

Exercise:

Brain Games to Improve Your Mind

Believe it or not but research and studies have shown that playing games can help reduce symptoms of depression and anxiety. These games help foster feelings of social connection, a sense of achievement, and emotional regulation skills, among other benefits. Playing games can help us change the way we think and behave, such as making us more courageous, ambitious, and goal-oriented.

Use these brain games to help your team improve their mind's health, as well as offer your team a quick and fun activity to engage in together.

Game 1: The Color Game

Activity Time: 5 minutes

Best for: Team Huddles

Ask the team to write out a list of color names, and change the color of the actual text so that it does not correspond to the color referred to.

Here's an example:

Black Blue Yellow Green Red Purple Orange Pink Black

Now, ask them to read out loud the color each word is written in, not the word itself. Time how fast they can do it. Tell them not to worry if they aren't able to do it at first. It's harder than anyone thinks.

Ask them to move as quickly as they can through the set, and then start again to see if they can improve their times. If this game is played again, ask them to create another, larger set and try timing themselves again.

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Game 2: Create a Story

Activity Time: 10 minutes

Best for: Department Staff Meeting or Team-Building Event

Practicing creativity has been [linked to better brain health](#), and what better way to be creative than to tell a group story? Break the teams of 3 - 5.

Get them to sit together in a circle and have each team member start by writing an opening line on a piece of paper. This could be as simple as "The boy woke up and walked down the street to the store." From there, ask them to pass the paper clockwise around the circle and keep going for 5 minutes and have everyone add a line that builds on the line before it. At the end of 5 minutes, have each team read the story (aloud if possible). Chances are, you'll come up with a funny tale that's a perfect combination of everyone's creativity!

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Game 3: Test Your Memory

Activity Time: 5 minutes

Best for: Team Huddles, Department Staff Meetings, or Team-Building Event

For this game, pull up a simple picture of an interior or exterior scene. The scene should have several elements to it. For example, a picture of a pond with a bench, some ducks, a walking path, a jogger, a tree, and a tulip bed. Use the one below if you like!

Once you've found an ideal image, present it to the team and ask them to study it for one minute. At the end of one minute, turn the picture face-down and allow the team to write down all the items they remember. Then, turn the photo back over and see what (if anything) they've missed. Complete the practice a second time to see if they do any better on the subsequent round!



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Game 4: Hidden Object

Activity Time: 5 minutes

Best for: Team Huddles, Department Staff Meetings, or Team-Building Event

One thing that boosts the performance and output of the brain is visual searching. Games like “Where’s Waldo” and similar “hidden object” challenges are ideal for this. Use the next few images for a few games. You can add a time limit for the team.

Can you find these objects hidden in the picture?



fish



crescent moon



sheep



hot dog



teacup



teapot



crown



glove



pointy hat



comet



ghost



tube of toothpaste



artist's brush



snake



screwdriver



horseshoe



book



banana



ice-cream cone

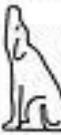


spoon





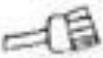
CLUES

-  book
-  flashlight
-  tooth
-  turkey
-  tent
-  paperclip
-  cane
-  loaf of bread
-  paintbrush
-  belt
-  canoe
-  cake slice
-  dog
-  bell
-  glasses

Can you find in the picture the objects listed on the right?

Picnic Day



 paintbrush

 ice-cream cone

 strawberry

 baseball bat

 flashlight

 crown

 broccoli

 balloon

 envelope

 fish

 tennis racket

 wedge of lemon

 arrow

 umbrella

 ladder

 crayon

 egg

 bell

 book

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Game 5: The Shortest Short Story

Activity Time: 5 - 10 minutes

Best for: Department Staff Meetings, or Team-Building Event

Chances are, each team member has written a short story before. Regardless of whether they were in college or high school, they've probably penned a 300-500 word tale they either read out loud or submitted. Now, it's time to draw on those skills and create another short story that's even, well, shorter!

Ask your team to use just seven words to craft a complete story. This game challenges their creativity and requires them to search their brain for the most impactful vocabulary.

For example, consider Ernest Hemingway's iconic 6-word story: "For sale: Baby shoes, never worn." Ask them to then, go around the room and read them aloud!