

Why Play Works Facilitation Guide 3

Each session would have some time for discussing the themes from the section read that month all together and some time for small group sharing/discussion. The general format for each session is:

1. Small talk/Arrival time (5 minutes)
 - a. We will take a few minutes to talk about the weather or do an icebreaker. Participants will be invited to volunteer to plan an icebreaker for the next session.
2. Today's theme (5 minutes)
 - a. The facilitator will share announcements and introduce the theme for the day. This leads naturally to the discussion.
3. Discussion (20 minutes)
 - a. Discuss the 3-5 questions that were sent in advance for each session. Use breakout rooms depending on the size of the group:
 - i. Up to 8 people stay in one room
 - ii. 9-15 people 2 breakout rooms
 - iii. 16-23 people in 3 breakout rooms
 - iv. 24-31 in 4 breakout rooms
 - v. 32-40 in 5 breakout rooms
 - b. *Will we ask for volunteers to facilitate the breakout rooms?*
 - c. At the end of 20 minute, bring the group back together and check-in on how the discussion went. Then transition into the time for playing together.
4. Let's Play (20 minutes)
 - a. 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 3: The Power of Play

Themes: Conflict & Competition – Physical Activity

Read pages 78-117 (40 pages)

- I Disagree
- Who Says "Winner Takes All"?
- Risky Business
- It's a Family Affair
- Let's Get Physical

Small talk/Arrival time (5 minutes)

As people arrive today, I want to chat about competition – but for us as adults, not for the kids we work with. Unmute or share ideas in chat about what the value of competition is in the lives of adults. Is competition good? Is it bad?

Discussion of ideas shared.

1. What do you notice?
2. Did this prompt you to think about competition differently? How?
3. Any concerns?

Today's theme (5 minutes)

Today's discussion will focus on conflict and competition. Both ideas that sometimes come up as concerns – or negative aspects of what happens during recess – but also both important elements in the lives of working adults.

Some highlights from our last discussion in Session 2 – We talked a lot about social norms – how we can instill positive social norms in how we play. We also talked about how we can try to set up experiences to help youth develop the skills to include others or to be good leaders – and how we need watch for

examples of leadership, including others, or other positive social norms and be ready to reinforce these behaviors.

The title of today's session is *The Power of Play* and this section talked about the power – and limitations of play in helping children learn to handle conflict, to manage emotions, and even to combat obesity. My favorite example of this, I think I mentioned last time was the story from New Orleans on pages 78-79. From my own experience, I recognize the burst of adrenaline that happens when you think something dangerous is about to happen on the other end of your playground, and the tension when you expect to find a physical fight just around the corner, and in this story, Sean, the staff member, was probably even more concerned for Mohammed, the junior coach or helper, who was in the middle of the potential fight.

The best part of the story, of course, is how the social norms of the playground had provided tools that the kids were using on their own to settle their conflict without anyone getting hurt.

Today, I hope we all leave with some strategies that we can use to create the types of environments we want in our programs – and also some ideas about what outcomes we do, and do not want to emphasize in our programs.

Discussion (20 minutes)

Set up just the number of breakout rooms needed: Up to 8 people stay in one room, 9-15 people 2 breakout rooms, etc. Send participants into breakout rooms if needed.

Discuss the questions shared in advance. (post in chat)

- Have you observed students resolving, or not resolving, conflict in your program? What happened?
- Does sport fit into your afterschool programming? What does a sports program offer?
- What about taking risks? (p 92-96) What role does risk taking have in how you and your kids play?

Now let's move into breakout rooms to talk about the discussion questions – or other topics that seemed important to you as you were reading this section.

Bring the group back together and check-in on how the discussion went. Then transition into the time for playing together.

Let's have each group share one interesting idea that led to a good discussion for your small group. Thank you for that discussion.

Let's Play (20 minutes)

Now we are going to take some time to learn from each other. We asked everyone to brainstorming ideas for group agreements or rules. On p. 77, Jill shared some of the agreements they use at Playworks. She mentioned how they make their agreements a bit playful.

Let's take **four** minutes to look over that page and type some ideas in the chat about agreements that you might add to this list. These could be agreements that you use, or might want to use, in your own program – or even in your place of work if that makes more sense for you. (*set timer for 4 minutes*)

Discussion of ideas shared.

1. What do you notice? Does anyone have positive comments to share about any of the ideas in the chat?
2. Any concerns? Questions?
3. Have any of you set up group agreements in your program? How did you go about it?

Wrap Up

Thanks for joining us today. Today's theme was about conflict and competition. I want to wrap up with a quick look at the section – We learn to take risks by playing on page 95-96. On the previous page, it says, Safety isn't the absence of risk, but the development of skills and understanding necessary for responsible risk-taking. I think equipping children to be responsible risk takers is really important for the success.

I wanted to point this section out because I was really struck with a quote for the middle of the next page – prioritizing short-term convenience for adults, often undermines helping children develop their own agency. The reason it stuck me was I think prioritizing short-term convenience has the effect in teaching – opening up experiences and giving students more agency is less convenient, but was also see how it results in deeper understanding and skill development. So, I am beginning to see how changes we make in the play parts of afterschool programs can also help promote learning during clubs or homework time.

Our next session will focus on *Purposeful Changes and Transitions*. For this session on January 11, we are transitioning to meeting on Thursdays for the last two sessions in 2024. We will read pages 118-143. I'm also going to ask everyone to share a favorite game that is not in the Game Guide in the back of your book. In my follow-up email, I'll share links to the Playworks online game library and Recess lab where you can find more game ideas if you want to – but you don't have to use it.

I'll see in January.