

21: A Rapport-Building Game

Source: Liana Lowenstein, MSW, www.lianalowenstein.com

Theme: Rapport Building

Recommended Age Range: 12 and Up

Treatment Modality: Individual

Goals

- Establish a safe and open therapeutic environment
- Gather information about the client

Materials

- A standard 52-card deck

Description

This activity is a modification of the card game "21." The game is played according to the rules below.

Card Game Rules

The aim of the 21 Card Game is to get 21 or as close to as possible. Number cards have their face value, jacks, kings and queens are worth 10. Ace can be either 1 or 11 and the player who holds the ace gets to choose the value of the card.

One player is the dealer. After shuffling the deck, deal each player, including the dealer, two cards - both face down. Cards should be dealt one at a time to each player, beginning from the dealer's left.

After all cards are dealt, look at your two cards (make sure not to show your cards to the other players). Add up your cards' total.

"Hitting" is optional but could help you win the hand if your initial deal was a low value (any total value under 11 is completely safe). When it is your turn and you wish to request another card from the dealer, say "hit me". You may Hit any number of times in one turn. Do this until you are satisfied with your card total or until you get over 21.

"Staying" is keeping the hand you've been dealt. It can be done as soon as you are satisfied with your card count. Indicate your desire to stay by doing a single motion wave with the palm of your hand facing down to the table.

Staying is fine above a total count of 11, however you still want try to get the highest total under 21.

After all players have seen their cards, the dealer shows his/her first card. Based on this card, players decide to hit or stay their hands. Players can hit as many times as they wish.

The dealer then reveals their second card and hits or stays their hand appropriately. At this point, all other hands are revealed, and a winner is determined.

The winner of each round gets to ask the other player a “Getting to know you” question such as:

1. What do you like to do for fun?
2. What’s one of your favorite TV shows?
3. What’s one of your favorite snack foods?
4. Who is one of your favorite celebrities?
5. If you could travel to anywhere in the world, where would you go?

Play several rounds of the game.

Discussion

This activity helps to create a positive therapeutic environment and facilitates open communication. Questions asked by the practitioner should be non-threatening, easy to answer, age-appropriate, and focused on rapport-building.

During game play, the practitioner should set a warm and engaging tone. The client’s responses to the game questions can be used as a springboard for further discussion.

About The Author

Liana Lowenstein, MSW, RSW, CPT-S, is a therapist, lecturer, and author who has been working with children and families since 1988. She is internationally recognized for her innovative work including numerous books on child and family therapy. She is winner of the Monica Herbert award for outstanding contribution to play therapy in Canada.