

## **Tool Box Activities for Module 8**

### **Reacting Vs. Thinking.**

**Purpose:** To demonstrate to participants the difference between simply reacting to a stimulus and thinking about how we want to respond, to lead into thinking about our anger in the same way.

**Outcome:** Participants will hopefully realize they have a choice in how they respond to their anger; they can react spontaneously without consideration for long-term costs, or think about their response.

**Instructions:** Have all participants sit in a semi-circle and hold hands. The leader holds the hand of one of the people at the end of the semi-circle and gives these instructions:

*In a moment, I'm going to squeeze \_\_\_\_\_'s hand. S/he will then squeeze the hand of the person next to him/her and that person will squeeze the hand of the person next to them, and so on, until it gets to the other end of the line. The last person to feel their hand squeezed, will say "Stop" when they feel the squeeze. We're going to time ourselves and see how fast we can send a hand squeeze around the group.*

You might do this a couple of times to see if they can improve on their time. Or have them close their eyes and do it. The leader times each try and announces the time aloud.

Then instruct them as follows: *Now I want each person to extend their hands over the knees of the person on either side of them. Not touching their knees, but having your hands about 10" above their knees. We're going to go around the room, tapping knees, **in order of the knees**. This is counter-intuitive. You will tap the knee on your right, then you should feel both your knees tapped before you tap the knee of the person on your left.*

*It's a little confusing at first, but it can be done. Let's try a practice run.*

(Let them try it once. You will probably have to prompt some people to tap, and others will automatically tap with their left as soon as they have tapped with their right. Remind them to wait.)

*Remember, just look at everyone's knees; and try to get everyone's knee tapped in order, around the room. We're going to do it and I'm going to time us now.*

Tell them this time is 'for real.' Observe the time it takes and announce it. Have them do it again to see if they can beat their time. There will be lots of grimaces and realizations their left hand automatically followed their right, but let them continue.

## Facilitator's Tool Box – Module 8

**Process:** *Which exercise did you like best? Why? It was easier – why? What was the biggest difference in the two exercises?*

What you're trying to get them to realize is that in the first exercise they just 'reacted', but in the second one, they really had to think & try to overcome the instinct to react..

*Someone tell us about a time in the past week where you had to react, pretty much without thinking. (Someone usually mentions another car pulling out in front of them). Now, someone tell me about a time in the past week where it was better for you to think about your response? (If no one speaks up, offer an example such as:*

*Someone had me blocked in in the parking lot at work. I had to think about whether I could maneuver my car out of the tight spot, or if I needed to go find who was parked behind me and ask them to move their car.*

*There are times when it's in our best interest to react quickly. But more often, it's better if we think about how we want to respond. How often do we just react when we need to think first?*

*Think of you amygdala as the 'reactor'. Most of the time we need to tell it to chill out while we think of the best response.*

## **The Zagnot**

Have a piece of paper on which you've written in large letters.

"I'm a Zagnot. Some of us are mean. Some of us smell. Some of us steal things."  
("Zagnot" is simply a made-up, nonsensical name. You can substitute another name if you prefer).

Ask for 2 volunteers. Ask them to leave the room. Show the sign to the rest of the group and tell them the volunteers are going to be Zagnots. Inform the group they are to react to the volunteers as they would to people they think are mean, smell bad, or might steal from them.

Ask the volunteers back into the room. Tell them they've been designated Zagnots for the evening and their job is to mingle among the rest of the group try to befriend as many people as they can in five minutes.

Watch for interaction between the volunteers and other members of the group. Take notes if you need to process when the five minutes are up.

Questions for processing:

*What did the volunteers notice about the way the group acted toward them?*

*What did they think was going on?*

*How did it feel?*

*What did the group notice about the reaction of the volunteers to the way they were being treated?*

*Do you think you ever treat people similar to the way the volunteers were treated?*

*Do you know people who are sometimes treated shabbily because of stereotypes or prejudices?*

*What can you do to make a difference?*

## **Practice Exercise for Communication Review**

Have each youth and parent/guardian dyad work together. Ask the youth participant to tell the parent/guardian one thing they will do to avoid getting in trouble again.

The parent is to use Skilled Listening techniques to convey to their child what they heard.

The parent will then offer a statement to their child, expressing appreciation for, or validating, what the youth said. The youth will then reflect back to the parent what he or she heard, using Skilled Listening techniques.

Facilitator's Tool Box – Module 8  
Legacy Exercise

WHY AM I HERE?

A. List the five most important people in your life:

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B. How would they remember you if you were to leave the planet today?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

C. How would you like to be remembered by these people?

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

D. Write 5 things you feel are important for you to change or continue doing in order to create your legacy:

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

**Facilitator's Tool Box – Module 8**  
**Letter to Myself**

As an optional exercise to wrap up the class, you can ask each youth participant to write themselves a letter, setting a goal they want to accomplish in 6 months. They leave the letter with the facilitator who mails it to them in six months. You'll need them to address an envelope to themselves.

This is good goal-setting exercise and a nice way to get them thinking into the future a little, and giving thought to changes they might want to make.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_

It's been six months since you completed the First Offender's program. At that time you identified your assets (strengths, talents) and barriers (liabilities, weaknesses) as:

Assets

Barriers

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A goal you had for the next six months was:

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Two specific things you committed to doing to help achieve that goal were:

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\_\_\_\_\_ and

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It's six months later now. How do you feel about where you are now? Did you complete those tasks and where are you in completing your goal?

Sincerely,

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