

Ball of Responsibility Game

Practicing Strategies for Crisis Intervention

Description: As the *Ball of Responsibility* is tossed back and forth from the group leader to a participant, ideas on ways that staff can support the person in crisis are explored and then the participant identifies strategies that he or she is willing to try in the event of crisis.



Objectives: The purpose of the game is to teach clients how to proceed if they sense they are becoming overwhelmed, dangerously angry or losing emotional control. It gives both staff and clients some shared language and understanding of how staff can be helpful in these crisis situations (shared responsibility) and how to shift the responsibility of control to the client (personal responsibility) and avoid the need for restraint, seclusion or emotional collapse.

Materials: 10" solid colored ball with the word RESPONSIBILITY written on opposite sides of the ball in large letters using a permanent marker.

Directions: Leader begins by introducing the concept of responsibility regarding self-control in times of crisis. Ideas can be briefly brainstormed about ways staff can help provide support and then strategies participants can use to regain control.

- ❖ **First Activity:** The leader holds the *Ball of Responsibility* and asks participants to think of things that are the responsibility of the staff in terms of helping patients to maintain safety and self control. (Ideas include: providing a safe environment, being available when needed, providing education, picking up on signs and triggers)
- ❖ **Second Activity:** The leader tosses the **Ball of Responsibility** back and forth with the first participant; this represents shared responsibility for control. The leader asks what he or she might be able to do to help this person in crisis. The leader and the participant come up with several ideas on ways that staff can provide appropriate support (take the person to a safe space, walk around together, toss a ball back and forth, go to the sensory room, share a cup of tea, discuss possible sensory tools and coping strategies). The leader continues to go from person to person asking what would be helpful.
- ❖ **Third Activity:** The leader gives all of the participants a chance to hold the *Ball of Responsibility* and mention three strategies they would be willing to try to regain self-control and calm down (use a weighted blanket, listen to music, sit in a chair with a massaging mat on it, use a sound machine, sit in a swing or rock in a rocker, wrap up in a blanket, use the "Lycra Hug," play a card game, do a puzzle, work on an art activity, etc.).

Discussion: The simple version of this game as it is presented here is designed to be used in the "Learning Stage" of the Sense-ability Group or as an interactive game in a skill building or self-regulation group. A more complex version of this game will integrate with a "Hold, Connect, Engage" treatment approach that will be explained in detail as part of the Sensory Connection Program Conferences and Trainings. This approach is informed by the Social Engagement Theory and the work and research of Dr. Stephen Porges who emphasizes the need to support more evolved control mechanisms of response to upsetting stimuli rather than resorting to "fight, flight and freeze" reactions.