

Ice Breaker ©
by Sueann Kenney-Noziska

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Intervention Summary

This getting-to-know-you activity is a modified version of the board game Don't Break the Ice™ (Milton Bradley). Colored stickers are placed on the underside of the game ice cubes with each color corresponding to one of six categories (likes, dislikes, self/family/friends, hopes/dreams, ask a question to the other player, treat). As players knock ice cubes out of the game, they share something about themselves based on the color of the sticker located on the underside of the ice cube.

Purpose

- Engagement
- Begin to establish the therapeutic relationship
- Acquaint the client and therapist

Modality

- Individual
- Group
- Family

Age Range

- 5–18 years

Materials

- Don't Break the Ice™ (Milton Bradley)
- Star stickers
- Small candy/stickers (optional)

Description

Engagement begins at the first contact and is essential to establish the therapeutic relationship. This technique is intended to “break the ice” between the client and therapist and provides an engaging way for individuals to get acquainted.

The game Don't Break the Ice™ (Milton Bradley) is played using the regular rules of play and the additional rule that after players have tapped an ice cube out of the game, they share something about themselves according to the color of the star sticker located on the underside of the ice cube.

Prior to the game, colored star stickers are placed on the underside of each ice cube. A traditional package of self-adhesive foil star stickers, which can be purchased at discount stores, craft stores, or online, contains five colors (i.e. blue, red, green, gold, and silver). For this intervention, an additional “smiley face” category is created by drawing a smiley face on one color resulting in six categories of stickers (i.e. blue, red, green, gold, silver, and smiley face). Since there are 36 cubes in the game, six stickers of each color/category will be used. Each sticker color corresponds to a different category. Categories include the following:

- Blue = Something I like
- Red = Something I don't like
- Green = Something about myself, my family, or my friends
- Gold = One of my hopes or dreams
- Silver = Ask a question to the other player
- Smiley Face = Free Choice & Treat/Sticker (optional)

Note: The Don't Break the Ice™ (Milton Bradley) game has one large ice cube that is the size of four individual ice cubes. When the game is played using the traditional rules, this large ice cube serves to hold the ice skater. In addition to the large ice cube, the game typically comes with extra small ice cubes that serve as replacement ice cubes in the event that pieces of the game become lost or misplaced. For this therapeutic version of the game, the replacement ice cubes are used in lieu of the large ice cube. If there is not enough extra ice cubes to fill the frame of the game, the large ice cube can be used and four star stickers can be placed on the underside. If the large ice cube is used, a player who knocks this ice cube out must respond to all four categories according to the star stickers located on the underside of the cube.

The game Don't Break the Ice™ (Milton Bradley) is played using the regular rules of play plus the additional rule that after each player's turn, the player must share about themselves based on the categories assigned to the stickers on the bottom of each ice cube that fell during their turn. If an ice cube includes a star sticker with a smiley face, the player selects a piece of candy and responds to a category of their choice. Stickers can be used instead of candy if desired. The use of candy or stickers is an optional part of the intervention, but the prospect of "winning" something during the course of the activity may lower defenses and incorporates an additional component of engagement and playfulness to the technique.

Throughout the activity, players get better acquainted by sharing non-threatening information in an engaging, yet structured manner. Using this intervention in the early stage of treatment assists in creating a playful, client-friendly therapeutic environment and orienting the client to the process of play therapy.

About the Author: Sueann Kenney-Noziska, MSW, LISW, RPT-S, is a Licensed Independent Social Worker and Registered Play Therapist Supervisor specializing in using play therapy in clinical practice with children, adolescents, and families. She is an accomplished author, instructor of play therapy, guest lecturer, and internationally recognized speaker who has trained thousands of professionals. Sueann is founder and President of Play Therapy Corner, Inc. and actively serves in leadership roles in the play therapy community. She is author of "Techniques-Techniques-Techniques: Play-Based Activities for Children, Adolescents, & Families," a manual which highlights the original play-based techniques and interventions she has created to advance the field of play therapy.

About the Book: Techniques-Techniques-Techniques is a collection of creative, play-based activities for clinical practice with children, adolescents, and families. This easy-to-read manual provides practical interventions that can be immediately incorporated into clinical work across modalities and in diverse practice settings. Techniques are clinically sound and target treatment issues including assessment, emotional expression, coping skills, ADHD, self-esteem, interpersonal boundaries, sexual abuse, and termination. Interventions are applicable for a variety of presenting problems and symptoms. The imaginative, adaptable nature of these techniques makes this book an invaluable resource for professionals seeking innovative strategies for clinical practice. The book is available at <http://www.buybooksontheweb.com>.