

PEACE POWER TOOLS

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Cooperative Games and Sports

Summary:

Cooperative games and sports are planned activities involving rules, turn taking, social competence and cooperation during games or sports. Cooperative games and sports may be carried out with or without "soft competition", so long as two or more individuals are involved in successful outcome. In many cases, cooperative games offer the opportunity for all participants to be "winners" or eliminate the need for winners and losers at all.

Resources Needed:

- Cooperative board games, such as Max[®], Harvest Time[®], Granny's House[®], Sleeping Grump[®] (available from Animal Town Game Company, P. O. Box 485, Healdsburg, CA 95448).
- Cooperative physical activities, such as musical chairs, balance activities, freeze - defreeze tag, and cooperative musical hugs (see Orlick, 1982 and Sobel, 1983). Some games are cooperative variations of competitive games.

Implementation Steps:

- Obtain listing and descriptions of cooperative games and/or activities. There are excellent books available for this purpose (see references below for examples).
- Participate in procedure training where available (optional)
- Using only the cooperative games from a list prepared in advance, teach and lead youth in cooperative games for 30 minutes each day.
- Youth are not required to participate in the games or activities; they may leave and rejoin games at any time. In nearly every case, active and enthusiastic by adult leaders coupled with limiting attention to non-participants (except for invitations) will bring them into the game.

Variations:

- A variation of cooperative games and sports is known as collaborative games. Collaborative games help reduce peer rejection through reinforcement using collaborative games, cooperative learning based activities and teacher meetings. The latter activities help reinforce the effects of collaborative games and create socially-accepting environments preventing future peer rejection.
- Cooperative games can also be played on the playground. Using age-appropriate structured cooperative activities, youth learn to engage in cooperative, less aggressive play with peers.

Rational and Evidence Base:

Substantial evidence shows that cooperative games and sports help reduce social rejection among middle school age youth and creates interest in encouraging and assisting others. Cooperative games and sports are also associated with increases in self-esteem. There is considerable evidence that cooperative games and sports help to decrease aggression and increase social competence among youth. Some research shows that cooperative games can help reduce ADHD symptoms, subsequently increasing academic achievement.

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- Murphy, H. A., Hutchison, J. M., & Bailey, J. S. (1983). Behavioral school psychology goes outdoors: The effect of organized games on playground aggression. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 16(1), 29-35.
- Orlick, T. (1982). *The second cooperative sports and games book*. New York: Pantheon Books.
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