circle and says, “Hi, my name is (name).” She then returns to the edge of the circle doing her special walk.
• The rest of the group then walks together into the center of the circle copying the walk they just saw. Once in the center, they turn to the first participant, who is still standing at the edge of the circle, and together say: “Hi (person’s name). You’re special!” They then all return to the outside of the circle using the same walk.
• Repeat this one at a time going around the circle to the left.

Tips: Yes, we know it sounds silly, but it turns out that people love this activity, so take a risk yourself and give it a try.
**PATTERNED NAME GAMES**  
10 min for group of 10

**Purpose:** learn names, relaxation, mirroring, creative risk

**Instructions:** Patterned name games are excellent for learning names because they include repetition, rhythm, and body movement. In some versions they also include associative thinking, another known memory aid. The instructions below lay out the basic pattern of the name game in this case using rhythm.

Ask participants to form circles of 8—12 people. Have one person in each group volunteer to be the leader (person A). Follow the circle around to the left.

Ask everyone to join you in the following 4 beat rhythm.

• **Beat 1:** slap knees with hands  
• **Beat 2:** clap hands  
• **Beat 3:** click right fingers  
• **Beat 4:** click left fingers

Once you get the rhythm going, you play the name game as follows.

• A says his name on the finger clicks  
• The group repeats his name on the next set of clicks  
• B says her name on the next set of finger clicks  
• The group repeats her name on the clicks  
• The group then says A’s name on the clicks then B’s name on the clicks  
• C says his name on the clicks  
• The group repeats his name  
• The group then says A’s name, B’s name, C’s name  
• D says her name, etc.  
• Continue this pattern all the way around the circle.

Once you have completed the circle, you can go backwards around the circle saying each person’s name once on the clicks. You can then mix the group up and go around the circle saying each person’s name once on the clicks.

**Variations:** You can replace the rhythm with a variety of options. Here are a few ideas. You can also make up your own. Follow the pattern outlined above.

1. **Name and adjective:** Each participant comes up with an adjective that starts with the same sound as their first name. For example: Magnificent Michael or Shy Sherrie. The leader starts by saying his adjective and name while making a physical movement. The group repeats the participant’s adjective, name, and gesture, and that of each person that follows.
2. Name and gesture: The leader says her name and makes a physical gesture to go with it. The group repeats her name and gesture, and that of each person that follows.

3. Name, emotion, and gesture: The leader says his name, states an emotion he is feeling and makes a shape to represent that emotion; the group repeats his name, feeling, and gesture and that of each person that follows.

**Tips:** Be sure to demonstrate this activity through modeling. It’s good to have one person who knows the activity in each circle.
EXPLORING YOUR CREATIVITY

This activity starts with a visualization and moves on to visual art. You follow with metaphor, free writing, poetry making and performance. This demonstrates how to use range of art modalities in sequence to address a common theme.

**VISUALIZATION**  Meeting Your Creative Spirit

Begin by telling participants they are going to go on an inner journey to the place where their creative spirit lives. The creative spirit represents the part of us that makes things happen. Then introduce the basics of visualization. Creative visualization is a visit into the imagination. It’s like having a dream while you are awake. In this case, it’s guided because you will be asking people to imagine certain things along the way. The important thing to remember, though, is that this is their experience and whatever comes up in their mind is the right thing. Let them know that everyone has a different experience with visualization. For some it looks like a brilliant movie, for others it’s a fuzzier, more impressionistic experience. Some people don’t see anything at all, but they may feel emotions or have some thoughts. It doesn’t matter what form the experience takes. The idea is to simply follow along and see what happens.

**RELAXATION**

Let people know that you are going to begin by leading them in a few activities to increase their relaxation. The more relaxed we are, the more open we are to our inner selves. Ask participants to get in a comfortable position either sitting in a chair or lying on the floor and close their eyes. Let them know that it’s ok to not close their eyes if they’re too uncomfortable doing so in a group. If that is the case, ask them to partially close their eyes. Then ask everyone to begin by becoming aware of their breathing. “Don’t do anything special with it. Just notice it coming in and going out of your body. Now, breathe more deeply bringing the breath right down into your belly. Watch your belly rise and fall as the breath comes in and out.” You can say things like, “Breathing in clear, calm energy. Breathing out any tension or worries.” Now ask participants to feel the contact between their body and the floor or the chair. With each out breath, feel their body get heavier. After going through a relaxation sequence tell participants, “Now we are going to take a journey to the place where your creative spirit lives.”

**VISUALIZATION**

Ask participants to imagine standing in front of a door. “Take a moment to look at the door. What color is it? What is it made of? What is the texture? What does the frame look like? Are there any words written on the door?” Ask them to reach out with their hand and run it down the imaginary door. “What does the door feel like?” And then ask them to reach out with their nose and
smell the door. “What does the door smell like?” Then say, “In a moment I’m going to ask you to open the door and enter the place where your creative spirit lives. Now, open the door and slowly walk in. Take a moment to look around. Are you in a large space or small? Are you inside or outdoors? What colors do you see? What does it feel like to be in the place your creative spirit lives? Now call out and invite your creative spirit to join you in this place. Notice what happens. If your creative spirit appears as a form, take a moment to see what it looks like. Is it big or small? Male or female? Human, animal, or something else? Does it have an age? How does it feel to be standing in the presence of your creative spirit? Now take a moment to talk with your creative spirit. What advice does she/he have to help you become fully creative, fully yourself? What does your creative spirit need from you to become fully activated? Take a moment to ask your creative spirit anything else that comes to mind. Finally, thank your creative spirit for taking the time to be you and say goodbye, knowing you can come back to this place at anytime. Now, walk back through the door, close the door, and slowly feel yourself return to the room. Wiggle your fingers and toes, stretch your arms and legs, and when you are ready, open your eyes.”
CREATIVE WRITING

DRAWING YOUR CREATIVE SPIRIT  
45 minutes

“Drawing on your visualization experience, think about your relationship to your creativity as you would a relationship to another person in your life. Each of our relationships has a past, present, and future; strengths and weaknesses; joys and challenges. If you took your creativity to a relationship counselor, what issues would come up?” Using crayons, oil pastels, or magic markers, and an 18” x 24” piece of drawing paper, ask participants to draw an image that represents their current relationship to their creativity. Are they in a time of great flow? Are they alienated? Is it a combination of the two? Their picture can be literal, impressionistic or a combination of both. They are free to use both images and words. They can use images from their visualization or not. Remind people that this is not a test of their artistic ability; it’s simply an opportunity to express themselves through shape and color. Once the pictures are complete, ask participants to come up with a short title for their picture and write it on the page. Give people 15-20 minutes to complete their picture.

Sharing: Ask participants to find a partner and share in the following way. Partner A begins by interpreting partner B’s drawing. A is simply to share some light impressions. Then B reflects on her own drawing and her partner’s interpretation of it. Switch after 7 minutes or so and ask the partners to move to A’s drawing. After personal sharing, you can ask participants to place their pictures in the middle of the circle if they feel comfortable making a gallery of their drawings. Ask the group to walk around slowly and comment on common themes.

Most young people love to write once they realize that writing can be relevant to their lives, and once they learn some easy techniques to get the flow going. There are many ways to use creative writing techniques to enhance your programs. Some ideas include:

1. Conversation starters: Ask participants to do a free write on an issue before talking about it in groups. This gets their ideas and emotions flowing so the group conversation starts at a deeper level.
2. Idea generation: If you are working on a creative project such as coming up with a performance, begin with everyone doing a free write and then sharing snippets of ideas that come forward.
3. Sharing life experiences: You can lead an entire workshop by asking participants to come up with a metaphor that represents their life, use that as a starter phrase for a free write, and then sharing their work with one another.
4. Reflection: free writing at the end of an activity gives participants a chance to reflect on what they have learned. The free writing helps uncover emotions and make sense of seemingly random thoughts.
5. Visioning: free writing allows the imagination to fly in directions previously unexplored. With the inner critic held at bay, people think new thoughts and come up with surprising ideas.
CREATING METAPHORS  WRITING

“Our species thinks in metaphors and learns through stories,” wrote Mary Catherine Bateson. We find that stating with metaphor is a sure way to delve deep with writing about our lives. Metaphor is language that connects head and heart. It serves as a bridge between rational logic and emotion, imagination and sensory experience. It is so fundamental to the way we think and make sense of our lives that we are speaking in metaphor rich language.

The foundational rule for good writing is “show, don’t tell.” This means describe, for example, how an emotion presents itself on the character’s face rather than tell us what the person is feeling. Our imaginations will fill in the blanks. Similarly, if you ask someone to come up with a metaphor for his life, the word picture he offers will present a holistic picture of his state of being. Here’s an example from Charlie Murphy’s work as a teaching artist many years ago. To start off a section on creative writing, he asked the youth to decorate covers for their journals. He was particularly drawn to one young woman’s image: a delicate feather in the midst of thunder clouds. When he asked her about it, she said, “The feather represents my heritage. I am Native American. The clouds represent a windstorm. I am a feather in a windstorm!” Such a powerful metaphor to represent her life.

We often ask youth to come up with metaphors that represents their live to use as starter phrases for free writing. Rather than go into textbook definitions of metaphor, we share images created by other youth. Some favorite include:

- I’m a feather in a windstorm
- I’m a car in 5th gear with the parking brake on
- Inside me is a stadium with 10,000 people ready to stand up and cheer

After sharing the metaphors, we ask each person to come up with their own. We encourage them to think of nature as a library of metaphors. We remind them that they don’t have to come up with the perfect metaphor. Anything that is meaningful will do. With a little encouragement, everyone can come up with a metaphor. One boy in a writing workshop had a very hard time connecting with people. When we helped him with his metaphor he stomped his foot and said, “I don’t have any ideas, I’m just a single leaf on a tree.” And that was it, the perfect metaphor.
STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS  5-10 minutes

Purpose: connect voice to writing, make writing easy, uncover thoughts

Instructions: This easy approach to writing is sometimes called free writing.

We introduce it as an activity that all kinds of people use to get the flow going, from best selling authors to people who can barely write.

• Ask participants to imagine that as they write, their thoughts are streaming like a river from their mind, down their arm and through the pen onto the page. Their job is simply to record the thoughts as they hit the page and to keep their pen moving the entire time. If they come to a stop, they are to simply write whatever they are thinking. For example, “I don’t know what to say, and this is frustrating.” By continuing to commit themselves to the page, the door will open to the next thought and off they will go. This is the stream of consciousness piece.
• The timed part means you will be telling them when to start and timing them for 5 minutes (or so) and then telling them to stop.
• Tell participants that they don’t have to worry about spelling or grammar. Their entire piece might be one long sentence or it might be all chopped up. It doesn’t matter. Whatever comes out is right.
• They are not to reread as they are writing or to cross out anything, just go with the flow.
• It’s also ok to use a mix of languages or to completely write in their native tongue.
• Encourage them to imagine their pen is a paintbrush that is painting images and descriptions on the page. Invite them to take some risks with their writing.
• Assure them that this writing is for themselves. They won’t be required to read their entire piece to anyone.
• Let them know that it’s hard to do this wrong. They just have to look down at their hand. If it’s moving, they’re doing it right.
• Say, “Ready, set, go...” and off you go.
• Give them a 30 second warning before you bring the writing to a close.

Tips: Be sure to remember to tell them that spelling and grammar is not important and that they won’t be reading their entire piece to anyone.
GROUP POEM & PERFORMANCE 40 minutes or more

Purpose: team building, creative expression, personal presence

Materials: paper, pens, tape, materials to use in a performance like scarves and percussion instruments

Instructions: This activity can be used to explore a theme. It can also be used as an evening activity for a large group. Begin by asking everyone to generate a metaphor on a theme that you identify. It could be a metaphor that represents your life as a 15-year-old, your life as a youth worker or teacher or a social change agent; your relationship to your creativity. Whatever theme fits the group.

- Once everyone has come up with a metaphor, ask for volunteers to write the metaphors on chart paper as each person says their metaphor out loud. If some people don’t have metaphors, catch them the second time around the circle.
- Once all the metaphors are written on the chart paper, break into groups of 4 or 5 people.
- Now each group has to choose one metaphor that each person in their small group will use as the starter phrase for free writing. Once a group has chosen their metaphor, each person in the group writes that metaphor at the top of a blank piece of paper.
- The next step is for everyone to do a free write for about five minutes using the metaphor as a prompt. Describe the free writing as a process of peeling an onion getting to deeper levels of meaning relating to their metaphor.
- When the writing is complete, ask everyone to read through their writing and underline 2 or 3 phrases that they like for some reason. It might be the sound of the words or the meaning or something else.
- Pass out strips of paper to each group, and each person writes their underlined phrases on separate strips.
- Your next step, you say, is to put all of the strips in your group together and form them into a poem.
- Once, the poem is together, let them know that their final task is to come up with a way to perform the poem for the rest of the group. They are to use at least three art forms. This can include reading the poem, improvisational dance or movement, percussion, vocal sound, visual arts plus more.
- Set up a performance space and be prepared to be surprised!

Tips: People love this activity. They are generally very proud of the poems they come up with and have fun with the performance. We often tell people to remember that this is a quick and dirty performance, no big deal. At the same time, we ask them to act as if they have been rehearsing for 6 months and this is their big debut.
PASS AROUND POEM  

30 minutes for group of 6

**Purpose:** poetic writing, team building, creative expression

**Materials:** paper and pens or pencils

**Instructions:** Here is another creative writing activity that activates the poetic voice. Ask participants to get into groups of 6 or 8 and sit in a circle. Each person needs a pencil and paper and a surface to write on.

- Ask each person to come up with a metaphor that represents his or her life right now and write it at the top of a blank piece of paper.
- Tell them that the metaphor is the first line of a poem and ask them to add a second line.
- Each person then passes his or her paper to the person to the left and receives a paper from the person on the right.
- They are to look at the new paper, read the first two lines, add a third line and then pass the paper to the left.
- The poems continue all the way around the circle with a line added by each person.
- Once the poem gets back to the original authors, they are to read the entire poem, add a final line and a title for the poem.
- Now, take the time for each person to read their poem to the entire group.

**Tips:** Ask people to imagine that with each line they write, they are giving a gift to the person who began that particular poem. As with the group poem above, you can also perform these poems. Each group chooses one of their poems to perform to the entire group.
RULES OF THEATER IMPROV

The world of theater is full of activities that you can use to bring energy to your group, engage the imagination, think outside of the box, and help participants gain comfort speaking in front of a group.

Many of us have been introduced to theater improv through seeing a professional troupe. This can be very intimidating. Theater Improv at its essence is simply about making things up and sharing the process with others. It’s something we can all do. You don’t have to try to be funny or smart, you just need to enter into the realm of the imagination with your partners. There are some basic rules of theater improv that are good maxims for living the creative life. When you play theater games, you get to practice these rules and discover how much enjoyment they bring and how quickly they connect you with others. Not surprisingly, theater improv is now making its way into organizations and large companies as a way to teach people to build strong and enduring teams. Here are some basic rules:

1. Say “yes.” Theater improv relies on accepting each other’s imaginal realities. When we say “yes” to each other, the imaginative space grows and creativity flourishes. When we say “no”, it’s like popping a balloon. When you are doing improv one of the players throws an idea out to another player. This is called making an offer. For example, she might look at a player with no hat and say with total conviction, “Irene, I love that purple hat you’re wearing.” Saying “yes” means that Player B accepts that she is Irene and that she is indeed wearing a purple hat. So she might respond with, “Oh, you like it. I got it at the thrift shop. Want to try it on?” Player A then takes the hat, tries it on and adds some new information into the scene.

If player B says, “What hat? I’m not wearing a hat. Are you crazy?” that’s the end of the game. Saying “yes” requires you to fully accept whatever your fellow player offers to you and then build on that reality.

2. First idea, best idea. We come up with ideas all of the time, but our inner critic quickly jumps in and says “no”. This rule tells us to follow our instincts and say “yes” to our own ideas the same way we do to others. Since theater improv is all about play, just say “yes” to your first idea and see what happens. No problem if it falls flat, but chances are it won’t.

3. Make your teammates look good. Theater improv is not about tricking people and making the game hard for them. It’s about giving your teammates fun and easy material to work with. This gives them the chance to generously add to it and the imagined space begins to build. Imagine if we lived our lives consciously playing in ways that make our colleagues succeed?
MAGIC WORD  5-10 minutes

Purpose: focus, listening, energizer, group cohesion, storytelling skills

Instructions: Ask participants to form a circle. Participants hold their right hands out, palm up, toward the person on their right. They hold their left hand above the hand of the person on their left pointing their index finger toward that person’s open palm. The person who is “it” stands in the center of the circle.

- Ask participants to decide on a magic word. It can be any simple word such as ice cream, gardening, jogging, blue, or bike.
- The person in the center then starts to tell a story. When she says the magic word, participants try to grab the finger of the person on their right while at the same time trying to pull their left hand up so their finger is not caught by their neighbor on the left. The challenge for the person who is “it” is to slip the magic word into the story in such a way that group is surprised. The person can also slip in a word that sounds like the magic word to trick everyone into reacting at the wrong time.
- The person who is “it” gets to try to trick the group a few times and then picks a new person to be “it.”

Tips: This is a great game to play when everyone is sleepy after lunch. It’s helpful to model it first. You can give people a chance to practice by identifying a magic word. Then say, “I will say 1, 2, 3, [magic word] a few times, to give you a chance to practice.” We’ve found that even very shy participants will successfully tell a story in the circle. They are so focused on tricking the group that they forget themselves. Later on you can point out, “Do you realize you just told a story to a large group of people?”
THIS IS NOT A... 10-15 seconds per person

**Purpose:** imagination, relaxation, laughter and play, creative risk

**Materials:** One stick, water bottle, magic marker, or similar object for each group

**Instructions:** Ask participants to form circles of 8-12 with one leader in each group

- The leader (A) holds the stick (or other object) and says, “This is not a stick, it is a (fill in the blank—comb, for example). He then demonstrates using the stick as a comb, making appropriate motions and sound effects.
- The leader then passes the stick to the person on his left.
- Person B repeats the leader’s demonstration of the comb, copying his movement and sound as accurately as possible while saying, “This is not a comb...” She then gives the stick yet another identity, saying “This is a (fill in the blank—say, a pair of scissors). She demonstrates the pair of scissors with movement and sound and then passes the stick on to the person on her left.
- Person C, repeats B’s demonstration of the pair of scissors copying the sounds and movement as accurately as possible while saying, “This is not a pair of scissors.” He then gives the stick a new identity and demonstrates the new object in movement and sound. And so it goes, around the circle.

**Tips:** Emphasize the importance of using exaggerated movement and a strong sound to demonstrate the object. Encourage participants to copy the person before them as accurately as possible. If a participant tells you all of their ideas have been taken, remind them that the stick can be anything.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING? 20 seconds per person

Purpose: imagination, relaxation, laughter and play, creative risk, learn names

Instructions: Ask participants to form circles of 8 – 12 people.

- The leader (A) mimes an obvious movement such sweeping the floor with a broom.
- The person next to her (B) asks, “[A], what are you doing?”
- She answers in a way that is at odds with her movement. For instance, if she is miming sweeping the floor, she might say, “I’m washing the dishes.”
- B then begins to mime washing the dishes and the person next to him (C) asks, [B] what are you doing?” Even though he is miming washing the dishes he now says he is doing something completely different. He says, for example, “I am flying a kite.”
- C then mimes flying a kite, and so on around the circle.

Tips: Let participants know ahead of time that they will need to know the name of the people next to them to play this game, and give them a chance to make sure they know the names. Remind people to use the person’s name when they are playing the game.
PASS THE BALL  5-10 minutes

Purpose: imagination, focus, connect imagination and physical sensation

Instructions: Ask participants to stand in a circle. You can play this in circles of 8-10 or in larger circles. The leader stands outside of the circle or circles and calls out the directions.

• The leader hands an imaginary ball to one person in each circle and then says, “Please pass this imaginary ball around the circle. It’s about the size of a tennis ball.”
• After the ball has gone a ways around the circle the leader calls out changes in the quality of the ball by saying, “The ball is slowly getting lighter…now it’s getting lighter and bigger….now it’s very large and light like beach ball….keep passing it around. “
• The leader continues to change the quality of the ball: “And now it’s slowly getting heavier….and heavier….and heavier…until it’s very heavy. Help each other pass this rock-heavy ball around…
• And now it’s the size of a soccer ball. Keep passing it around…It’s getting sticky. It’s very sticky…and it STINKS! Keep passing it…
• Now it is very hot...
• Now it is a very precious little thing…”
• After calling out several changes, the leader can give the groups the power to transform their own object by telling them that anyone in the group can now call out a new quality when the ball comes to him or her. Remind them to let the ball go around for a bit with its new quality before someone transforms it to something new.
• Eventually the leader calls a halt to the game. A fun way to end the game is to say, “Now the ball has turned into a fine piece of chocolate.”

Tips: Watch the groups carefully as you call out new qualities for the ball. Be sure to give time for them to get into each quality.
MAGIC CLAY  10 minutes for group of 4-6

Purpose: spatial awareness, imagination, attention, focus

Instructions: Ask participants to form circles of 4-6 people. The leader begins by giving a piece of imaginary clay to one person (A) in each circle.

• A uses mime to slowly mold the clay into a usable object such as a hat. She then demonstrates using the object. If it’s a hat, she puts it on her head and shows it off.
• She then passes the imaginary object to a person next to her, B. He first plays with the imaginary object, and then compresses the “clay” into a ball and makes a new object. Demonstrates the object and passes it to C. Continue around the circle.

Tips: The leader should demonstrate by making a fairly simple object. Encourage people to go slowly when they are forming their object. Ask participants to refrain from guessing what the object is until the person has demonstrated using it.
NON-VERBAL FREEZE TAG 10-15 minutes

Purpose: imagination, spatial awareness, creative risk, non-verbal communication

Instructions: This game enhances the imagination while demonstrating the power of non-verbal communication. It’s a good warm up for doing improv scenes with dialogue. Ask your group to form a circle or sit in an audience facing a playing area.

• Participant A steps into the playing area and takes a shape and freezes.
• Participant B steps into the playing area and takes a shape in relationship to A to imply a story.
• Participant C comes in and taps out either A or B. The untapped person remains frozen in his shape. C then takes a new shape in relationship to that person to imply a completely new story.
• Participants continue to come into the playing area, tap out one of the players and take a shape in relationship to the remaining player that implies a new story.

Tips: Encourage participants to hold their shapes with an unmovable freeze. Ask participants to take the time to fully appreciate each new shape before jumping in and tapping someone out.
VERBAL FREEZE TAG 10-15 minutes

Purpose: imagination, creative risk, spontaneity

Instructions: This activity is an all around creativity stretcher. Once participants let go of self-judgment, it is lots of fun and makes great entertainment. Ask your group to form an audience with a designated playing area.

• Participant A steps into the playing area and takes a shape and freezes.
• Participant B steps onto the playing area, takes a shape in relationship to A, and launches into a scene that includes movement and dialogue. B gives A some material to work with by letting her know things like who she is (mom, dad, friend, teacher), how old she is, and what she’s doing. B might say, for example, “Mom, I’m sorry I stayed out so late without telling you.” Or “Hey Alisha, you want to jump rope with me?”
• A joins in the scene using both dialogue and movement. The pair continues the scene until an audience member (C) yells, “Freeze.” The players then freeze and wait for C to come in and tap one of them out.
• The player who is not tapped out, remains frozen on the stage. C takes the same pose as the person she tapped out and starts a completely new scene. Her partner responds and they improvise a scene together until another audience member yells, “Freeze.” And on it goes.

Tips: Ask participants to let the scenes go long enough to have some momentum. Remind players to take the exact pose of the person they tap out. Remind players that they don’t have to have an idea before they call “freeze” and tap a player out. They can simply get into the position and see what comes to mind.
YES, AND...   7-10 minutes for group of 3 or 4

Purpose: imagination, listening, attention, storytelling skills, group cohesion

Instructions: This easy-to-play storytelling game ignites the imagination and teaches the first rule of theater improvisation: “say yes”. Ask participants to form circles of 3 or 4 people and decide who will go first (A).

• A begins by making up a story. It can be any story, past, present, or future. After setting the stage through three or four sentences, A stops at the end of a sentence.
• B picks up the story with the words, “Yes, and...” B then continues to tell the story in the same voice as A. This means, if the story was started in the first person, the story continues in first person. B adds three or four sentences and stops at the end of a sentence.
• C then picks up the story with, “Yes, and...”, adds to the story and stops at the end of a sentence. The story continues around and around the circle with each person picking up with the words, “Yes, and...”
• Let the storytelling go for 7-10 minutes and then call “stop.”

Tips: Make sure participants know they are to come to the end of a sentence before passing it on to the next person. Demonstrate what you mean by everyone in the circle using the same storytelling voice. Encourage participants to stand up while playing this game. People naturally add more gesture and energy to their stories when they are standing.
**TELL ME**  **2-3 minutes per person**

**Purpose:** self-confidence, storytelling skills, improvisation

**Instructions:** This is a great activity to spark the imagination and ease people into improvisation.

- The facilitator comes up with a list of simple but provocative opening lines to a story beginning with “Tell me...” Here are some samples: Tell me about the time you jumped off the Taj Mahal and landed in London; Tell me about the time you got in a limousine and Julia Roberts was in the car; Tell me about the time you swam across the Pacific Ocean and you were chased by a shark; Tell me about the time you dug a hole to the center of the earth.
- In small groups each person has a chance to share for one to two minutes. The facilitator calls out the first opening line.
- The storyteller must immediately launch into the timed telling of the event with full commitment as though it had really occurred.
- After two minutes, give a 15 second warning and then call out a new opening line for the next teller. Timing the telling is a great device for getting people to jump in without “over thinking.” Continue around the circle.

**Tips:** It’s important to start with imaginative story starters to activate the tellers’ imaginations. Have a few extra scenarios available. Sometimes it’s fun to have one or two people perform for the entire group.
CONDUCTED STORY  5 minutes per game

Purpose: listening, attention, storytelling skills, self-confidence

Instructions: This activity helps people get used to speaking in front of a group. Begin with five or six people standing in a line facing the audience. A “conductor” sits on the floor facing the line of storytellers.

• To start the game, the conductor points to one of the players (A). A begins telling a story, any story.
• When the conductor points to a new player (B), A falls silent and B picks up the story mid-sentence, even mid-word.
• The conductor continues to move the story from one teller to another by pointing.
• The conductor gradually picks up the pace of moving from one teller to another.

Tips: Clarify that each new storyteller has to pick up the story exactly where the other teller left off without using words like, “As I was saying.”
SENSITIVITY LINE  5-10 minutes

**Purpose:** personal presence, focus

**Instructions:** This activity together with the next is a fail-safe way to get even the shyest participants to speak in front of a group. Begin by asking the group to form an audience.

- Invite 5 or 6 volunteers to stand in a line with their backs to the audience. They should be standing close to each other but not touching.
- When the facilitator says “Go,” one person in the line (A), in silence, turns to face the audience.
- A must remain facing the audience until another person (B) randomly turns to face the audience. A then must turn back so that there is only one person facing the audience at a time.
- The players in the line one at a time continue to randomly turn to face the audience.
- When the group gets into a flow, it looks like doors revolving seamlessly toward and away from the audience.

**Tips:** To get your first volunteers, tell them this is the easiest part of the activity. Ask the players to try to sense when another person has turned rather than crane their necks to look. As they get going, encourage them to pick up the pace of turning. You might be surprised by how amusing this activity is for the audience to watch.
SENSITIVITY LINE WITH STORIES

15 minutes or more

Purpose: storytelling, personal presence, listening, focus

Instructions: This is where the fun really begins. Begin with a line of 5 players standing side-by-side looking away from the audience. In this activity, each player tells a story when they facing the audience.

- When the first person (A) faces the audience, she is to start telling a story. It can be a true story from her life, a fantasy, a folk tale. It can be funny, sad, or outrageous. Whatever she wants.
- When the second person (B) turns to face the audience, he interrupts A as if she’s not even talking and launches into his own story.
- A immediately stops her story mid-sentence and turns back from the audience.
- When A chooses to face the audience again, she picks up her own story mid-sentence and continues on until another player turns and interrupts her. You end up with 5 parallel, unrelated stories told in an interrupted fashion.

Tips: Instruct the players to let the stories go a little longer at the beginning so the audience can get the gist of each story. As the game goes on, the players are to interrupt each other more and more frequently. They can also look for good moments to interrupt. This game is sometimes uproariously funny.
SENSITIVITY LINE ON A THEME  5 minutes

Purpose: public speaking, personal presence, listening, spontaneity

Instructions: In this version, each player speaks to the same theme. This offers an opportunity to speak to the audience from the heart.

- Give a group of 5 players a starting line such as: “If I really knew I was creative, I would...” or “My ideal community...”
- The group then stands in a line with their backs to the audience.
- When you say, “Go,” the first person (A) turns to face the audience, starts with the starting phrase and speaks for 30 seconds or so.
- When he is done, he turns back and person (B) then turns, starts with the same starting phrase and speaks for 30 seconds. She then turns back.
- One by one, the players turn and speak to the theme.
- When the last person is done, the players all turn and face the audience and take a bow.

Tips: Remind players that in this version they only speak once and they don’t interrupt each other. This is a powerful format for a short public performance on a theme.
MY LIFE AS A STREAM 45 minutes or more

**Purpose:** storytelling, personal reflection, visioning, values exploration, empathy

**Materials:** 18” x 24” drawing paper; oil pastels, crayons, or markers

**Instructions:** This storytelling activity helps people look at their life as a whole and to imagine their future. It’s a good activity for doing deep introductions near the beginning of a program.

- Ask participants to imagine their life as a stream. Their task is to draw that stream. The twists and turns represent major turning points in their lives. There may be rocks and waterfalls. The stream may get narrower and wider. At the side of the stream they are to depict the major people and events both positive and negative that made them the person they are today. Encourage them to use images as well as words.
- Once they get to present time, they are to draw the stream into the future and write some possible directions for their life from this moment in time.
- Then ask everyone to list on their picture: 3 strengths they bring to the world; 3 ways they’d like to contribute to the project at hand; and one thing they’d like to strengthen in themselves.
- Finally, they are to come up with a short title and include it in the picture.
- Share the pictures in groups of 2 or more, giving each person a set time to share. Once everyone has shared ask them to look for common themes and common values.

**Tips:** Remind people that this is not a visual arts test. Everyone can do this and once they get into it, they will find it’s easy and engaging. A great way to end each personal sharing is to have their fellow group members go around and each complete the sentence, “Something I appreciate about you is....”
THEMES THROUGH THEATER

COLUMBIA HYPNOSIS  8-10 minutes

Purpose: focus, leadership, trust, movement

Instructions: This game designed by Augusto Boal gives participants the opportunity to explore the dynamics of leading and following. Ask participants to break into pairs and decide who will be A and who will be B.

- Tell A’s they will be the leaders first. They are to hold up one hand palm open about six inches in front of B’s face.
- When you say “go” A begins to slowly move around the room. B must follow as if A is a hypnotist. A’s can walk around the room, move up and down, side to side, crawl on the floor, whatever occurs to them. B needs to keep his or her face six inches from A’s open palm at all times. Tell A’s that it’s their job to give B an interesting and enjoyable experience.
- After a few minutes ask everyone to “freeze” and then switch so that B leads A.

Tips: With younger participants it’s important to stress that their job is to give their partner an interesting and enjoyable experience. Invite people to vary the speed of their leading. Possible debrief points who preferred leading vs. following and vice versa. And why; and what made this safe for people?
FOLLOW THE SOUND 8-10 minutes

Purpose: listening, focus, leadership, trust

Instructions: This version of a game designed by Augusto Boal is a good follow up for Columbia Hypnosis. Ask participants to get into pairs and decide who will be the first leader.

- The leader in each pair needs to come up with a repetitive sound that his partner can identify with eyes closed.
- Ask the followers to close their eyes. When you say “Go”, the leaders begin to move around the room repeatedly making their sound. The followers follow the sound with eyes closed.
- You can ask the leaders to move more quickly, to make their sound louder, or softer, etc.
- After a few minutes say “Freeze” and ask the partners to shift roles.

Tips: Remind leaders that they are in charge of the safety of their followers. Shifting levels (going high and then low) does not work with this activity. Possible debrief questions include, Who preferred to follow and why? Who preferred to lead and why? What made it easy to follow your partner? What made it difficult? What did you learn from this about yourself as a leader?
FAMILY PHOTOS

Purpose: to learn to use the body to explore an idea or emotion

Instructions: This is a good warm up for building statues on a theme (see next activity). Ask participants to break into groups of 5 or 6. Each group will be a family. The purpose of this activity is to take imaginary photos of the families.

- Give each group 2 chairs to serve as the frame of their photo. Ask the groups to step into their frames to create a family photo.
- Begin by asking participants what makes a good photo: things like facial expression, placement of bodies (ie. at different levels) etc. Then ask each group to imagine they are posing for a family photo. Once they are in place, ask them to freeze, hold perfectly still. Go around and take an imaginary picture of each family.
- As you go around the second time, ask one group at a time to depict a particular kind of family: the happy-go-lucky family; the spiritual family, the shopping mall/consumer family, the supportive family, the furious family, the independent family, the co-dependent family, the snobby family. It’s a good idea to keep this lighthearted...touch into more serious themes, but from a lighthearted perspective.
- Be sure the last pose each group takes is a positive one.
MIRRORING  15 minutes

Purpose: To explore the dynamics of leading and following

Instructions: Ask participants to get into pairs, face each other, and choose and A and a B. A’s will begin as the leaders.

- Ask participants to hold their hands up in front of themselves with their palms facing those of their partner.
- When you say “go” A’s are to begin moving very slowly. B is to mirror A’s movement as exactly as possible. The key here is to go very slowly.
- After awhile, ask B to start leading. B leads for a few minutes.
- Then call out switches more quickly from B leading back to A and so forth.
- Finally, ask the partners to lead and follow without designating a leader.

Tips: It’s imperative to do this slowly. To slow people down you might say, “Now slow down to half your present speed.” This activity leads to an interesting debrief around leading and following and all that that entails.
**SCULPTING EMOTION**  
*15 minutes*

**Purpose:** To explore ways to express emotions through body sculptures. This is a warm up for developing group sculptures.

**Instructions:** Begin by demonstrating how one person can sculpt another—basically move them into a shape to form a statue that expresses an emotion. There are three methods to use.

1. A asks permission to touch B and then gently moves B into position.
2. A asks B to mimic A’s shape and facial expression.
3. A moves B’s body by pulling an imaginary string that is attached to B’s hands, feet, etc.

Once you have demonstrated the sculpting process, ask partners to choose to be A or B. Begin with A sculpting B then switch. Give time between sculptures for participants to view all of the sculptures in the room. You can include any emotions. Be sure to end with a positive emotion. And at the conclusion of the activity ask everyone to shake the poses out of their bodies.
GROUP SCULPTURES flexible duration

Purpose: to explore social issues

Instructions: This exercise is an excellent way to explore issues and can be done with a group of any size. Ask participants to come up with a situation, theme, or issue: “Education,” “Shopping,” “Peer Pressure,” “Violence.”

- Ask one person to stand in the center of the space and make a physical shape that represents something about the chosen topic.
- Ask for a second person to join in making a shape that represents some other aspect of the topic.
- Continue inviting people to join in as long as they have something new to add to the scene.
- Invite the rest of the group to observe the final sculpture and as a group reflect on what they see.
TALKING SCULPTURES  flexible duration

**Purpose:** deeper exploration of issues

**Instructions:** The next version of this exercise is to ask people to stay in position after completing the group sculpture.

- Now ask participants to get into the character they are representing in the sculpture and begin quietly speaking a monologue from the vantage point of that character. Ask everyone to raise the volume on their monologues, and then bring it down again.
- Then begin moving from person to person in the group. When you put your hand on their shoulder, they are to raise the volume and repeat one short phrase from their monologue over and over. When you stop touching their shoulder, they return to a quiet mumble.
- Move from person to person until everyone’s message is heard.
- Invite the members of the statue and the rest of the group to reflect on the experience. What did the talking statue reveal about this issue?
DANCE CIRCLE  5-15 minutes

Purpose: imagination, rhythm, creative risk, mirroring, leading

Instructions: This game is a great opening or closing activity. It uncovers the hidden dance talents of some participants, gives others a chance to increase their comfort with dance, and gives everyone the opportunity to take the lead. We have led dance circles with as few as 5 people and as many as 125.
- Ask the group to form one circle.
- Tell the group you will be putting on some danceable music and you’d like someone to volunteer to be the first leader.
- Once the music gets going, person A will lead a repetitive dance move for 10-15 seconds. Everyone in the circle will join in with the same dance move.
- A then passes the leadership to the person directly to her right (B). B comes up with a new dance move that he leads for 10-15 seconds and then passes the leadership on to C.
- The leadership passes around the circle until everyone has had a chance to lead.

Tips: Some people will be very uncomfortable when you say everyone is going to lead a dance step. It’s important to let people know that they can lead something as simple as waving their hands to the music right and left. They just need to do it as if they think it’s the best dance move in the world.
TEAM BUILDING

MAKE AN OBJECT 15-30 minutes

Purpose: imagination, focus, team building, creative risk, personal presence

Instructions: Ask participants to form groups of 5-7 people.

- Give each group the name of a commonly known object. Possibilities include: fruit smoothie maker, elevator, helicopter, grand piano, roller coaster, refrigerator, or television.
- Each group has 10 minutes to come up with a skit that demonstrates the object. They are allowed to make sound effects, but they can't use words. Everyone in the small group has to take part in the skit.
- The groups then perform their skits one at a time. After a group is completely done with their skit, the audience can guess what they are demonstrating.

Tips: Encourage participants to use sound effects. Remind the audience to refrain from guessing until the group on stage has finished their skit.
GROUP QUILT  
30-40 minutes

Purpose: group visioning, creative risk, group cohesion

Materials: 8½ x 11 paper, magic markers, oil pastels, crayons, tape

Instructions: This is a great activity for coming up with a picture that represents the gifts each individual brings to the group.

• Give participants an 8½ x 11 piece of paper and have them place it horizontally in front of them. To make the quilt work, everyone has to have their paper in the same direction.
• Ask everyone to come up with some quality they can bring to group. Enthusiasm or friendliness, for example.
• They then draw an image that represents that quality and include the word in the image. The image can be literal or abstract. It’s important that they use bold colors. Each of these pictures will become a square in a paper quilt.
• Count the number of participants so you know how many squares you’ll have and divide them into small groups. If you have 40 participants, for example, you might want the quilt to be made up of eight rows of five pictures.
• Each small group puts their pictures together in a long strip and tapes them together from the back.
• You then put all of the strips together and tape them from the back.
• Turn the quilt over and you have a colorful representation of the gifts everyone is bringing to the group.

Tips: This is a good way to end an afternoon leadership assembly or to set a group up for a long-term program.
GROUP SINGING

Once they get over their initial hesitation, people of all ages love to sing. We find that young people appreciate learning short 3 or 4-part songs they can sing over and over again. Here is a quick warm-up to get your group ready to sing.

THE TWO ESSENTIALS  5-10 minutes

In order to sing, you must do two things—open your mouth and breathe.

1. Open your mouth warm-up: open your mouth wide, stretch your jaw in different directions, experience how wide and open your mouth can be.
2. Breathing warmup: become aware of breathing into your belly and then repeat the following syllables with energy, feeling your belly contract as the air moves out:
   • hing-yah
   • hing-yay
   • hing-yee
3. Sighing warmup with toning: If you can sigh, you can sing. Ask participants to form a circle and sigh a few times. Then start the sigh on higher and higher notes and end on lower and lower notes. Finally let the sigh drop to a mid-range note and start toning. Ask everyone to match that tone. As the group tones together ask them to imagine that the space in the center of the circle is a bowl. They are filling the bowl with the sound of the toning.
PERSONAL & GROUP VISION

We all have the ability to imagine the future. We do it all the time, and yet too often our envisioning takes the form of unconscious fear or dread. In our “just in time” world, and given the multitude of challenges facing us, it’s hard to think forward in a generative manner. We believe it’s important to regularly exercise our visionary capacities and to share visioning practices with young people so we can fully engage our creative imaginations in working toward a world we want.

GROUP MANDALA ON A THEME  30-45 minutes

Purpose: visioning, team work

Materials: large pieces of butcher paper, scissors, oil pastels, crayons, or markers

Instructions: Using butcher paper, make a large circle, maybe six feet in diameter. Cut out a center circle then cut the outside of the circle into 4 to 6 pie-shaped pieces.

Break out into 5 to 7 groups (depending on the number of pieces you have)

• Ask each group to create a group picture that represents “the world you want your great, great, great grandchildren to inherit.” Ask them what they want it to look like and feel like. What do they want to find there?
• Once the individual pieces are complete, tape them together to make one large mandala.
• You can then use this as a focal point for exploring values and motivating social action.

Tips: Encourage people to use images more than words. Groups are free to make one central image or a series of random images. The completed mandala makes a great piece to display to adults to show them what youth care about. They are inevitably surprised.
LETTER FROM THE FUTURE 20 minutes or more

Purpose: visioning, creative writing

Materials: pen and paper

Instructions: This writing activity helps people throw a fishing line into the future and hook a clear image of positive possibility. It’s an excellent activity for both youth and adults. Tell people they will be doing a free write activity and provide appropriate instructions.

- Ask participants to think of a time in the future, say, at the end of the school year or at the completion of a planned project.
- Now think of person who is very supportive and revels in your success. It can be a family member or a friend. The person can even be deceased.
- The object of this activity is to write a letter to this person from the vantage point of the time in the future you have identified. You have been successful beyond your wildest dreams and you are telling this person all about it. What happened, what does it feel like, what steps did you take to get there, and what’s next. Just let your mind go and record the good news on the paper.
- Once everyone has written a page or so, call a halt to the writing.
- Invite people to read all or some of their writing to a partner.
- Call for volunteers to read their piece to the entire group. As people read their pieces you will notice the energetic shift in the room to one of power and possibility.

Tips: Be sure to stress the fact that the person’s endeavor has met with wild success. Encourage people to use description in their writing.
THE BULLSEYE PROCESS  30-60 minutes

Purpose: personal visioning, goal setting

Materials: 18”x24” paper; pens; oil pastels, crayons, or markers

Instructions: This is a great activity for individuals or groups to use to focus on a goal. You can give people a form with the bullseye chart on it, or you can draw the chart on a flip chart and ask them to draw their own. Going back to the “start with the blank page” maxim, we find that people come up with something more personal and creative when they draw it on their own. It helps to walk people through the process using an example.

- Begin by explaining goal versus objectives. A goal is a final outcome such as “becoming an excellent arts facilitator.” The objectives would be the steps you would take to reach that goal such as 1. Taking a workshop. 2. Volunteering at an arts/empowerment camp. 3. Pulling together a small group of friends you can practice leading activities with. Encourage people to be very clear in their goal and objectives. They should be written in such a way that they can look back later and see if they have accomplished them.
- Once they have filled in their goals and objectives, they are to fill in each quadrant of the form.
- Share the bullseye charts in groups of 2 to 4. Encourage the groups to question and coach each other along the way. Are their objectives clear and doable? Have they adequately identified their resources and skills? Might they want to add some objectives that speak to the personal changes they need to make?