

Red Light/Green Light Scribble Activity

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Recommended Age Range: 3 and Up

Treatment Modality: Individual, Group, Family

Goals

- 1) Improve impulse control and ability to self-regulate.
- 2) Improve listening skills, eye contact, and focus.
- 3) Promote flexibility and collaboration skills.

Materials

- Large paper
- Markers or crayons (one for each group or family member)

Advance Preparation

Place the paper and markers on a table or on the floor. Ensure there is ample space for all group or family members to sit around the paper.

Description

Part 1: The first part of the activity is Winnicott's Interactive Squiggle Game. Each person in the group or family picks a marker and one person draws a scribble on a large piece of paper. Then the next person adds to that scribble and continues to make connections. (The following person has to watch carefully where the last scribble ended.) The next person connects as they start their scribble where the last person left off. The scribbles become continuous lines of connections and the lines can go in whatever direction they choose.

Part 2: The practitioner says, "This is too easy so we are going to make it harder" and the paper is turned over. The practitioner says, "Who knows the game Red Light/Green Light?" The game of connecting scribbles is the same but the person cannot go until the person next to them says "green light." They have to keep scribbling until the "police officer" says "red light." If they start before the green light or keep going through the red light, the practitioner says, "Be careful not to get a speeding ticket." Once several rounds have been played, switch roles and have another group or family member be the police officer.

Part 3 (Optional): If there is time, the group or family can create a story about the pictures they see in the scribble. At the end, everyone

signs the drawing, which gives them a sense of importance and accomplishment.

Discussion

There are many benefits of this activity, such as: following rules, taking turns, impulse control, and learning how to work together. The activity also assesses dynamics of control, collaboration, and self-regulation. For instance, some children proceed slowly because they are afraid to get a traffic ticket. Some parents have difficulty stopping and listening to the child's commands in the game. Some children will quickly say "red light/green light" in one breath so the player is unable to do a scribble. Others will not say "red light" so the player's scribble goes on and on. It is also important to note the clients or family members who need help connecting their scribble.

Creative activities that are mutually inclusive of all group or family members create less conflict, more cohesion, and, most importantly, more FUN!

This activity can be played in individual therapy. It is a great way for a therapist to connect with a client. A variation for children with ADHD, impulsivity, or perfectionism is as follows: When the practitioner says: "green light" the child begins drawing a scribble. When the practitioner says: "red light" the client has to immediately stop drawing, look the practitioner in the eye and wait for the practitioner to say "green light". The practitioner can also say "yellow light" and have the child draw slowly. This is a playful and engaging strategy for helping the client strengthen skills such as focusing, listening, and maintaining eye contact.

Reference

Winnicott, D.W. (1971b). *Therapeutic consultations in child psychiatry*. New York: Basic Books.

About the Author

Tammi Van Hollander, LCSW, RPT, is a licensed clinical social worker and Registered Play Therapist who has worked with children and families since 1990. She has presented numerous workshops throughout the nation on play therapy and sand tray therapy. She owns a private practice in Ardmore, Pennsylvania, specializing in young children, trauma, anxiety, ADHD, and sensory processing disorder.