



AUTHENTIC REVOLUTION

CONNECTION GAMES

RELATE WITH ANYONE, ANYWHERE, ANYTIME





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WHAT IS

AUTHENTIC RELATING

Welcome to the open source, decentralized movement known as Authentic Relating! This guide offers a handful of games that can be played with friends and family to foster connection.

Authenticity is acting and speaking in alignment with our inner feelings, desires, and needs. Authentic Relating (AR) is the practice of bringing our truth into connection with others', so that we can weave a more rich and truthful human experience.



The Authentic Relating Games contained in this guide are an easy and fun way to introduce AR into daily life. They can help us experience deeper connections, boost empathy, see the world through others' eyes, and understand ourselves better so that we can enjoy life more.

Every game is a unique experience, whether you are playing it for the first time or the hundredth, because there is something new to learn about others and ourselves every time we enter into a new connection.

From simple curiosity games, to awareness-building exercises, and group activities which can take individuals safely out of their comfort zone, Authentic Relating games have the ability to profoundly and positively impact how we interact and live.

This free guide contains a sampling of exercises with the intention to increase presence, connection, self-awareness, and empathy in groups around the world. For much more:

[Access the full AR Games Manual here, with over 150 games and variations!](#)



HOW TO

USE THESE CONNECTION GAMES

WHEN:

1. When first meeting a new group or person during a party, Zoom hangout, or casual conversation simply ask: “Hey, do y’all want to play a game?”
2. Prior to a meeting or purposeful group interaction, notify people through email or other format: “When we get together, I’d love to start off with a 10-minute game to help us connect and make the rest of our time together more deep, effective, and fun.”
3. When you’re anxious, in conflict, stuck, or feeling disconnected, use the Games as a simple way to change the social norms and have more choice around your experience.

HOW:

You can call it a “Game” or an “Exercise” or “Social Technology” or a “Magic Connection Experience”. The important thing is that you adapt to your audience and use these games to create the connection that you desire.

You can try:

- Different timing of turns
- Different group sizes
- Different prompts
- More playful or serious ways of introducing instructions
- Giving different examples of what play looks like

Try different things and find what works for you!



THE AGREEMENTS

These are usually shared at the beginning of an authentic relating game night, so may not be needed for an informal context. However, they point to some of the core values of AR, so are very useful for new people. Feel free to use some or all of these to help create a culture before playing some AR games.

1 . RESPECT YOURSELF

You are your main priority. If you have bodily or emotional needs that are keeping you from being fully involved in the Games, please take care of those first. You are welcome to sit out of one or all of the Games. You can change your mind at any time. The more you take responsibility for yourself, the more freedom you and others have to play without worrying about others' unspoken needs!

2. LEAN INTO YOUR EDGE

Authentic Relating Games are meant to take us places that we don't often go in everyday conversation. You may experience fear, anger, joy, desire, cuddliness, or other emotions, perhaps more strongly than you have before! These games are an invitation to lean into the edge of discomfort that comes with true authenticity, in a space that's kept safe for vulnerability . . . as long as you do so while still respecting yourself. Find your own edge, and lean into new ways of sharing and being together.

3. STAY PRESENT

Remain aware of your own sensations, emotions, and needs during the games. Notice where your attention is. If it wanders away from yourself or your partner, gently bring your awareness back into connection. The more conscious you are of yourself, the more you will get out of this work.

4. CONFIDENTIALITY BY REQUEST

If you feel you've shared something you would like to remain private, ask for confidentiality from those you've shared it with. This is always an option before, during, or after speaking. We use confidentiality by request - rather than blanket confidentiality - because it allows us to practice asking for what we need, and because vulnerable sharing can happen inside or outside of an explicit Games container and it's easier to remember a specific request than everything shared within an event.

5. CHECK YOUR ASSUMPTIONS

We all have different ideas of what is "normal" in terms of touch, sharing, and other physical or emotional intimacy. Before you reach for any un-invited touch, ask personal questions, or make requests outside of the instructions given in a game, please check in with your partner to see if this is something they would like to receive. You can also check assumptions you have about how somebody seems - if they seem distant, angry, confused, joyful, etc., checking in can help align perception with reality, so that you can relate with a person rather than your story of who they are.



THE "GOOGLE" GAME



SETUP: PAIRS OR FULL GROUP
TIME: 10-20 MINUTES

The purpose of this game is for groups to get to know each other in a fun, light-hearted way. For those newer to AR, it can be an intriguing taste of the deeper curiosity inherent to the practice. Try this game at parties or on a first date, to spark some fun and interesting stories.

Instructions for Playing:

- In pairs or small groups, one person begins as the focus of attention—the person who will be “Googled.” Others ask questions using the format:
- *If I were to Google you and [fill in a word or phrase], what would I find?* These phrases can be concrete or more abstract (e.g., *“If I were to Google you and [surfing, international travel, joy, concerts, lizards, the color blue...], what would I find?”*).
- In response, that person can share a story, memory, or whatever words or thoughts come up in relation to the search term. Usually for 1-3min, although a longer story could be shared if everyone involved finds listening enjoyable.
- Group members can also “double click” on anything they want the “Googlee” to say more about.
- After five minutes or so, switch roles (if in pairs), or continue rotating through group members until everyone has gone.

You can find a video on [The Google Game here](#).



SENTENCE STEMS



SETUP: FULL GROUP
TIME: 10-30 MINUTES

Sentence Stems are a simple and versatile tool to practice Authentic Relating with groups of any size, and in a wide variety of environments. They are highly effective at building connection between people who are unfamiliar with each other, and just as valuable for close friends seeking deeper intimacy. In fact, they are so commonly used in AR that they form the backbone of many other games.

Simply put, a “sentence stem” is the beginning of a sentence, for which the rest can be uniquely completed by each person in a pair or group. Often people will want to take a slight pause and think about their answer, and after that simply take 10-30 seconds to complete the sentence stem. Elaborating a little gives people a chance to understand you more, but usually the answers are short, which makes this ideal for bigger groups.

Options:

- If you really knew me, you would know...
- Something I really appreciate about you [pick a person or go around naming everyone] is...
- My friends / parents / therapist / pet / computer would describe me as...
- I'm really passionate about...
- Something I really love about myself is...
- I'm really f***ing good at...
- Something you'd be surprised to know about me is...
- With you, I feel...
- I'm jealous of...
- A perfect day for me would be...
- What scares me most is...

You can find [more Sentence Stems here](#). Feel free to add your own!



HOT SEAT



SETUP: FULL GROUP
TIME: 15-45 MINUTES

This is a classic edge-pushing game that gives us permission to ask juicier questions. It's recommended to be played with friends or family you want to know better! This game is always a favorite for its rapid depth and boldness, and it brings a lot of energy to the room.

Instructions for Playing:

- In groups, one person volunteers to sit in the "hot seat," facing the rest of the group. Set a timer for 3-6 minutes.
- The person in the hot seat chooses their desired level of intensity (mild, medium, or spicy). Or, if the group agrees to it, you can set the same level for everyone.

Mild questions are unlikely to bring up difficult topics or emotions. Examples might be:

- > What brings you the most happiness?
- > What's your idea of a perfect day?
- > Who in your life would you like to spend more time with?

Medium questions prompt more vulnerability or deeper thought. Examples:

- > How do you feel in this group of people?
- > When's the last time you felt lonely? Why?
- > What's one thing you'd like to change about yourself?

Spicy questions are anything goes.

- > Who in this group are you least comfortable with? Why?
- > When's the last time you had sex?
- > How do you feel about your parents' relationship?
- > Do you ever abuse your power?



Anybody in the group can ask a question at any time. If the person who asked a question feels complete with the answer, at any time, they can say “Thank you”, which is a signal for the person on the hot seat to STOP TALKING - even mid-sentence. This ensures that the focus doesn’t ramble, and helps keep the heat up.

Give about 4-10 minutes per person, and aim to end either when the time is up when you feel the high note has been hit. If you want, you can end with group shares of “What I get about you is...” and/or “I felt you the most when...” to help ground the experience. The focus chooses who goes next!



"ONE TIME..."



SETUP: BREAKOUT GROUPS
TIME: 5-20 MINUTES

In this storytelling game, each person tells one-sentence-long TRUE stories that start with, 'One time...' These one sentence stories can have a comma or perhaps a semicolon, but should be concise. This fairly fast sharing is what keeps the game alive. Example: "One time I accidentally shot my neighbor's dog in the leg with a bb gun."

After the first share the person to the left (clockwise) tells a story that the first person's story reminds them of (whether or not it seems connected to everyone else) and so on around through the group. Example: "One time my brother and I egged the neighbor's house and got grounded for 2 months."

The goal is to not plan ahead and stay in the present moment. In other words, don't tell a story you thought of while the person prior was speaking. You can allow for longer stories and popcorn style shares (where anyone can speak without going around the circle), as the game goes on and the group gets warmed up. This game can go for any length, usually 5-15 minutes, although one time a group I was in played for over an hour!

You can also share stories around a particular theme, ex. "Success", "Fear", "Stories I don't tell my family", etc.



TRUTHS



SETUP: FULL GROUP
TIME: 10-30 MINUTES

Truths is a simple, powerful way to communicate the effect others have or have had on us. Although we all impact each other, we rarely get to hear how. Sharing impact is one of the most important tools in Authentic Relating practice. Truths helps us practice this skill of telling others how their actions and interactions, with us and others, changed our experience of life.

In Truths, any person can share with another individual, or the group as a whole, using this sentence completion:

“Bob, when you ____ [identify a particular moment or action], I felt or experienced ____.” Optionally, you can add: “And what I’ve learned from that is ____”

E.g. David, when you shared what you did about your family I learned something about how I can show up differently and with more compassion with my brothers.

Susan, when you said you wanted to move on and felt complete in an interaction, but said it in a grounded kind way, I grew in respect for you and had a model for clear and healthy boundaries.



DEEPENING QUESTIONS

Often in life we can get into a pattern of asking the same cordial questions. E.g. How are you? How are the kids? Where did you go to school? Do you have any summer vacation plans?

Authentic relating teaches us to go deeper and tap into our childlike curiosity. In these depths we are more nourished by our connections and life just gets a bit more interesting.

Try experimenting with some of the questions below and even take a risk and create your own deepening questions.

What was the best part of your day so far?

What would a perfect day be like for you?

What have you learned this week that you found interesting?

What are you passionate about?

What are you obsessed with right now?

What is most real for you these days?

What's the best thing going on in your life right now?

What's something missing in your life right now?

What do you want more than anything?

What has been one of the 3 most valuable lessons of your life? And what experiences instigated that lesson for you?

What is the biggest thing you've overcome?

Where & when do you get your best ideas?

What makes you feel alive?

What's something you really value and appreciate about yourself (that you wish others appreciated more often)?

What's something about yourself that you don't normally tell people you've just met?

How would your friends describe you?

Why do you think we have met?

What are three things that you and I have in common?

What are you struggling with lately?

How do you sense I can support you most?



What's something you really want me to know about you? Why?

What do you really want to know about me?

What's something you're afraid to share with me? Why?

What do you think I think about you?

The elephant in the room is...

Is there something you've dreamed of doing for a long time?

If you could wake up tomorrow having gained one new quality or ability, what would it be?

What do you value most in a friendship?

What is one of your favorite memories?

What is one of your earliest memories?

What activity in your life makes you the most nervous?

If you could do over one year of your life, which year would it be?

Do you have a morning ritual?

If social media didn't exist, how would your life be different?

What's your relationship to anger?

What's your relationship to spirituality?

What's your favorite part of your body? Why?

What are you really fucking good at?

What is the number one reason that you think people want to hang out with you?

What is one way you like to be appreciated?

What helps you feel most fully in your swagger?

What is your most urgent priority for the rest of the year?

Who is the last person that deeply disappointed you? (What happened?)

Would you consider yourself an introvert, extrovert, or ambivert?

Would you like to write a book? (About what?)

Tell me about a friend from your past that you wish was still in your life.

What do you think happens after we die?

If your exes all got together and decided to psychoanalyze you, what do you think they'd say?



KEYWORDS AND PHRASES

You'll see many of these mentioned throughout this guide, so here is an explanation to some of the language we use in Authentic Relating.

AGREEMENTS

Shared understandings about how we will interact and communicate. Usually stated to and confirmed by all participants at the start of an event where we may be interacting in new and/or vulnerable ways.

ALIVE

The thing that feels strongest or has your attention the most.

- ★ *"What's alive for you right now?"*

AUTHENTIC

Honest, forthright, real. Authenticity can include being open or closed, as long as that is what is real in that moment.

AUTHENTIC RELATING (AR)

A mode of communication that involves acknowledging and revealing one's own feelings, thoughts, motivations, and perceptions.

CIRCLING

A relational meditation practice used by groups worldwide to increase empathy and self-awareness within connection. Part art form, part meditation, and part group conversation, it is a profound way of developing presence with yourself and richer relationship with those around you.

CONTEXT

The surroundings or frame of a statement, experience, or event that provides meaning and helps one interpret the situation.

DISSONANCE

A clash of values or styles between two people or a within a group.

- ★ *"I want to share some dissonance with what is happening in the group right now"*

Also: Incongruence within one individual especially between aspects of their expression.

- ★ *"I'm noticing dissonance between you saying you feel joy, and your furrowed eyebrows and lack of smile. Can you tell me more about what's happening for you?"*

EDGY

Some experience that puts the person into a place of emotional discomfort, but not overwhelm.

- ★ *"I'm attracted to you, and it feels edgy to say that."*

EMPATHY

Relating to, understanding, and/or viscerally feeling someone else's experience



FEELING

Physical: A sensation. A somatic experience.

or:

Emotional: An emotion.

- ★ Physical feeling: *“My arms tingle and there is a sharp ache behind my forehead.”*
- ★ Emotional feeling: *“I’m angry.” “I’m a little scared and also excited.”*

GETTING SOMEONE'S WORLD

Taking the time to understand and/or embody someone else’s perspective on reality.

- ★ *“Once I got her world around the conflict, I could understand why she was so angry with me!”*

INTEGRAL

A developmental theory about individual and collective human evolution, often used in association with Circling and Authentic Relating. Developed by philosopher Ken Wilber as a synthesis of psychological, philosophical, and religious theories across many cultures and modalities.

OWNING YOUR EXPERIENCE

Taking full responsibility (ownership) for the somatic/sensory, emotional experience that is present for one’s self. Using language that indicates it is understood that the locus of experience is inside of the self (owner), not outside of the self.

SHARED REALITY

Consensus on the world we’re experiencing. “I know that you know that I know,” etc. Getting shared reality is core to Authentic Relating practice.

- ★ *“Do we have shared reality that “clean” means all the dishes are put away?”*

SUBJECTIVE

Individual, focused within the self. Often refers to my personal truth and/or view of reality, which may or may not be true for others.

TRIGGERED

Experiencing emotional intensity, usually negative/uncomfortable emotions (anger, pain, sadness, etc).

- ★ *“I’m really triggered by what you just said. It reminds me of feeling left out of games when I was little.”*

TWIDDLE / TWINKLE FINGERS

Silently waving fingers to show “Me too.” This is American Sign Language sign for applause, here used to show agreement or resonance with what is going on or being said.



OTHER RESOURCES

All available at www.authrev.org.

CONNECT

COConnect is an online Authentic Relating and Circling community for those who feel a longing for deeper connection and are looking for a community to practice with. You may continue your journey every day with live, interactive events.

THE AUTHENTIC LIFE COURSE

The ALC is a seven-week-long online turbocharger for all your relationships and everyday interactions, developed by Sara Ness. It has all the tools and accountability you need to actually change the way you interact and show up in your connections.

THE AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP TRAINING

The ALT is a transformative, experiential 3-day training in facilitative leadership. You'll learn to bring your desires authentically and effectively into groups both personal and professional, and you'll get many chances to try and improve your new skills.

OTHER WRITINGS

The AR Games Manual: More than 250 Games and variations like the ones in this manual!

Creating Authentic Communities: A guide to starting and running communities around Authentic Relating and Circling practices.

Circling Guide: A manual of tools for the art of understanding others deeply.

Social Technology for the Workplace: A manual developed by AuthTeams for increasing connection and trust within companies.

All manuals are available at www.authrev.org/manuals



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Authentic Relating Games Manual is the work of six years (and counting). It contains a multitude of exercises, with the intention to increase presence, connection, self-awareness, and empathy in groups around the world. The “Games” contained here have been extensively play-tested. If you have contributions or variations as you try them out in your own community, please email sara@authrev.com.

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Thank you all for your hard work, and your generosity in sharing these games!

The full manual, with many more Games and contributors, is available at
<https://www.authrev.org/manuals>