**Reciprocal Conversation**

**Source:**

do 2 learn. (2009). *Reciprocal Conversation.* Retrieved from

<http://www.do2learn.com/organizationtools/SocialSkillsToolbox/ReciprocalConversation.htm>

**Target population/Issue:**

* Middle School Students with ASD/Social Skills Deficits
* Initial stages of group

**Outline of the Activity:**

* **Ice breaker:** Highs and Lows
* **Review of norms** **& previous session**
  + Make sure everyone is still comfortable with norms and there are no additions or confusions.
* **Activities**
  + Read Participating in Reciprocal Conversation Article
    - *Discussion questions*: How is having a conversation like playing a game of catch? When someone is speaking what should the other person be doing?
  + Explain: You are going to practice a reciprocal conversation with a partner. I have random topics in a hat and I will pick one. Each pair will receive a ball and whoever is holding the ball will make a comment on the topic and then throw the ball *softly* to their partner, the partner will then say something in return to their partner about the same topic and throw the ball. Each pair will stay on the topic for at least three throws.”
  + Model this concept with a member.
  + Example topics: Movies, restaurants, favorite place to be, what you do in your free time, songs/musicians, what you want most out of this group, hobbies, etc.
  + Group members participate in reciprocal conversation activity.
* **Process Questions**
  + What was the activity like for you?
  + By a show of thumbs (up, down, middle) was the activity easy for you? Up-yes, Down-no, Middle- kind of. [member name] why was this easy/hard? [member name] what part was easy/hard?
  + How did it feel to have to say something in response to someone?
  + Who felt it was hard to listen to your partner? [answer] Why or at what times?
  + Which topic was the easiest to talk about?
  + How does this connect to real life social situations?
* **Wrap Up:** Thank members for their participation and engagement
  + Today we got to know each other a little better by playing people bingo and having conversations. We learned how to have a conversation about the same topic and take turns talking. -Be sure to point out specific themes that occurred or salient points that were made by participants.
  + Optional Homework: Write down one reciprocal conversation you have in the next week and come to group ready to share about your experience.

**Rationale:**

* Getting to know you activities allow group members to becoming comfortable and lay the groundwork for the formation of a group identity.
* Youth with ASD have a hard time understanding the reciprocal nature of conversations. By explicitly stating this norm, modeling it and allowing members to practice it members can improve in this social skill. Additionally, using the suggested topics will help members get to know each other better and start thinking about what they want out of group.
* Assigning the suggested homework will allow members to generalize activities from group to a larger setting (every day life).
* The ability to have reciprocal conversations is needed for the group to move into the working stage.

**Goals**

* To facilitate group identity formation through exploring similarities and differences.
* To have members understand and participate in reciprocal conversations.

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