

Why Play Works Facilitation Guide

The general format for the book club is:

1. Small talk/Arrival time (5 minutes)
2. Today's theme (5 minutes)
3. Small Group Discussion (25 minutes)
4. Let's Play (20 minutes)

Research tells us that play is important for keeping children, and adults healthy. So we are going to take time to play as part of the book club.

Book Club meeting 2: Let's Start Playing

Themes: Inclusion and Leadership

Read pages 39-77 (39 pages)

- Fire in Your Belly
- What's Normal
- Anyone Can Play
- If at First You Don't Succeed
- Follow the Leader
- Emotional Rescue

Small talk/Arrival time (5 minutes)

Jan Handa will facilitate arrival time.

Share in chat:

We'll have time to share one interesting game from the Game Guide in the back of your book. If you don't have a game selected, take some time now to look through the Game Guide and pick out a game you want to share.

Today's theme (5 minutes)

Today's discussion will focus on inclusion and leadership. This section of the book dives into more of the big changes that we can support in the lives of the kids in our programs through how we play together.

Some highlights from the first session – play has benefits – physical, emotional and social for youth and adults. We all need play for our brains and bodies to develop to their fullest potential. Play is sometimes structured and sometimes unstructured – but is also voluntarily. We reap benefits when we choose to join into play, not when we are forced or required to participate.

We talked about how playing together can help adults build authentic, caring, consistent relationships with program participants – and how these relationships help them navigate the challenges that they face.

The title of this session is let's start playing. There were several examples in the book today about how to get play started. I loved Lamar's story in chapter 3 because he didn't take time to plan – while maybe a bit because he did use his experience to know how to structure things so 120 kids could play together – but mostly he realized the most important thing about play is to get started and that is what we're going to do

today. By the time you leave, I hope you are prepared to pay with the youth in your program this afternoon.

Small Group Discussion (20 minutes)

Set up the number of small group/breakout rooms needed: Up to 8 people stay together, 9-15 people divide into 2 groups, 16-23 people into 3 groups etc.

Send participants into small group/breakout rooms if needed. If possible, have the facilitator move between groups to observe and answer questions.

Discuss the questions shared in advance.

- “Healthy communities use play to instill positive social norms.” (page 50) What norms are imbedded in how the games are played in your program now?
- What ideas about making all children feel included do you want to try out? (Facilitators see pages 55-61)
- What ideas about developing leadership would you like to explore more? (Facilitators see pages 64-77)
- How could group agreements be useful in your program? (Facilitators see page 77)

Bring the group back together and transition into the time for playing together.

Let’s Play (20 minutes)

Next we are going to take some time to learn from each other. We asked each person to share one interesting game from the Game Guide in the back of your book. Now is your chance to briefly share the game you selected and why you found it interesting.

If you have questions as people share their game, please write them down on a piece of paper or in the chat. You will have time to come back to the questions after everyone has a chance to share.

Return to the same small group/breakout rooms. If possible, have the facilitator move between groups to observe and answer questions.

1. Go around the group sharing your name, where you are from, the game you selected (page number is helpful) and why it is interesting to you.
2. After everyone has shared their game, you can ask questions about the games – or questions you have in general. Have they played this game? Did it work? Which games are going to work best with middle schoolers? What games can you play with high schoolers?

Wrap Up (5 minutes)

Thanks for joining us today. Today’s theme was inclusion and leadership – these ideas tied several of the short chapters we read together. Our discussion illustrated how we can try to set up experiences to help youth develop the skills to include others or to be good leaders – and we should. But we also need watch for how these ideas come up naturally through play and be ready to reinforce positive behavior and redirect negative ones.

Our next session will focus on Conflict and Competition. For this session on December 5 you will read pages 78-117. With this theme in mind, we’re going to ask you to share an idea for group agreements or rules that will help create positive social norms for your program. You may already have group agreements or rules you use, or you can check out page 77 for ideas.