

The following is an excerpt from *Zen and the Mindful Classroom: The Stress Reduction Program for Students and Educators*, by Kimberly Post Rowe, 2006. Call 207-650-3964 or visit <http://www.mbtherapy.org> or <http://www.fiveseeds.org> for more information.

Zen Games

Activities for fostering trust, mindful awareness, and peaceful groups and classrooms.

What Is It?

For Young Players Of All Ages

This game needs a collection of small objects such as marbles, erasers, stones, small plastic dinosaurs, dice, etc. The more and varied, the better, but each object must fit easily in small hands. Any number of people can play, with one game leader.

The players sit in a circle with their hands behind their backs. The leader asks everyone to close their eyes, then walks around the outside of the circle, placing an object in each pair of hands. No peeking!

With hands remaining behind their backs, have the players open their eyes and take turns describing what their objects feel like. Encourage each child to verbally communicate shape, texture, perhaps even guess a color. After someone describes their object, see if the rest of the players can guess what it is. Can the player guess what her own object is? Did she know right away or did it take awhile?

Excellent as a rest time game, it encourages problem solving, verbal contact, creativity, and fine motor skills.

Something Nice

Grades K – 5

Everyone likes recognition for being special even if they already know that they are! This game guarantees that everyone will hear something nice and have a chance to say something nice as well. It can be appropriate for all ages, but preteens and teens often find this game too personal.

You will need a beanbag or soft ball to play.

Have the players sit in a circle. With younger children, the game leader might like to start the game by rolling, tossing, or passing the beanbag or ball to someone else in the circle while giving them a compliment. No repeats are allowed until everyone has had a turn and a compliment. Try to encourage different compliments each time.

It is very important that everyone is included for each round and sarcasm is not allowed. This is a wonderful feel-good game that teaches verbal contact, visual ability, cooperation, problem solving, adaptability, self-control, creativity, spontaneity, coordination, and reactive ability.

This Is My Nose

Grades 4 and up

This game can be played by as few as two players, but this explanation is for a group in a circle. Before starting, make an agreement that certain body parts are off limits to avoid embarrassment and respect personal boundaries.

One player begins by turning to the player on her left, pointing at any appropriate place on her own body other than her nose (her knee, for instance) and saying "This is my nose." The player to her left then turns to the player on his left, points to another random appropriate body part and says "This is my knee." The process repeats with each succeeding person saying what the preceding person has pointed to while pointing to a different appropriate body part.

Confusing? Indeed! But this challenging and often hilarious game encourages problem solving, verbal contact, adaptability, self-control, visual ability, and creativity.

Cows and Ducks

All Ages

This game works best if there are at least ten players. Bring the players together in a fairly close, standing circle. Have everyone close their eyes and give them a few moments to decide whether they are cows or ducks. The goal of the game is for each species to find others of the same species and join together by linking arms. With eyes kept closed, players make the sounds of their animals in order to locate others in their own animal "family." The game is over when all the cows and ducks have found each other.

This game is great for groups and teams, teaching trust, adaptability, self-control, verbal and tactile contact, cooperation, problem solving, and creativity.

Thanks to:

Le Fevre, Dale N., Best New Games, Human Kinetics Publishers, 2001.

Nurturing Potential: <http://www.nurturingpotential.net>

Inner Kids: <http://www.innerkids.org>