

# BOOK REVIEW

## **Engage the Group, Engage the Brain: 100 Experiential Activities for Addiction Treatment**

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Roll up your sleeves and jump in! *Engage the Group, Engage the Brain* is a hands-on workbook for therapists to get their substance abuse groups actively engaged in recovery. The foundation for the approach comes from the original insight of Milton H. Erickson, MD--that therapeutic change takes place within the experiential world of the patient--so the exercises are designed to elicit *self*-discovery. In addition, they stimulate neuroplasticity (based in Ernest Rossi's theories) by providing novel moments to break the neurological chains of addiction and create a new consciousness. The book gains added efficacy since each exercise was tested on patients at the Nexus Recovery Center of Dallas Texas, an inpatient facility for female substance abusers.

The 100 activities are divided into six sections. Each section provides general and personal comments from the two authors to guide readers in understanding the rationale behind each activity. Then, explicit instructions are given in a consistent format: "Objectives," "Directions," "Discussion," and "Inspired By." To add even more clarity, a box at the top tells you where to perform the activity, what materials you will need, and how long it takes. The discussion section explains how the exercise was applied and what kinds of responses people had. This valuable information supplies you with everything you need to do these activities with groups.

The "Self-Acceptance" section offers clients the opportunity to tell their story using creative devices, such as drawing a picture of the addiction or recalling the comforts of childhood. The authors believe that when clients express their history while learning to accept the good with the bad, they develop compassionate self-acceptance.

"Self-Awareness" guides clients in expressing themselves and developing strengths. A wide variety of exercises, such as crafting a clay pinch pot and creating a brochure about yourself, raise awareness. By focusing attention on triumphs instead of tragedies, resources emerge.

"Self-Responsibility" promotes emotional regulation and self-care with breathing exercises, mindfulness of triggers, and journaling Aware in the moment, clients slow down and make more mature choices.

Substance abusers often are engaged in misunderstandings and miscommunications. "Communications with Others" fosters better interpersonal relations and empathy is evoked by means of shared sentence completions and nonverbal partner exercises.

Having a healthy social network is key to recovery. "Being Part of a Larger Community" helps clients expand themselves in a supportive network where they give as much as they receive. Sharing in creating a handmade book--a technique drawn from Puebla, Mexico-- or finding free things to do, can encourage healthy habits.

"Envisioning a Future of Recovery" teaches how to go beyond struggling with abstinence, and how to envision a life without drugs, such as planning a sober recovery party. Holidays can be particularly difficult, so exercises like Easter egg

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affirmations help clients develop a sense of mastery they can carry with them.

Finally, Five Appendices provide the 12 Steps for AA & NA, feeling words, affirmations, and a facilitator's guide.

The playful, creative, and inspirational activities are drawn from arts and crafts, different cultures, meditation, group process, counseling, and more. Combined with personal reflections from the authors and charming illustrations, *Engage the Group, Engage the Brain* provides a wealth of tools sure to motivate your clients. We highly recommend this useful workbook!