

Air Hockey Feelings Game

Source: Creative CBT Interventions for Children with Anxiety, Liana Lowenstein, 2016

Ages: 8–12

Objective:

Verbally articulate a range of feelings and their intensity

Supplies:

Two straws, masking tape, marker, scissors, timer, bag filled with small prizes

Advance Preparation:

Make the air hockey rink (see the instructions provided). Cut out the Feeling-Word Squares, and place them face up on the table.

Description:

Air Hockey Feelings is an intervention that lowers defenses and creates a playful format from which various feeling states can be identified and processed. Definitions are provided for each feeling. However, the practitioner can offer additional explanations using examples that children understand and can relate to. As the child talks about feelings, the practitioner can make reflective comments, ask the child to elaborate, and praise the child for openness. When it is the practitioner's turn to share, responses can be tailored in a way that would be therapeutically beneficial to the child.

The Feeling Words for the game have been specifically ordered so that primary emotions (happy, sad, angry, scared) are chosen first. The concept of feeling intensity is taught and integrated into the game.

Children have limited attention spans and can only manage a few rounds of the game. Use clinical discretion to determine how many rounds to play. The practitioner participates along with the child and should be animated and energetic to maintain a playful tone. The client and practitioner work collaboratively to blow the puck (wad of paper) from one end of the rink to the other—this strengthens the therapeutic rapport. Timing each round and working together to try to beat the record adds another element of playfulness to the activity.

Air Hockey Feelings Game

Air Hockey Rink

Use tape to make the rink. Begin by clearing a large space on the floor. To make the hockey rink, tape two pieces of masking tape along the floor (each piece of tape should be about 4 feet long, and placed about 2 feet apart.) Use tape to make the nets by placing tape at each end of the rink in the shape of a U. Alternatively, draw the hockey rink on a large piece of cardboard, poster board, or white board, and place it on the floor or on a table. Ensure there is ample space for two players to move around the hockey rink.

Instructions: Air Hockey Feelings Game

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The Air Hockey Feelings game will help you talk about feelings. We will take turns choosing one Feeling-Word Square. The first person to choose will crumple the Feeling-Word Square into a round wad (the puck) and place it in the center of the rink. To begin the game, we will both kneel down side by side at one end of the hockey rink. We will each put a straw in our mouth and place the other end of the straw just behind the puck. At the count of three, we will both blow into our straws and try to move the puck toward the net at one end of the hockey rink. Once we have blown the puck into that net, we will blow it toward the other end, into the other net. (The nets are the spaces marked with the masking tape at each end of the hockey rink.) If the puck gets blown outside the hockey rink, place it back in the middle of the rink and begin again. This is cooperative air hockey, which means we're on the same team and we must work together to blow the puck from one end of the rink to the other. We can both move around the hockey rink to optimize our chances of blowing the puck quickly from one end of the rink to the other.

Once we have successfully blown the puck from one net into the other net, the person who chose the feeling word will uncrumple the wad of paper and read the feeling word out loud. We will then take turns telling a time we experienced that feeling. You get 1 point for telling about the feeling.

You earn an extra point when you rate the intensity of the feeling. This means saying whether you experienced the feeling a tiny bit, a little, medium, a lot, or extremely. Hold up the number of fingers to show the intensity of the feeling. Use the Feeling Rating Scale and read the examples below to understand this better.

Feeling Rating Scale

5 fingers = extremely

4 fingers = a lot

3 fingers = medium

2 fingers = a little

1 finger = tiny bit

Example 1: Ali felt scared getting a needle (a shot) from the doctor. Ali is holding up 4 fingers because Ali felt "a lot" scared.

Example 2: Ali felt scared when Ali woke up from a bad dream. Ali is holding up 2 fingers to show that Ali felt "a little" scared.

We will play several rounds of Air Hockey Feelings and use a new feeling-word square for each round. We'll set the timer at the beginning of each round and see how fast we can work together to blow the puck from one net to the other. At the end of the game, trade in points for a prize: 1–10 points = 1 prize; 11 or more points = 2 prizes.

Air Hockey Feelings Game: Feeling-Word Squares

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HAPPY Something good happens	SAD Something upsets you	ANGRY You don't like what is happening	SCARED Something scary or dangerous is happening
WORRIED You are afraid something bad is going to happen	BRAVE You do something that's scary to do	LONELY You have nobody to be with	SAFE You know something bad won't happen
CALM You feel relaxed	GUILTY You feel bad about something you did wrong	FRUSTRATED You try to do something but you can't do it	LOVED You feel cared for by someone
JEALOUS Someone has something you want	EXCITED You are looking forward to something good happening	KIND You treat someone nicely	PROUD You feel good about something you do