WHAT IS IT?

The following games are designed to help the group focus and work together. Alternatively if the group’s attention starts to drift, or when they’re over-excited, use these games to help focus attention back to the room and get everyone ready for the next task. These games are useful for encouraging the participants to think as a group and work as a team.

Make up your own rules and adapt them to suit your group... but here are just a few to get you started.

TIPS

- To encourage a group to manage their own behaviour, offer them these and similar games as ‘strategies’ to use if they feel the group is losing focus.
- If a group struggles to achieve the objective of a game return to it again at the end of the session; try girls versus boys or ask the group to come up with three ‘top tips’ or strategies.
GAMES TO FOCUS

Games

Eye Contact Shuffle
This is a game to promote collaboration and positive non-verbal group interaction. (It also gets everyone to shush and sit next to someone new). In silence members of the group look around the circle. When they catch the gaze of another person they have to swap seats. The group has to maintain focus for as many swaps as possible. If the pair or anyone in the group laughs or speaks the swap counter is reset. Try setting them a challenge, maybe 10 swaps. Make it harder by asking the person to say ‘yes’ when they receive your eye contact. You start walking towards them but they can’t move until someone else has said ‘yes’ to them.

Collaborative Counting (Or One To Ten)
In a circle facing each other to begin with (but with backs to one another as the group becomes more tightly knit), participants must slowly count to ten. One person contributes a number at any one time. If two people speak at the same time the group must start again. After the process the group can be asked to reflect on what worked and what didn’t. Make it harder by introducing new rules e.g. no-one can say the same number twice when you restart the game; try with just boys then just girls to see who can get further; no-one can say more than one number during one game.

Who Started That?
Someone is ‘it’ and briefly leaves the room. In a circle the rest of the group appoint a leader. When ‘it’ rejoins the group the leader starts a series of subtle actions one after the other (e.g. swaying, twitching or chewing.) Everyone in the circle begins to imitate it. The person in the middle has to work out who started the action with three goes. If they succeed the leader becomes ‘it’ and goes outside. If ‘it’ fails, they go outside again and a new leader is chosen. Make it harder by having two leaders.

One, Two, Three
The group pair off. Each pair has to count to three, alternating each time. i.e. Person A: “One”; Person B “Two”; Person A: “Three”; Person B “One; Person A “Two” etc. As the counting speeds up the activity requires more and more concentration. If one pair is particularly fast, ask the rest of the group to watch them. Make it harder by replacing one or all of the numbers with an action or sound like a clap, a jump or a whoop.

Philosophy Fruit salad
Sitting on chairs in a circle, swap places in response to various philosophical propositions. E.g. Swap places if... “You think that you are a brain, if you think the universe is infinite, if you think capital punishment is right, if you think words have fixed meanings…” This game familiarises students with philosophical subject matter and promotes questioning.

Speed Dating
In response to some stimulus, pairs comprised of person A and person B compose philosophical questions. They begin to discuss their question but when three minutes are up, the B’s must rotate right, swapping partners and questions. The A’s might explain where they got to with their last partner while the B’s bring additional considerations to the conversation, some of which might be influenced by their previous conversations. This game gives students an opportunity explore an issue focussing on depth (if you’re in the inner circle thinking about one question) and breadth (if you’re in the outer circle thinking about many questions)