Cooperative Musical Chairs

Purpose: To understand the importance of working together and building peer relationships, friendships, and trust.

Skills: Communication, Cooperation, Empathy, Listening, Problem solving, Trusting others

You will need...
- 10–30 players
- Upper elementary age players or older
- Chairs for each player, CD player, music
- Enough space for all players to form a circle of chairs and move around them

Before You Begin
- Organize the chairs into a tight circle facing outward.
- Prepare the reflection questions you will ask players in the debrief.

Directions

Introduce the game Cooperative Musical Chairs. Use this time to reinforce any established expectations that are important for players to remember during the game, especially as players will be sharing chairs.

Explain that the objective of the game is to play the game of traditional Musical Chairs in a more cooperative way.

Ask players if they are familiar with Musical Chairs and tell one of them to explain the rules of the game.

Explain that this version of the game is slightly different and that players must work together when the music stops to find a seat for everyone by sharing and cooperating.

Tell players to sit down on one of the chairs in the circle.

Ask players if they have any questions about the game.

Tip: If players are not familiar with Musical Chairs, play a few rounds of traditional Musical Chairs before beginning this version so players can understand the directions and recognize the differences between the two versions.

Begin the game by starting the music and prompting players to walk around the circle of chairs. If possible, have another facilitator present to ensure players are safe.

Stop the music every 20-50 seconds, varying the time each round.

Remove a chair each time the music is stopped, before the next round begins.
The game ends when you feel the space for players is too limited to continue playing the game safely. Explain to players that now they will reflect on how they experienced the game.

Debrief

Debrief the game with players. Remember, cooperative games are only as effective as your debrief. This is your opportunity to help players connect the game to personal experiences, actions, and beliefs. You will want to reinforce any skills or beliefs you are hoping players will carry beyond the game.

For more on facilitating debriefs, refer to the Debriefing Tip Sheet on our Digital Activity Center.

We’ve included some suggested questions below to get you started.

Ask:

What happened in this game?

How does this version of Cooperative Musical Chairs compare with the traditional version? How does each version make you feel?

What was difficult about this game? How could you have avoided those difficulties?

What skills did we use to play this game and how can we use them outside of the game?

Thank players for their participation.