

NAME: Min(e)d Field

SOURCE: Adapted from a variety of team building exercises and the Monsters on a Bus Metaphor (Hayse)

INTENTION: This exercise is a flexible metaphor to address the whole range of ACT processes

MATERIALS:

- Large Open Space
- Blindfolds (alternatively people can close their eyes – impulse control / honesty)
- Tape to define *beginning* of the **mined field** and the *end*.
- 8-12 “Mines” (cups, cones, pads, etc)

SET UP

- Group gathers on one side of the mined field
- “Mines” are scattered randomly throughout the field.
- Option: Leader can provide some value-based reason the group is crossing through the mined field. (e.g. - To discover a hidden truth)

INSTRUCTIONS

*The challenge for this group is for each person to cross the mined field without sight (blindfolded, eyes closed, etc.), relying on the verbal instructions of a **guide**. If anyone makes physical contact with a mine the entire group needs to start over from the beginning. Each member of the group can serve as the guide, giving verbal instructions to a person in the mined field **only once**.*

This means that everyone will cross the mined field without sight and everyone will serve as a guide once. (To add a problem solving component you can eliminate this part of the instruction).

There can only be one person in the mined field at a time. The guide and the rest of the group must remain outside of the field. They can only provide verbal instructions. No one can make physical contact or provide any other form of guidance. .People who are not serving as the guide must remain quiet and cannot provide suggestions or hints.

The team should inform the group leader when they believe they have successfully completed the challenge.

DISCUSSION: Possible questions or topics to address

- How was that for people? (Start with a question that is open ended and non-directive)
- How did the group decide that it had been successful?
 - Notice any difference in values: We had fun, we followed instructions, etc.
 - Process any questionable observations (It looked like someone stepped on a mine, but the group did not start over. How was this decision made?... One person sat out and the group decided not to include them...Did anyone question that decision?)
- How did people respond when a mine exploded?
 - Anyone feel an urge to deny that or pretend it did not happen?

- What did people think/feel, how did that impact what you did?
- Was there a time when anyone moved forward in the activity in opposition to thoughts or feelings that tried to hold you back?
- Did people prefer to walk the mined field, or give instructions?
 - Why do you think that is?
 - Is this true of you in other areas of your life?
 - How does it affect the way you live; what you choose to do or avoid?
 - Could you make another choice if it was important?
- What would happen if the person in the field did not take instructions, but just took control of the situation themselves?
 - How would it look if you let your feelings guide you rather than listening to the instructions of the person guiding you?
- Are there different mind fields that you experience in different settings (home or school)?
 - What do you depend on to lead you through?
 - Are these thoughts, feelings, or people dependable guides?

The therapist should look for and process examples of experiential avoidance and cognitive fusion with thoughts (I am lousy with instructions; I let the group down...)

This activity can be adapted to emphasize different ACT process.

1. SELF AS CONTEXT - Participants can take on the “voices” of different mines in a particular “field” (context like school, home, a specific task or relationship). This can play out like monsters on the bus metaphor. A participant can change places with different mines (anxiety, negative self-image, self-criticism, etc.) and “get into the skin” of the mine. The therapist can then ask the participant questions like: What is your motive; how did you get planted here; how can you be helpful? Participants can step outside of the field and watch a peer play their role (take observer position).
2. CONSTRUCTIVE HOPELESSNESS – Participants can re-enact how they have habitually and unsuccessfully negotiated the mind field (gone in without a guide, impulsively confronted the same mine, or threw themselves on a mine...), repeating the same scenario over and over.
3. EXPERIENTIAL AVOIDANCE – Negotiate the field but stay 3 feet away from the therapist who plays a moving mine (anxiety or depression, etc.). Participants can process what happens to the goal of getting to the other side when they get focused on running away from something they want to avoid.
4. COGNITIVE FUSION – This usually pops up as participants negotiate the mined field. Participants often express thoughts about themselves; these can become characters in the play. You can also give participants “impossible instructions” to follow: crawl through the mind field, hop on one foot, don’t feel anxious, don’t touch the floor. Process how your mind gives you unworkable instructions (don’t feel ____, don’t look foolish, don’t think hurtful thoughts...) and how we try to follow them, because they feel like commands not options.
5. PRESENT MOMENT AWARENESS – Ask participants to complete a distracting activity (times tables out-loud, juggling 3 balls, singing Yankee Doodle) while negotiating the mined field. Process the impact of divided attention.