

OUT OF THE BOX

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OBJECTIVE

Students will practice brainstorming and finalizing creative, strengths-based agreement items that are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Related, Timely) for restorative justice processes.

MATERIALS

Tape to draw a large “box” for each team on the ground (Or, if you happen to have large boxes or bins that a team of 4–7 people could stand in and if the group is familiar enough with each other to feel comfortable being that close, this is an entertaining setup and intensifies the physical experience of the game.), a notepad and pen for each team, a mock restorative justice case scenario, and a description of the responsible person’s strengths and interests. Optional: List these strengths and interests on a poster that is visible to all participants.

Note: This game is easier to lead with a co-facilitator. One facilitator leads the game, and the other acts as the “judge.”

INSTRUCTIONS

Divide participants into teams of 5–7 people. All members of each team will stand inside their own box made out of tape on the floor (or an actual box). The size of the box should require the team members to stand close to each other to help create intensity and increase motivation to get out. You may want to begin by reviewing the SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Related to repairing the harm, Timely) criteria for agreement items as a group.

The facilitator then explains: “I am going to share a case scenario and the responsible person’s strengths. Each team will work together to write agreement items that are creative, strengths-based, and SMART that could potentially be used in a contract to repair harm. Here’s the catch: your agreement item must be an ‘out of the box’ idea, meaning it cannot be any one of the four most common agreement items: apology letter, poster, PowerPoint, and community service hours. When your team has an idea ready to share, raise your hand and shout ‘Repair!’ (or another word that has meaning for your group). I will call on you to read your idea out loud. The other groups should pause and listen. The idea must be read in one continuous sentence and clearly have all the elements of SMART.

If I accept the item you described because it has fit all the SMART criteria, the person who voiced that item will step out of the box and stand to the side, away from their group. That person is no longer participating in the game (but can certainly cheer on their teammates). If I reject the item, you can continue working on it, but another group can also 'steal' that idea and try to make it fit the criteria. The goal is to be the first team to get all members out of the box."

Adjust the "four most common agreement items" according to your context! If the community you are working with tends to overly rely on certain agreement items, you can make those part of the box and push participants to use their creative capacity to come up with different creative ideas.

The facilitator needs to be prepared to listen to each proposed agreement item to determine in the moment if it fits all criteria. If you are working with a co-trainer, share responsibilities and ask them to be the judge. Once a teammate is outside the box, they cannot make suggestions. The first team to get all teammates out of the box wins. Depending on group size, this game may require substantial time to complete. Plan for at least 30 minutes. If you don't have enough time to run the game through completion, stop it with enough time to synthesize learning and debrief.

Note: This game can be a little wild and chaotic at first, and that's part of the fun! The facilitator must orchestrate the game, tracking when each team is ready with an idea and indicating which team has the floor, making sure that teams are taking turns. This requires a facilitator who is ready to think on their feet and manage a lot of activity. Recruit a good co-trainer to help you facilitate the first time, don't take yourself too seriously, and don't give up!

DEBRIEF

Ask the last person who was left in the box: How was it different brainstorming ideas with a big group versus alone? Ask everyone: How did your group work together to create agreement item ideas? What got your creativity going? What did you notice when you couldn't rely on the four most common agreement items?

LESSON

When we think “outside the box” and brainstorm together, we are able to come up with more creative ideas to repair harms. Students learn about the importance of making an agreement idea SMART.

