

WORD FIND ACTIVITY: CIRCLE STORY

Station 3

1 leader for every 6 - 8 students

15 mins

PURPOSE: • To appreciate the amount of effort people with word-finding issues might have in formulating words and sentences in order to get ideas across to others

MATERIALS: • No special materials required

SET UP: • The students sit in a circle.

PROCEDURE:

- Tell the students they are going to play a game to help them understand what it might be like to have to struggle with putting their thoughts into words.
- Explain that the group will make up a story, with each person adding something to the story. The students do not repeat the preceding sentences. They only add their own ideas to the story.
- Start the story by saying, "Once upon a time there was a boy named Jack who ..." and have a student complete the sentence in any way he/she may want.
- Go around the circle letting each child contribute to the story. **(Students who might have a challenging time with this activity can add one word or pass).**
- When everyone has had a turn, explain that the next step will make the game harder. This is the way it might feel for a person who has a difficult time finding words.
- A second story is to be composed by the group, **but this time no word can be used that has the letter N in it.** Explain that your first sentence has to be changed because you cannot say "Once upon a time" because there are N's in the words "once" and "upon."
- Begin the second story by saying, "There was a boy called Jack," and go around the circle in the opposite direction, letting each person once again contribute their ideas to the story. The story does not have to be a retelling of the first story and can be different. Once again, the students need only add their own ideas. They do not need to repeat the preceding sentences. Participants can pass or contribute less.

Hot Tip!

Sometimes during the activity a participant will struggle to find a word and someone else will jump in and finish their sentence. This is an opportunity to ask the first student if it made him feel relieved to be off the hook, or if he wanted a chance to express his own ideas? Point out to students that they might want to ask their classmate if they could help by making a suggestion before blurting out the answer. If no one has jumped in to finish a sentence, ask the entire group how they might have felt if someone had supplied a word to finish their sentence when it was their turn.

CIRCLE STORY

Discussion

Before doing the activity

- We are going to play a game that will help you understand what it is like to want to say something and have to really struggle to quickly come up with the words you want to use.
- Have you ever heard the expression "it was on the tip of my tongue?"
Does anyone know what it means?
(*That you know what you want to say but cannot find the right words.*)
All of us have had that happen occasionally.
- This game will give you an idea of how people with word finding issues have to work harder to communicate.

During the activity

- We are going to make up a story and each of you will add to it. You do not need to repeat the preceding sentences. Just add to the story with your own ideas.
- This story needs to be "G-rated." Please don't say anything violent, gross or super-silly.
- I'm going to start the story. "Once upon a time there was a boy named Jack who..."
(**Go around the circle letting each child contribute to the story. Students who might have a challenging time with this activity can add one word or pass.**)
- Now that everyone has had a turn, the next step will make the game harder. This is the way it might feel for a person who has a difficult time finding words to communicate. We are going to make up a second story, **but this time no word can be used that has the letter N in it.** The story does not have to be a retelling of the first story and can be totally different. Once again, just add something new to the story. You do not need to repeat the preceding sentences.
- I need to change my first sentence because "Once upon a time" contains N's in the words "once" and "upon." So I will start with, "There was a boy called Jack..."
(Go around the circle in the opposite direction, letting each person contribute his or her ideas to the story. Participants can pass or contribute less.)

After doing the activity

- Was the game harder the second time?
- How did it feel?
- Were you frustrated at times?
- Did you feel like your brain was slowing down when you had to think about each word you used?
- What would it feel like if you worried about getting called on in class because you knew you would have difficulty answering?
(*Anxious*)
- Was there anything you did to make it easier for yourself? These are called strategies.
- What could you do if you had to struggle with this all the time?
(*Write things out before you speak, volunteer for another part of a group presentation that you find easier*)

- Did anyone spend time figuring out what you were going to say instead of listening to what other people were contributing to the story?
(Yes)
- If that happened in class, would you be able to pay attention to the rest of the discussion?
(No)

A good strategy would be to let your teacher know that you will volunteer rather than have the teacher call on you. That way, you could be more relaxed and pay attention to the entire discussion once you spoke.

- How could you be a friend to a classmate who had trouble expressing their ideas?
(Give them time to get their words out, ask them if they want you to suggest a word, be patient so he/she is confident responding at their own pace, do not tease anyone)
- Was our second story as interesting as the first?
(No; less complex; simpler sentences; not as rich.)

It is not because we had less imagination or were less smart the second time. People with word finding challenges are not less intelligent than their friends. Their vocabularies might be just as large, especially when they have the time to think and write their ideas on paper, but they sometimes have to work harder to express themselves verbally. Their brains are working extra hard when they talk, just like yours worked harder to make up the second story. Working this hard can make school much more tiring and stressful.

Hot Tips!

- Allow students who are having difficulties supply one or two words rather than complete sentences. (This option can be especially helpful for children who have difficulty with expressive language due to a variety of possible causes.)
- Again, some students will find this activity frustrating. Talk about their frustration, how it feels, and possible strategies that would be helpful.
- There is usually a marked decrease in the complexity and richness of the second story. Discuss this outcome and how the lack of elaboration isn't a sign of less imagination or intelligence. Some people find this task difficult, while some find it easy. How would it feel if everything you said was such an effort?