



Brief Group Module and Icebreaker Collection 4 - Taking the Escalator releases brief icebreakers and group therapy modules about twice per week in the "[Forum](#)" section on the [Taking the Escalator: Group Activities by Topic](#) page of the website. This is a reprint of the brief therapy modules and icebreakers released in that forum for the period from *October through December 2021*

"A Few Minutes of Amusement" (Icebreaker or Closer Material)

Sometimes you just need something easy to help the group relax and take their mind off of things for a few minutes. These two free websites provide an amusing escape from reality for a few minutes (and they do not disappoint!)

1- Eel Slap - <http://www.eelslap.com/>

2 - Pointer Pointer - <https://pointerpointer.com/>

Self Care Strategies List

Self Care Thoughts for This Time of Year

- GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO GO SLOW.
- DON'T FORGET TO BREATHE!
- TAKE YOURSELF OUT OF THE SITUATION IF YOU NEED TO. COME BACK WHEN READY.
- GET ENOUGH REST
- MAKE BETTER FOOD CHOICES + DRINK WATER!
- TAKE A WALK/GO OUTSIDE
- LOWER EXPECTATIONS /HAVE NONE!
- UNPLUG. SPEND TIME WITH FAMILY + FRIENDS WITHOUT SCREENS.
- ENGAGE ALL OF YOUR SENSES
- FOCUS ON MAKING GOOD MEMORIES
- STEAL TIME FOR YOURSELF!
and REFLECT on the past year.



Discussion - "A Wise Man" Short Story - Read and Discuss

A Wise Man Short Story

For years people have been coming to the wise man and complaining about the same problems every time. One day he told them a joke and everyone roared in laughter. After a couple of minutes, he told them the same joke and only a few of them smiled.

When he told the same joke for the third time no one laughed anymore.

The wise man smiled and said, "you can't laugh at the same joke over and over, so why are you always crying about the same problem?"

Author of the Wise Man: Unknown.

Brief Discussion Module - "Alone in the Quiet of the Night"

Everyone has those deep thoughts in the dark of the night when no one is around and its just you alone with the unfiltered wanderings of your mind. These moments of introspection and examination of the world and beyond can actually be helpful to our growth process as humans as it is important to ask ourselves some of the deep questions in life and let these questions inspire us to learn and explore more about ourselves and the world we live in and much more

For this exercise, everyone in the group should try to open up and share some "deep thoughts that come up in the quiet of the night" by answering and discussing the following:

When alone with your thoughts in the quiet of the night, what are some of your thoughts about....

..."**The Big Picture**" (Life, death, purpose, meaning, time, existence...etc.)

..."**The World We Live in**" (People, society, the future)

..."**Our Own "World"**" (Family, loved ones, hopes and dreams for life for ourselves and those whom we care about)

..."**Our "Selves"**" (What have you learned about yourself by really looking inside yourself and asking some of the difficult questions?)



Brief Group Discussion: Repeat Performance

READ: This may require some thought so take a few minutes to think of something that you did well in your life. It can be from anytime in your life as early as childhood up until today. It could be a time when you hit a home run, nailed the audition, got the job, gave the speech, won the contest, etc. Or it may be a memory of yours where you are just happy with how you performed or something in your experience that turned out well for you based on your actions and choices (not just based on sheer luck) It does not need to be dramatic, just something that is meaningful to you personally

First, as a group take turns sharing your experience

Then discuss the following: What can skills and ideas can you draw from that event for today? Be open minded: Sure, you may never repeat that exact event again today but what about your mindset, your preparation, your choices, your focus, etc... from that performance **can you still use today?**

Time Machine Icebreaker

For this group discussion imagine that the group had access to a time machine however this time machine can only send you on trips forward or backward in time for only 5 minute trips. With this in mind, as a group discuss what you would do if you had a 5 minute mission to go back or forward in time for the following intervals:

What would you do if you had 5 minutes to observe or try to intervene in something....

- **5 years ago?**
- **10 years ago?**
- **20 years ago?**
- **Yesterday?**
- **Tomorrow?**
- **5 years in the future?**
- **10 years in the future?**



Discussion Article - Recognizing Holiday Triggers of Trauma - SAMHSA

This is a great article to review with clients and groups coping with potential trauma triggers related to the holidays.

DIRECT LINK: <https://www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-programs-resources/hpr-resources/recognizing-holiday-triggers>

Brief Group Activity - Survey "5 Questions on Addiction"

If you have time in your group it would be great if you could administer this brief survey but sharing this link with group members. It is just 5 questions focused on some thoughts about addiction

Then if you would like invite the group to discuss some of the topics

SURVEY LINK (THANK YOU) - <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/XCFQNFK>

Gratitude Word Cloud Generator

Directions:

Share this link with the group - <https://www.menti.com/moggf3emkz>

Everyone in the group should use their smart phone to enter some things they are grateful for which will be uploaded to the Word Cloud

To view the group's word cloud live as it is being generated click this link -

<https://www.mentimeter.com/s/9fa815e21e6aefe3f17dc55913f32a95>



Random Thoughts Icebreaker

Directions – Everyone write down a random thought or opinion on a small piece of paper (Or if doing this via telehealth, everyone should send a thought to the group leader via chat).

Then mix the random thoughts up and have everyone in the group take turns having group members read a random thought and then respond on their thoughts on the original thought. If done via telehealth just number, the list and have group members pick a thought by number

Example - Group member picks the random thought that says: *"I think that the Yankees are the greatest team in all sports"* – This group member gives their thought on that thought by saying: *"I feel like I lack the patience and concentration to sit still and watch baseball, so I prefer football and I think the Green Bay Packers are the best team of all time"*

- Continue this process going around the group giving everyone a chance to pick a random thought and respond

For both questions and responses: Anything goes as long as it is not offensive or hurtful. Keep it brief and to the point but have fun with it!

Icebreaker - "No Regrets...I'm Glad!"

Directions: Sometimes we think about things in the past that we wish we would have done differently. (It's only natural) - For this exercise we are going to focus on things we did right and that we feel happy with our past decisions and outcomes.

Read each life area below and try to come up with some real life POSITIVE examples of decisions from the past that turned out well. (*Please try to keep it positive and avoid angry or resentful answers such as "I am glad I beat up my next door neighbor"*)

- FAMILY - Example: "I am so glad that I had my daughter, even though she came along at a tough time in my past, she brings so much joy to my life today"

FAMILY

CAREER

RELATIONSHIPS

FINANCIAL/MONEY

SUBSTANCE USE

EMOTIONS/MENTAL HEALTH

End with "**WILD CARD**" - Anything goes....



Fun Group Close-Out Exercise: "Chained Expression"

This is a fun way to end group if there is leftover time. The rules are as follows:

1. Someone in the group should agree to make a **brief one sentence statement** about their thoughts or feelings about something (can be anything as long as it is group-appropriate)
2. The next person in the group on the right should provide a follow up statement but **STARTING WITH THE LAST LETTER OF THE FIRST STATEMENT**
3. Continue this process until the group hits a dead end and then start again with a new statement.

An example is provided here. Notice the last letter in each statement that is used to start the next statement:

- Group Member 1 - *Sometimes I just feel like I can't take iT*
- Group Member 2 - *That's because this world has gone off the railS*
- Group Member 3 - *So what am I supposed to do about thaT...*
- Group Member 4 - *Try moving to Sweden?*
- Etc...

Perspectives and Preferences Icebreaker

Directions: Review and discuss the following as a group. Everyone should try to answer. Feel free to discuss the rationale for your choices:

1. Which do you enjoy more: Making someone else laugh or someone else makes you laugh?
2. Which one feels worse: Someone you care about to makes you cry or you do something to make someone you care about cry?
3. Would you rather go a month without feeling annoyed, frustrated or angry or go a month without feeling any anxiety or worry?
4. What is more important to you: To feel a sense of freedom or to feel a sense of security in life?
5. Would you prefer to live a life that is simple, steady and stable but satisfying or a live a life that is enjoyable, entertaining and exciting and but erratic (*uncertain and unpredictable*)



Visual Discussion Tool: "The Anger Iceberg"

The "Anger Iceberg" illustration and concept was developed by the Gottman Institute. Use the following illustration to discuss some of the feelings "beneath" anger (as anger is often a "secondary emotion" with a deeper emotion underneath the anger

[Click for downloadable PDF of The Anger Iceberg](#)





Brief Module - "Healthy Choices"

Which would you choose more often:

- Chips or Veggies (Carrot/celery sticks, etc)?
- Candy or Fruit?
- Soft Drink (Soda, Iced Tea, etc.) or Water?
- Go to sleep or Channel Surf?

What are some healthy choices in life that you need to work on?

What are some healthy choices that you are doing well with?

How can you make progress with healthy choices? (*What helps and works for you?*)

Brief Module: Positive Lessons from Childhood"

Discuss positive things we have learned from childhood by completing these sentences:

- Something positive that I learned in childhood that I want to keep with me is...
- Something that I did not understand when I was a child but I do now is...
- Something I used to think as a child that I have matured and moved on from is....
- One thing that adults can learn from young children is....
- I stay "young at heart" today by...

Brief Video Discussion - An Inside Look at Fentanyl

***Directions:* As a group view this brief (8 minute) video on fentanyl production and distribution and discuss as a group**

VIDEO LINK: <https://youtu.be/wdoRAjilrhs>

Some suggested group questions:

- > What stood out to you about this video?
- > Has this video changed your view on fentanyl production and distribution?
- > When you consider the prevalence of fentanyl, what do you think about the dangers of using illegal drugs today?
- > What were your thoughts about some of the responses given by people making fentanyl in the video when they were asked about the overdose deaths associated with fentanyl?
- > How can you personally stay safe from overdose risk?



Group Discussion: Brene Brown on Shame

You can use this brief (less than 3 minute) clip of Brene Brown on the Oprah Winfrey Show to open up a discussion about coping with Shame

- **Here is the video clip link - <https://youtu.be/TdtabNt4S7E>**

The take-aways from this clip on how to stop a shame spiral:

1. Know your shame triggers and reality check them
2. Talk to yourself like you talk to someone you love
3. Reach out to someone you trust
4. Tell your story

Brief Discussion - "I Promise"

Read and Discuss: 10 promises that are too often broken: (Have you ever heard any of these?)

1. "I promise if you let me speak, I'll definitely keep it brief"
2. "I promise I'll only take one"
3. "I promise I'll just have a small bite of your food"
4. "I promise, I just want to cuddle, that's it"
5. "I promise I'll be right there"
6. "I promise I will definitely keep in touch"
7. "I promise I won't tell anyone"
8. "I promise I'll pay you right back as soon as I can"
9. "I promise, I'm telling the truth this time"
10. "I promise, I'll quit tomorrow"

Discussion: What is needed to live the kind of life where you are able to keep your promises to others, and to yourself?



Coping Skills Brief Discussion - "Rough Day Ahead"

Discussion: There are days when you wake up and you know ahead of time that "today is potentially going to be a rough day". For example, maybe you have to work late, or perhaps you have a court date or a dentist appointment. Whatever it is, discuss how you cope in the morning and throughout the day when you know that challenges are ahead of you

- Example: *"When I wake up knowing that I am facing a long or challenging day, I make sure to envision the time at the end of the day when I will be driving home feeling satisfied that I got through it all and I focus on how good I will feel at that time."*

What do you do in the morning to prepare and strengthen yourself to endure a potentially difficult or long day that may be ahead of you?

Brief Module – "Risk"

Directions: First read and discuss the following brief poem by Anais Nin. ***What does it mean to you?*** - Then review the closing discussion questions at the end:

Risk

And then the day came,
when the risk
to remain tight
in a bud
was more painful
than the risk
it took
to blossom.

- **What are some healthy risks you are taking or considering taking in order to change and grow for the better?**
- **Who and what can help you build and sustain the encouragement, strength and inspiration to successfully "blossom" in your life?**



Brief Group Module: “My Reality”

Background: There are many unrealistic things that happen in movies quite often which rarely (or never) seem to happen in day-to-day life. Consider some examples:

- ***“People are up in the morning with enough time to have a home-cooked breakfast, casual family conversation, just relaxing and taking their time, even on a school day!”***
- ***“One line of clever or thoughtful dialogue or a spontaneous kiss somehow changes everything and makes it all OK.”***
- ***“No one has to wait for anything: People phone or email back in time, taxis arrive, the results come back in time to catch the bad guys, perfect parking spaces are always available”***

In reality, there is often a lot of red tape, waiting, obstacles, etc. but yet in reality, we still get through it all .

As a group discuss the following:

→ **Tell the group about one or more things specific to your reality that you have to contend with from time to time**

→ **Reflecting on the positive – What helps you to successfully survive and thrive in spite of the some of the stresses and obstacles you face in your life?**



Group Close Out Activity - Explaining the Answer

Directions: This can be a fun way to close out group at the end of the session. Someone in the group should volunteer to go first. That person should come up with a word or phrase. There are no limitations except that the word or phrase chosen should not be overly obscure or controversial (or offensive)

Then each person in the group should come up with personal explanation for the first person's phrase. For example:

First group member chooses the phrase: "***Migraine headaches***"

- Second group member adds personal explanation to the answer: "***What talking to stupid people gives me***"
- Third group member says: "***What I experience whenever I have to listen to country music***"
- Next group member says: "***The reason I became addicted to pain medication***"
- Next group member says: "***Something I gratefully have never experienced***"
- Next person says: "***What this game is giving me right now...ha-ha-ha***"

Continue going around the group until it gets back to the first group member who can go last by providing his or her personal explanation for their own answer.

Then the second person should come up with a brand new phrase as the answer for the rest of the group. Then as a group go around in a circle again the same exact way way providing personal explanations for this new phrase as the answer. Continue with this pattern until the group has had enough.

Icebreaker - Songs that Inspire

*"Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery.
None but ourselves can free our minds."
— Bob Marley*

*"Don't criticize what you can't understand."
— Bob Dylan*

*"All you need is love."
— John Lennon*

Directions: As a group discuss a song or song lyric or verse that you have found to be motivational or inspirational (or both)