

OBJECTIVE

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

MATERIALS

A Zoom account with breakout room availability. A mock restorative justice case scenario, and a description of the responsible person's strengths and interests.

Note: To make this game fun and manageable online, you need a minimum of 9 participants (in addition to the facilitators) and a maximum of 25.

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

INSTRUCTIONS

Explain to the whole group that you will be dividing participants into teams (3–5 people per team depending on group size) and sending each team into their own breakout room.

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 three agreement items that are creative, strengths-based, and SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Related to repairing the harm, and Timely) that could potentially be used in a restorative contract to repair harm. Here's the catch: all agreement items must be 'out of the box' ideas, meaning they cannot be any one of the three most common agreement items: apology letter, poster, and community service hours. Imagine that all the members of your team are standing in a box together. Your goal is to get all members of your team 'out of the box' through coming up with creative, SMART agreement item ideas.

After 10 minutes, I will bring all teams back into the main meeting space for Round 1. I will call on each group to read one idea at a time, i.e. Team A reads one idea, then Team B reads one idea, then Team C, etc. The other teams should pause and listen. The idea must be read in one continuous sentence (as it would be written on a restorative contract) and clearly have all the elements of SMART.

I (or the "judge" if you have a co-facilitator) will respond to each agreement item after it is read and will determine if it has met all the SMART criteria. If I accept the item, the person who voiced that item will symbolically step 'out of the box' by turning off their video and muting themselves. They are now a silent observer, and can no longer make suggestions. If I reject the item, you can choose to continue working on it when I send you back into breakout rooms, but another group can also 'steal' that idea and try to make it fit the criteria.

The first team to get all members 'out of the box' wins.”

How the game progresses:

After the teams have read all 3 of their ideas in Round 1 and you (or the "judge") have accepted or rejected each idea, send the teams back into their breakout rooms to continue working on additional SMART, out of the box agreement items. Reduce the amount of time they have to 8 or 6 minutes (You can always visit the breakout rooms to see how each team is doing time-wise!), then bring them back together to the main space for Round 2. Have the teams share back their ideas, one by one, as you did in Round 1. Continue this process until one team gets all its participants “out of the box,” which will look like all those team members silently appearing on screen with just a gray box with their names. Announce the winning team and they can turn on their cameras to celebrate!

Adjust the “three 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 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, make them the Zoom Co-Host and ask them to be the "judge." Depending on group size, this game may require a fair amount of 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, the judging of ideas, 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 three 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.

