Activities
For Group Work With Adolescents
By Susan Ciardiello, Ph.D., LCSW

Easy-to-use activities that promote group process and enhance social, emotional, cognitive, and behavioral competencies
ACTivities For Group Work With Adolescents

Susan Ciardiello is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with her Ph.D. in Social Work from Yeshiva University Wurzweiler School of Social Work. She also holds a Master of Science in Social Work from Columbia University and a Bachelor of Arts in Psychology from the University of Maryland.

Ciardiello’s area of expertise is social group work with children and adolescents and AD/HD coaching. She is a member of the Board of Directors of the International Association for Social Work with Groups, Inc. (IASWG). She is currently Supervisor of Group Work Programs at the Larchmont-Mamaroneck Community Counseling Center and has a private practice in Mamaroneck, NY.

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### THE USE OF ACTIVITIES ACCORDING TO THE DEVELOPMENTAL STAGE OF ADOLESCENCE *

#### AGES 13–18: 7th–12th GRADE

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<th>GROUP ACTIVITIES AND INTERVENTIONS THAT COMPLEMENT DEVELOPMENTAL CHARACTERISTICS, ABILITIES, AND NEEDS</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Social Development:</strong></td>
<td><strong>ACTivities:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Major developmental tasks of adolescence in the social realm are 1) developing more meaningful relationships with others 2) achieving socially responsible behavior.</td>
<td>Use activities that help group members get to know each other:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Major developmental area: develop self-image; a sense of who they are; social self-efficacy (the ability to set social goals and meet them); peer acceptance and approval.</td>
<td>➤ What’s My Favorite? (page 46)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adolescents need to feel accepted by others as they work toward self-acceptance and a sense of identity; conforming to peer standards is exceedingly important.</td>
<td>➤ Candy Quest (page 49)</td>
</tr>
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<td>Identity can be found in joining a group or cause (formal classroom groupings, teams, leadership groups, and informal self-selected peer groups).</td>
<td>➤ It’s A Small World (page 51)</td>
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<td>Adolescents need to experience more independence and rebel against parental and other adult expectations and values to gain a sense of their own identity and competence within their environment.</td>
<td>➤ All About Me (page 52)</td>
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<td>Use activities that enhance communication and friendship building skills, social self-efficacy, socially responsible behavior, and peer acceptance and approval:</td>
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ACTivities That Promote Group Process

THE TALK SHOW

Purpose: To engage members in a stimulating group activity

Stage of Group Development: Late Beginnings, Middles

Materials Needed:

For the leader:
- Talk Show Scenarios (pages 63-69 or CD)
- Scissors
- Hat

For each group member: None

Pre-Activity Preparation:

Choose a scenario, then cut apart characters’ names and put them in a hat. The host uses the top section as a guide. (Note: Each group has pre-determined main characters. The number of audience slips in the hat is determined by the size of the group. For example, if there are 10 group members and 7 main characters, put 3 audience slips in the hat.)

The ACTivity:

Members pretend to be on a talk show. One member will play the host and some members will be a part of the panel he/she interviews. The host will encourage audience members to question the panel. The director/producer of the show yells “cut” when the group needs to be pulled together to regroup and refocus on the topic.

Each group member picks from the hat to determine his/her role. After bringing up key concerns and points about the problem or situation, the group comes back together in a circle. Use the following questions to facilitate a discussion:

1. How did it feel to be the person you pretended to be?
2. What was it like for you to play that role?
3. Any other thoughts? Reactions?
ACTivities That Enhance Social Competency

Bystander Power: Fighting Social Cruelty

Purpose: To show that social cruelty/bullying is a serious problem and that an assertive bystander can alter a socially cruel situation.

Stage of Group Development: Middles

The ACTivity:

Say:

Social cruelty is a problem in our society, especially in schools. Today we will examine ways we hurt each other and how differences can divide people. Let’s try to do this quietly. Strong feelings may emerge, so be respectful toward each other. Can we agree to not laugh or talk during this activity so we all feel safe? You will have a chance afterward to talk about your experiences, thoughts, and feelings.

Please stand and make a circle. I am going to make a statement. If you agree with the statement, step inside the circle. If you don’t agree, don’t move. If you feel uncomfortable or unsure, stay where you are and be aware of the feelings you are experiencing.

Pause after reading each of the following statements. Then say:

Look at who stepped inside the circle. Now, everyone, move back into the circle.

Statements:

• Enter the circle if you have ever been teased or ridiculed.

• Enter the circle if you or someone you care about has a disability that you can
MY COMMUNITY/MY PLANET

Name: ______________________________ Date: __________

1. Describe a community or global problem that causes suffering and pain for humans or animals.

___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

2. List some small ways people could respond to this problem to make their community or world a better place. Check the things that group members are willing to do.

WILLING TO DO

□

□

□

□

□

What one small thing can the group do to respond to this problem?
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________

3. List some big ways people could respond to this problem to make their community or world a better place. Check the things group members are willing to do.

WILLING TO DO

□

□

□

□

□

What one big thing can the group do to respond to this problem?
___________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________
| Situation | The prom is next week.  
My prom date just said he/she can’t go with me. |
|-----------|------------------------------------------------|
| ANTS      | Everyone will think I am a loser.  
I’ll never find another date now. The prom is only a week away. |
| Feeling(s) Rate Feeling(s) (1–100%) | embarrassed (95%)  
discouraged (80%) |
| PATS      | Everyone gets rejected; it’s part of dating. That doesn’t make me a loser. It makes me human.  
I have been embarrassed and discouraged before and have felt better in time. I’ll figure something out. The worst case scenario is I won’t go or I’ll go with people I know who aren’t bringing dates.  
Things will get better. This painful situation won’t last forever. I’m doing the best I can. I can choose to be happy in it or miserable. It’s my choice. |
| Feeling(s) Rate Feeling(s) (1–100%) | embarrassed (65%)  
discouraged (50%) |
| What I Can Do Now To Help Myself? | I will brainstorm ideas for a new prom date. If I need help, I’ll ask friends.  
I can distract myself and watch my favorite TV show. |
**ACTivities That Enhance Emotional Competency**

**THE ERASER**

**Purpose:** To help group members feel less alone by recognizing that they may share similar problems

**Stage of Group Development:** Middles

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**Pre-Activity Preparation:**

Gather the necessary materials.

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**The ACTivity:**

Ask:

*Have you ever wished you could get rid of something negative in your life?*

Group members draw what they wish they could erase from their lives, then write at the top of the paper what the drawing depicts. They should not write their names on the paper.

Group members fold their pictures in half, put them into the bag, then take turns selecting a picture from the bag and showing it to the group. Discuss each picture. Elicit important information about difficult times in group members’ lives by asking:

*Has anyone else ever felt that way?*

Encourage members to think of ways someone could cope with the difficulties described. On the back of the chosen picture, have the person holding the paper write possible methods described by group members of coping with the situation, person, or issue. Place the completed papers into the second bag.

At the end of the group, invite members to take their own papers back from the second bag as a reminder of how they can cope with those situations in their lives.
ASCA STANDARDS

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT

Standard A: Students will acquire the attitudes, knowledge and skills that contribute to effective learning in school and across the life span.

A:A1 Improve Academic Self-concept
A:A1.4 Accept mistakes as essential to the learning process

A:A2 Acquire Skills for Improving Learning
A:A2.2 Demonstrate how effort and persistence positively affect learning
A:A2.3 Use communications skills to know when and how to ask for help when needed

A:A3 Achieve School Success
A:A3.2 Demonstrate the ability to work independently, as well as the ability to work cooperatively with other students
A:A3.3 Develop a broad range of interests and abilities

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Standard A: Students will acquire the skills to investigate the world of work in relation to knowledge of self and to make informed career decisions.

C:A1 Develop Career Awareness
C:A1.3 Develop an awareness of personal abilities, skills, interests and motivations
C:A1.4 Learn how to interact and work cooperatively in teams
C:A1.5 Learn to make decisions
C:A1.6 Learn how to set goals
C:A1.7 Understand the importance of planning
C:A1.8 Pursue and develop competency in areas of interest

Standard C: Students will understand the relationship between personal qualities, education, training and the world of work.

C:C2 Apply Skills to Achieve Career Goals
C:C2.2 Learn how to use conflict management skills with peers and adults
C:C2.3 Learn to work cooperatively with others as a team member

PERSONAL/SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Standard A: Students will acquire the knowledge, attitudes and interpersonal skills to help them understand and respect self and others.

PS:A1 Acquire Self-Knowledge
PS:A1.1 Develop positive attitudes toward self as a unique and worthy person
PS:A1.2 Identify values, attitudes and beliefs
PS:A1.3 Learn the goal-setting process
PS:A1.4 Understand change is a part of growth
PS:A1.5 Identify and express feelings
PS:A1.7 Recognize personal boundaries, rights and privacy needs
PS:A1.8 Understand the need for self-control and how to practice it
PS:A1.9 Demonstrate cooperative behavior in groups
PS:A1.10 Identify personal strengths and assets

PS:A2 Acquire Interpersonal Skills
PS:A2.1 Recognize that everyone has rights and responsibilities
PS:A2.2 Respect alternative points of view
PS:A2.3 Recognize, accept, respect and appreciate individual differences
PS:A2.4 Recognize, accept and appreciate ethnic and cultural diversity
PS:A2.6 Use effective communications skills
PS:A2.7 Know that communication involves speaking, listening and nonverbal behavior
PS:A2.8 Learn how to make and keep friends

Standard B: Students will make decisions, set goals and take necessary action to achieve goals.

PS:B1 Self-Knowledge Application
PS:B1.1 Use a decision-making and problem-solving model
PS:B1.2 Understand consequences of decisions and choices
PS:B1.3 Identify alternative solutions to a problem
PS:B1.4 Develop effective coping skills for dealing with problems
PS:B1.5 Demonstrate when, where and how to seek help for solving problems and making decisions
PS:B1.6 Know how to apply conflict resolution skills

Standard C: Students will understand safety and survival skills.

PS:C1 Acquire Personal Safety Skills
PS:C1.7 Apply effective problem-solving and decision-making skills to make safe and healthy choices
PS:C1.10 Learn techniques for managing stress and conflict
PS:C1.11 Learn coping skills for managing life events