

## Drama Activities, Games, Exercises, and Ideas

### 1. A Dialogue with the Back

In this exercise, the goals are to break the ice between group members, provoke a range of emotions, and warm the group up for interactions.

The group should be split up into pairs, with each person standing back to back with their partner. The leader or facilitator will read out instructions like:

*“Imagine your backs are speaking to each other about trivial, everyday life matters. You exchange ideas, don’t get into anything deep. Eventually, a mild disagreement between you arises which increases gradually into a discussion. An intense conflict is revealed which turns into an angry argument. You both hold to your positions: it is a matter of principle and you are not willing to give up! Finally, you realize that it was all a misunderstanding, a big mistake. You just didn’t understand or hear each other properly. Now everything is mended, you explain yourselves to one another, you make up. You’re just two loving, caring human beings.”*

- Red is better than blue.
- It’s going to rain today, no it’s not.
- Pepsi is better than Coke
- The sky goes into eternity no it stops at a certain point.
- Painting is much more difficult than sculpting
- Nike is better than Adidas.
- The shape of clouds determine your future. No, the stars determine it.
- Women should not wear makeup. They should.
- Bald men are very handsome. Men with hair are handsome.
- Roses are better than tulips
- The circus is more fun than a water park
- Elephants are bigger than giraffes.
- Glass is better than plastic
- Coffee is better than tea.
- Liquid soap is better than bar soap
- People shouldn’t wear watches/yes they should.
- Busses are better than trains
- My mother was better than your mother
- Soft beds are much better than firm beds

## **2. Mirror images**

Children are paired up. Choose the leader. Whatever the leader does, the other has to “mirror.” After about 2 minutes, switch leaders.

## **3. Living Sculptures**

Divide the children into groups of 5 (or so). Give them a theme and tell them they have to make a sculpture of the theme.

*Examples:* Living water. Shine your light brightly. Be kind to one another. A growing garden. A blind man can see. If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek. Love your enemies. Give and it shall be given to you. Don't judge others or you will be judged. It is better to give than to receive. God always gives good gifts to His children. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Actions speak louder than words. Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. A person's heart plans his way, but the Lord determines his steps. Iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens another.

## **4. Energy Ball**

In a large circle, have all players hold their hands up, palms facing each other. Next, ask them to imagine that they are holding a ball of energy. Invite them to feel the energy pulsating and radiating light. Have them make it larger, and then smaller. After a few moments of practice, have everyone drop their hands and choose one person to create an energy ball and toss it to another player across the circle. Players can make their energy balls move quickly, or very slowly. They can be large or tiny. Players receiving the energy ball can transform the ball before tossing it to another player.

## **5. Catch and Clap**

Players in a circle. Toss a bean bag or easy-to-catch ball back and forth around the circle. Let players know that it is the thrower's responsibility to allow the catcher to catch it! Once a rhythm is established, introduce a “clap” every time the ball is in the air. All other players must clap in unison while the ball is in the air. Play until there is a nice rhythm and flow! For more advanced drama groups, introduce another ball into play.

## **6. Big Winds**

Try having the class stand on one end of the playing space. One person goes to the other side and declares something that is true about them (I love to sing, I hate frogs, I love movies, etc.). Anyone who shares their interest joins them. Players are then able to notice who is with them and who is left behind. Choose the next person from those who are still standing on the first side.

## **7. Circle Sitting**

Arrange everyone in a circle and have them continue to step in closer and closer until their shoulders are touching. Next have everyone turn to the side so that they are back-to-front and have them step even closer together and have them sit down. The result should be that everyone will end up sitting on each other's knees, without the structure falling down.

## **8. Group Juggle**

Have students stand in a large circle with plenty of room between them. Next, have players to toss a soft ball or small stuffed animal back and forth across the circle in no particular order. After players become accustomed to the flow of the game, introduce a second and possibly third ball into play. Tell students that it is the responsibility of the person throwing the ball to make sure that the receiver catches it. Slow down or speed up the game depending on how well the group is doing.

## **9. Group Stop**

Have everyone quietly mill about the room. Tell group members that at any moment, a player may stop. As soon as that happens, the other group members should also stop. One person 'freezing' should cause all of the others to freeze. Anyone in the group may start moving again, causing the entire group to move. This game reminds actors that what they do onstage is dependent on what other actors do. Drama is a series of actions and reactions.

## **10. Human Knot**

Arrange group members in a circle, standing shoulder to shoulder. Have each person put their right hand into the center of the circle and grab hands with another player across the circle. Next, have them do the same with their left hand. Tell players not to hold hands with the person next to them, and to choose a different person for each hand. Now, tell group members to untangle themselves without breaking the chain of hands!

## 11. Line Up

Call the children up to line up. This is a silent game! When the line is finished, go along the line checking their accuracy. Make comments if something stands out. For instance, if a student has 2 dogs, bring her up in front and ask about them. Or something else you know about some children. Stopping every once in a while to ask questions or point something out helps kids learn more about each other.

### *Ways to line up*

Line up according to height. Tallest on this end, shortest on this end.

Line up according to your birthday. January on this end, December on this end.

Line up according to number of brothers and sisters. Most on this end, least on this end.

## 12. The Living Machine

Tell everyone that they are going to be building a 'machine,' and announce what kind of machine it is, such as a 'bubble gum making machine.' One player enters the playing area and creates a simple sound and motion that starts to build the machine.

As soon as another player has an idea of how to add to the machine, he/she joins the first person, forming a connection and relation to the first sound/movement. Players must physically connect with some part of the machine, but they needn't be in order. Coach kids that they can join anytime, as long as it's one player at a time. If two people rush in, gently remind them that it is one at a time, and to sense when it's their turn.

If you have a large group, you may wish to divide them into two groups.

## 13. People to People

Have players scattered around the room milling about. When the leader calls out "People to People!" players must immediately find one other person. Next, the leader calls out two body parts such as "nose to knee." The players must connect one person's nose to the other person's knee. Lastly, the leader calls out two more body parts such as "hand to shoulder." While keeping their first position (nose to knee) the players must connect one person's hand to the other person's shoulder. Ring a bell and have the players resume milling about the space until the next round starts.

#### **14. Change 2 Things**

In pairs, children observe one another. Say, "Notice everything you can about your partner. Look at her clothes, her hair, her eyes, really observe the other person." Next, ask all players to turn away from each other, back to back. Tell players that each person must change two things about him/herself. Players can remove jewelry, change their hair, take off shoes, etc. Next, have the players turn back toward each other and take turns noticing what has changed.

#### **15. Labyrinth**

Fill the playing space with random obstacles such as turned over chairs, books on the floor. Blindfold one player and have her stand at one end of the playing space. Put one or two other players on the other end of the playing space. They will 'guide' her through the mine field by verbally calling out instructions.

#### **16. Gibberish**

Gibberish is the art of using sounds and utterances in place of normal speech. Put the group into pairs and invite each pair to carry on a conversation as if speaking in an unknown language. Players should converse as if making perfect sense. (Note: Before presenting the concept of gibberish to your class, practice using gibberish with family or friends.) In class, keep the conversation going until everyone participates.

Some students find it easy to speak in gibberish, while others struggle. Invite students who are having trouble to start with making simple sounds such as: ma; dee; dah; doo; etc. This will help them become more at ease with vocalizing nonsense sounds.

#### **17. Hot Spot**

This is a classic drama exercise that teaches quick thinking. With everyone in a circle, one actor goes into the middle and begins telling a story. At any time, another actor can enter the center, tap the first actor on the shoulder and start telling a story that the first one made him think of.

## 18. Space Objects

In a sitting circle, have kids imagine that they are holding a ball just big enough to fit in their hands. Invite them to imagine the texture and the weight of the ball, and to roll it around in their hands. Have them make it smaller...make it bigger...make it heavier...make it lighter. Then invite the kids to slowly transform the ball into another object such as a pencil. Coach kids to make the transition slowly, scrunching the ball down, making it flatter and longer, until forms into a pencil.

**Repeat with other objects such as:**

A jar of peanut butter

A teddy bear

An egg

An umbrella

An iPad

A bowl

A flower

A banana

A coin

Invite kids to offer suggestions! Keep coaching students to turn the object slowly into something else, rather than just switching to the new object.

## 19. What, This??

In a circle, introduce an object such as a string. Declare that it can be many things. An 'elephant's trunk' for example.

Pass the object around the circle with each player turning it into something new (no repeats) and saying one line of dialogue such as "My elephant trunk is feeling stuffy today." Allow students to either "pass" or "come back to me." If they are still nervous, play a few rounds with the same object so everyone gets a chance.

In addition to secretly encouraging reluctant students, playing several rounds with one object allows students to realize just how endless creativity can be. Just when they think they will run out of ideas, more ideas, and more outrageous ideas begin to flow.

Normal class rules apply: something that isn't gross or violent, for example. Repeat with other objects

## 20. You're an Animal

Children are asked to pick an animal then walk around the room as that animal for about a minute. You can then ask them to change animals. Or after they are finished, ask them why they chose that animal.

## 21. Lead Me

Invite the entire class to get into a big circle and have them start walking while in a circle. First, ask them to start walking as they normally would. Next, ask them to imagine that there is a string attached to their nose, pulling it slightly forward. After a minute or so, coach them to walk normally again. Then, call out different parts of the body, always returning to normal walking in-between. (Examples of parts of the body to call out: chin; forehead; toes; knees; chest; stomach; pelvis; arms.) After the activity is over, gather students and ask them what sensations they experienced. Ask if different types of walks evoked different attitudes. Write down the various parts of the body and ask the class for suggestions on which types of characters would lead with that part of the body.

## 22. Space Walk

This activity helps actors to get to know their space as well as practice using their bodies in different ways. Establish clearly defined boundaries for the players to stay inside. Have players move about the room, paying attention to the space around them.

*Say!*

- Keep walking.
- Only now pretend you are walking through pudding.
- Think about what it feels like and how your body would move through pudding.
- For example, you might move more slowly now because pudding is thicker than air.
- After a while, pretend the space has turned into clouds.
- Think about what it feels like, and how you might walk through clouds.

*Suggestions for different spaces:*

- Honey
- Snow
- Water
- Frozen pond

- Mashed potatoes
- Mud
- Fire
- Pea soup
- Marbles
- On a boat in a storm

*Instructions for twelve different kinds of space-walks are included in Drama Notebook such as:*

- Spacewalk as different animals
- Spacewalk to music
- Spacewalk with weather

### **23. Emotionally Yours...**

Start a neutral scene with two players. For example, the child walks into a Dentist's office. Have the two players act it out straight. Then, have them do it again, using emotion suggestions from the audience. For example: in the second round of play, the child is fearful and the Dentist is extremely happy. (They can each have a different emotion, or both the same.) Coach students to play the emotion without stating it outright. For another twist, try giving students the emotions secretly and having them try to 'read' the other person. After the scene, ask audience players if they could name each actors' emotion.

#### *Emotion Examples*

- Fearful
- Bored
- Excited
- Depressed
- Anxious
- Hysterical

#### *Situation Examples*

- Customer returning shoes
- Teacher scolding a student
- Talk show host interviewing celebrity
- Mechanic delivering bad news to car owner
- Detective interviewing suspect