

Peaceful Practices: Cooperative Games



Cooperative games are games in which people work together to achieve a goal. Everyone wins since there is no competition. The value of cooperative games is that children can focus on playing the game and learning the skills of the game, not winning the game. Cooperative games encourage empathy and cooperation. They are inclusive and can be adapted to be simpler or more complex, depending on the developmental level of the children. For instance, the Weaving Ball game can be simplified. It can be played with a yarn ball or soft, small ball. The person with the ball throws the ball to another child in the circle and calls their name. The person whose name is called catches the ball and throws the ball to another. It's a fun way for children to learn each other's names.

Rock Candy

Children stand in a circle. One child stands in the center and does a simple motion, such as jumping, hopping on one foot, touching their nose...Everyone sings: Rock candy every day, Rock candy every day, Rock candy every day, Do your own rock candy.

Now all the children imitate the child in the center and sing: We can do it, yes we can, We can do it, yes we can, We can do it, yes we can, Do your own rock candy.

Child in the center or adult chooses next person to be in the center.

Earth Ball

Standing in a circle and holding a parachute or a blanket, the group bounces the ball and keeps the earth (an earth beach ball or a regular beach ball!) from falling to the ground while the music plays.

Blanket Ball

Players hold the edges of the blanket. They place a ball on the blanket. They then toss the ball up by cooperatively manipulating the blanket. They then try to catch it in the middle of the blanket. Use various sized balls.

Variation: Pass ball between 2 groups with blankets.

Bean Bag Helpers

Each child has a bean bag. While music plays children walk around balancing a bean bag on their head. If the bean bag falls to the ground child has to freeze until another child holds their bean bag on their head, reaches down to the floor, picks up the bean bag and hands it back to the child who dropped it. (Alternative placements could be on shoulders)

Snickers and Hoots

Players find a partner and stand back to back. Leader calls “Knee to knee,” then “Toe to toe,” then “Hand to hand.” As each direction is given partners go face to face and touch body part to body part. When leader yells “Snickers and hoots,” all find a new partner and stand back to back.

Do After Me

Sit in a large circle. One person begins by entering the circle and making a gesture, sound or movement (sillier the better), and then points to someone else in the circle to succeed him/her. This person makes the same gesture, sound or movement as the preceding person and then adds their own.

There are only two actions performed by each person. He/she chooses the next person and this person repeats the preceding action and adds their own before choosing someone new. Everyone should get a turn if they want one.

I Like My Neighbors

All but one of the players are seated on chairs that face into the circle. The person who doesn't have a chair is the leader and stands in the middle. The leader makes a statement such as, “I like my neighbors, especially those wearing running shoes (flip/flops, glasses, who are eight, have a birthday in the summer, etc). All those players who meet the criteria must jump up from their seats and scramble to find a different chair; the person in the middle also scrambles for a chair. The new person left in the middle becomes the new leader.

Secret Leader

To play this game one child is asked to step out of earshot of the others; they are the “Guesser.” One “Leader” is chosen among the others who stand in a circle. The “Leader” will initiate a body movement such as clapping, marching, jumping jacks, touching their toes, which all the others in the circle try to imitate. The “Guesser” is invited back to the circle. After about 10 – 20 seconds the “leader” will switch and do a new movement, which all those in the circle try to imitate as quickly as they see it. The “Guesser” has to try to figure out who is leading the movements by watching all those in the circle. Play several rounds so each child gets a turn to be a “Leader” or “Guesser.” After the game talk about how it is important to be both a leader and a team member at different times. Group size is best with 6 – 11 people.

Changes

Have a group players sit on the floor or on chairs. Three people volunteer to come and stand in front of the group. The sitting group looks at the volunteers and remembers as much as they can about their appearance. The three volunteers leave the room and change two noticeable things about their appearance. When they return to the group, those sitting must guess what changes have been made. Three new players volunteer and the group plays again.

Weaving Ball

Players sit in a circle with legs into the middle of the circle. One person begins with a ball of yarn. Person with ball of yarn calls out something in creation that they can care for and then the name of the person they are tossing the ball to.

Person tosses ball with one hand while holding onto the end of the yarn with other hand. The next person does the same and throws the ball with one hand while holding the yarn with the other hand. Keep going until everyone has a turn. Now can you unwind, remembering who comes next?

Sentence Catch

Stand in a circle with the children. Begin by saying a word to start a sentence. Then toss the ball to any child. Once a child is holding the ball it is then their turn to continue the sentence by contributing a word. Then that child throws the ball to a new child who is to contribute a word and so on. Continue until the end of the sentence or until everyone has had a turn.

Cooperative Games Resources:

Beall, Pamela C. and Nipp, Susan H. *Wee Sing: Games, Games, Games*. (1991) Price Stern Sloan.

Brooking-Payne, Kim. *Games Children Play: How games and sport help children develop*. (1996) Hawthorn Press.

Butler, Susan. *Everyone's a Winner! Non-Competitive Games for People of All Ages*. 1986. Bethany House Publishers.

Gibbs, Jeanne. *TRIBES: A New Way of Learning and Being Together*. (2001) Center Source Systems.

Luvmour, Josette and Sambhava. *Everyone Wins!; Cooperative Games and Activities*. (2007). New Society Publishers.

Swiss Committee for UNICEF *Games of the world : how to make them, how to play them, how they came to be*. (1982). UNICEF.