

Autism Activities

Find the ring by sound – Targets the goal "Recognize when a sound changes"

A ring is hidden (may use an object) so that it is in plain view but is located where you would not ordinarily find a ring. (For example, in tongue of a person's shoe, between shoe laces). One person is removed from the room while the ring is hidden and then returns to the room. Classmates provide auditory cues to help the person find the ring by humming softly when the person is far from the ring and yelling out loudly with a higher pitch when the person gets closer to the ring. Students are instructed not to look at location of ring because this would give away the secret. The person searching for the ring must rely on these auditory cues to find it.

Turn-taking within musical games

For a student who has difficulty waiting to take a turn, present a singing game in which the student needs to wait a moderate amount of time prior to receiving a turn. Provide verbal praise and support to student for waiting for his or her turn. Gradually require the student to wait longer and longer until the student is able to wait to be the last student to receive a turn, supporting student verbally.

Anger Management

Music may be used to target the following goals for anger management:

- Identify anger triggers
- Identify usual choices of personal responses to anger triggers
- Identify vicious cycles related to anger
- Develop successful tools for redirection away from vicious cycles related to anger
- Identify alternative responses to anger that would be considered healthy and safe
- Successfully choose healthy responses to anger triggers in the heat of the action
- Authentically participate in role play that involves choosing healthy and safe alternatives for anger expression
- Develop use of music for relaxation
- Develop use of music for healthy emotional expression
- Develop use of music to channel emotional expression via healthy outlets and redirect/deflate anger
- Develop awareness of emotions
- Develop musical repertoire of songs to use for redirection away from vicious anger cycles
- Develop coping skills for dealing with negative emotions

- Develop spiritual support system
- Develop insight and problem solving skills
- Broaden perspectives related to anger

Types of Activities:

- Song-writing
- Lyric analysis
- Art paired with music (example: "Draw a picture of the waves that rock your boat." This instruction may be used with lyric analysis songs about storms and boats)
- Theatre paired with music (example: create five non-violent endings to a musical drama in which the person reenacts an anger episode from real life)
- Dance and movement
- Musical relaxation
- Group music ensembles (singing, playing instrument, sign language)
- Musical games (example: use structure of 'Jeopardy' game to explore different anger styles – "Sneaky Anger for 200")

Tangled Feelings

Play 'Sesame Street' version of the song "Feelings" that includes sound effects representing a variety of emotions. Ask students to list the different sound effects they heard in the song. Also ask students to explain why this version of the song is humorous when the content is not humorous. Discuss the use of exaggeration and musical reflection of the lyrics to create humor. When the song stops and then begins again, point out that this effect is similar to episodes in life which trigger our emotions. Just when we think we have our emotions under control, something happens to set us off again and we realize we are not quite as stable as we thought we were.

Place students in a circle formation, holding onto a piece of brightly colored purple yarn. Pass the ball of yarn around to different people in the circle, having each person hold the piece of yarn while passing the ball to another person. This activity will result in a web of yarn that connects all people in the circle. Ask the students how they can untangle this web. Emphasize that it must be untangled one by one at each point. Then have the students roll the ball of yarn back up by locating the person with whom their piece of yarn are tangled. In the process of wrapping the yarn back up, ask each person to share about a time when his or her feelings were tangled and to explain what helped in dealing with their feelings. Give other group members a chance to also contribute suggestions for what can help. It may be that time passing is the only thing that will help. A listening ear is also usually helpful. Point out that just as the ball of yarn can be re-wrapped, we can go on living our lives even when our feelings have become tangled.

You may want to make one large knot in the yarn that cannot be untangled. In the process of trying to untangle this knot, explain that some

emotional tangles can never be repaired but life continues, with other feelings wrapped around these "knotted" feelings. This is just like the ball of yarn.