Games and Group Activities for Children with Autism

The deficits in the area of social communication, as well as in the area of restrictive and repetitive interests, are barriers that children with autism face in their attempts to make friends. Equally, play represents the working ground, learning, and joy for all children. Friendships are built on common passions. The proposal of group games that motivate the participation of a child with autism and encourage interaction with other children is always welcome, as long as the child is prepared or supported to participate in them.

Below, you will find many examples of such group games.

1. **Taxi Game**

Ask participants to imagine themselves as taxis. Tell them that they will move around the room, getting to know each other. Explain the rules:

- When the music starts playing, everyone moves.

- When they hear a whistle, taxis collide with other taxis. The number of collisions will be determined by the number of whistles heard.

- During the collision, drivers get to know each other.

- When participants hear another whistle, they continue their movements.

- Each time they collide with others.

Include music. After 30 seconds, whistle 3 times and stop the music. Give them 30 seconds to exchange information. Include the music again. Repeat the process up to 5 whistles. The whistle can be replaced with clapping or hitting an object."

2. **Magic Mirror**

A volunteer will start the activity. Others will form a unique mirror the size of a wall. The volunteer stands in front of the mirror and makes various movements, which the mirror reflects accurately. When they desire, the person returns to their place, and someone else takes the front.

3. **The Signal**

A participant starts making a sound until they run out of breath. As soon as they finish blowing, their neighbor takes over the sound.

4. **Who brings first**

Participants, in small groups, position themselves at one end of the room, while the facilitator stands at the opposite end. The facilitator asks the participants: "Who brings me first...?" and names an object, such as an earring, a shoe, a hairpin, a ring, a safety pin, a watch, a pen, etc.

5. **Bouncing Ball**

Participants gather around a blanket that they will use to make a ball bounce. In the middle of the blanket, a hole can be cut to try to pass the ball through it.

6. **The Snake**

Participants form pairs. Explain to them that the pairs will join together during the game to create a long "snake." Partners lie face down on the ground, one in front of the other. This way, a "snake" is formed by 2 people, which will start to crawl on the ground. When they achieve good coordination of movements, the "snakes" will pair up in twos, forming a group of 4, and so on, successively until a huge "snake" is formed. In the end, the snake will try to surround trees (real or imaginary), climb "mountains," pass over rocks and through narrow spaces, etc., without breaking apart.

7. **Musical Circles**

Participants form pairs, and each pair stands inside a gymnastics circle. When the facilitator starts the music, the pairs must jump around the room while staying inside their circles. When the music stops, two pairs that are closest together form a team by standing inside the two circles (one circle on top of the other). This process continues until there is a maximum number of participants inside the circles. Alternatively, the circles can be placed on the floor. Participants will jump around them and enter inside when the music stops. Each time, a circle is removed from the game, and participants collaborate to fit everyone into the remaining limited number of circles.

8. **Attention, Balloon!**

Participants form a circle. A balloon must be passed around the circle without it falling. The balloon cannot be returned to the person from whom it was received. The balloon is passed in various ways: with both hands, with the palm of one hand, with the head, with a finger, and finally, with the tip of a pencil or pen. If the balloon bursts, it is replaced with another one, and the game continues.

9. **Let's Get to Know Each Other**

Participants form pairs and decide who will be number 1 and who will be number 2 in each pair. Instruct all number 1 participants to go to the center of the room and close their eyes. Number 2 participants should scatter randomly throughout the room without moving from their spots. At the signal from the facilitator, the number 1 participants must find their corresponding number 2 by calling them by their first name. The round ends when all the number 2 participants have found their number 1. Then, participants switch roles.

10. **Trust Me! Trust Me!**

Ask participants to form teams of 4 people. Participation should be optional. One person from each group will be blindfolded. Another person will be the leader and will give instructions to the blindfolded person on how to navigate through the room. The other 2 people will assist the leader in ensuring that the blindfolded person does not bump into anything. After 2-3 minutes,

participants will switch roles. You can create various obstacles in the room, such as tables, chairs, and other objects, to make the activity more interesting and promote trust and collaboration among team members.

11. Creating the Monster

All together or in small groups, participants have the task of creating a monster. The facilitator can specify the number of hands, legs, heads, or leave it entirely up to the participants to decide.

12. Robots

Participants form groups of three people. In each group, one person is the robot controller, and the other two are the robots. The controllers must direct the movements of their two robots. To make the robot move to the right, the controller places their hand on the right shoulder of the robot, and to make it move to the left, the controller places their hand on the left shoulder. The facilitator gives the signal, instructing the robots to move in a certain direction. The controller must prevent the robots from hitting obstacles such as chairs, tables, or other robots. After some time, participants switch roles, giving each person the chance to be both a controller and a robot.

13. Car Wash

Participants form two rows facing each other. Each pair becomes a section of a car wash. In turn, each person becomes a "car" and goes through the "car wash." The "car wash" makes various hand movements: stroking, rubbing, light hits, touches, etc., to "wash the car." After being washed, the "car" stays at the other end of the "car wash," becoming part of the system, and another person starts moving between the rows. The game ends when all the "cars" have been "washed" and the assembled car is complete.

14. The Shadow

Define the boundaries of the playing space. One volunteer will be the "special" player. The objective of the game is for the "special" player to catch the others by stepping on their shadows. When the "special" player steps on someone's shadow, they shout "Sun!" The participants who have been caught also become "special" players but remain motionless until they catch three more players.

15. Police and Thieves

Players are divided into two teams: "police" and "thieves," each occupying their respective halves of the playing area. The goal of the "police" is to catch all the "thieves." The "police" achieve this by simply touching the "thieves." Once caught, the "thieves" are taken to a designated jail area. "Thieves" can free their teammates by entering the jail and touching them. The time is limited – 15 minutes. If all "thieves" are caught, the "police" win.

16. Blowpipe Relay

Trace the starting and finishing lines about 3 meters apart. Participants form two teams. Each participant has a blowpipe. The first two participants from each team kneel in front of their own ping-pong ball, placed at the starting line. They must blow forcefully through the blowpipe to

push the ball with the blown air and transport it to the finish line. Once it crosses the finish line, the blower takes the ball and quickly passes it to the next teammate. The team of the fastest blowers wins. Touching the ball between the starting and finishing lines is prohibited. Anyone who does so must immediately return to the starting line and start again.

17. The Wolf

The activity can take place inside or outside the house, but you need a generous running space. One participant is the "wolf," and the others are the "lambs." The wolf must hide. The lambs stay in a pen (a circle with a diameter of 3-5 meters), which serves as their refuge. When the wolf calls out "U-u-u!" the lambs leave the pen in search of him. The first one to spot the wolf shouts "The Wolf!" At this moment, all the lambs run back to the pen. The lambs that were caught transform into wolves. The game ends when there are no lambs left.

18. Potato Race

Draw the starting and finishing lines. Each participant receives a spoon with a potato on it. Participants line up at the start. At the facilitator's signal, everyone moves quickly to reach the finish line. The one who drops the potato must pick it up using only the spoon, without using their hands. Adults can also be included in the game, and they will find that it's not as easy as it seems! Finish with a delicious snack of mashed potatoes and sausages to avoid wasting potatoes.

19. What Am I Feeling?

Participants stand in a circle. Each, in turn, represents an emotion without speaking. The others try to guess the portrayed emotion. The person who guesses correctly then represents the next emotion.

20. The Story

Participants will create a story by taking turns to say one sentence at a time. The story should have a beginning, middle, and end.