

The Big Class Experiment!

Purpose: The purpose of this experiment is intended to:

1. Help participants realize that counseling can be both fun & interesting,
2. Increase student awareness regarding the role music may have in identifying potential personal issues.
3. Create a framework in which students can easily understand how “mismanaged” emotions can interfere with daily functioning.

Experimental Premises:

A. That certain types of instrumental music is intrinsically bound to human emotions and thus helps to facilitate the recall of emotional memories (both good and not so good.)

B. List A (pre music) represents the “here & now” of thinking. It represents the thoughts (names) going through our heads at any given time during our “go” moments.

C. List B (post music) represents the “emotional past.” These names represent memories of our past emotional experiences that emerge through the music which often serve to remind and guide our future actions.

Materials: C.D., Cassette Tape, or Internet access to the music: Adagio for Strings by Samuel Barber (I like utilizing the YouTube website and using the entry (while available) by Tweeklet featuring Max Ehrmann’s poem Desiderata.) You may also need a functional time piece with moving hand/seconds counter, a box of Kleenex and a “Testing” sign. Kids will require a pencil and two sheets of paper.

Time: Approximately 30 minutes.

Warm-up:

Introduce/reintroduce yourself to kids. Review the activity you had done with their class the last time you were there (The Front Page.) Remind students that MYOB goes a lot further in building a good reputation than spreading gossip and rumors especially in getting ready for middle school.

Phase 1

Announce: For our activity today we will be doing a counseling experiment. It might be a bit like taking a test in that you’ll be told what and when to do things. Do your best to ignore any minor interruptions that may occur. The experiment will only last around 10 minutes.

Remember, once we get started I won’t be able to answer any of your questions until after the experiment is over. No talking during the experiment please. To do the experiment, you will

need two sheets of paper, a pencil, and a clear desk top (table) area. Right now, label one sheet of paper with the letter A at the top of its page and the other sheet of paper with the letter B at its top. During part of the experiment you will be instructed to lay your heads down on your desk top. Feel free to use your arms to rest your head upon while doing so. Some of you with the sniffles might want a tissue in your hand or at least have a neighbor sitting next to you with a long sleeve shirt on;) Raise your hand now if you think you'll need a Kleenex later (distribute.)

Assure: If anyone during the experiment has an emergency that needs to be taken care of at that moment, raise your hand and I'll come to you. Remember, there will be plenty of time after the ten minute experiment to talk and ask questions.

Prepare: Turn off the room's telephone and if possible the classroom loud speaker. Place the "testing" sign on the classroom door.

Phase 2

State: Let's get started!

Read: 1 Leave paper A and your pencil on the top of your desk.

2 Quietly place paper B under your chair.

3 In a few seconds when you hear me say the word "Begin" I will want you to write down the names of everyone you know that comes to mind. You will continue writing until you hear me say the word "Stop." (Repeat if necessary)

4 "Begin" (wait 60 seconds before saying)...

5 "Stop"

6 Fold paper A in half and slide it quietly into your desk.

7 Starting right now and for the next several minutes you will:

~rest your head on your desk top (demonstrate using folding arms.

~close your eyes, clear your mind and listen to music.

~stay that way until I give you further directions.

Phase 3

Play: Adagio for strings by Joseph Barber.

Watch: for kids needing encouragement to follow the above directions or needing other forms of assistance.

Stop: Music approximately at the 7:02 mark (end of the crescendo.) **For students high school aged and older, play entire piece of music.*

Phase 4

Announce: 1 Boys & Girls please begin to sit up and open your eyes.

2 Without talking, place paper B on top of your desk and pick up your pencil.

3 In a few seconds when you hear me say the word “Begin” I will want you to write down the names of everyone you know that comes to mind. You will continue writing until you hear me say the word “Stop.” (Repeat if necessary)

4 “Begin” (wait approx. 60 seconds before saying)...

5 “Stop”

State: Congratulations! You’ve completed the experiment!

Phase Five

Analysis & Review: This is a time to share with students what the experiment was all about. Allow your explanation to unfold gradually through a series of questions about the lists and music. Have students retrieve list A from their desks and place side by side on their desk tops. Encourage other students to “MYOB” when it comes to respecting their classmate’s privacy to the content of his or her list.

Before offering a few “predictions,” remind students that the predictions do not apply for everyone but generally speaking, may apply to most people.

Request: * Raise your hand if list B has more names on it than list A.

- Look over list A and raise your hand if you left off the name of someone very important.
- Look over list B and raise your hand if you have the name of someone you haven’t seen or have thought of for a long while.
- Look over list B and raise your hand if wrote down the name of someone who is deceased (had died.) If so, tell me how long it’s been since he/she had passed away?
- Does anyone have a pet listed on his/her list?
- Raise your hand if you had the experience of having some good memories come to you while you were listening to the music.
- Raise your hand if you had the experience of having some not so good memories come to you while you were listening to the music.
- While you were working on the B list, raise your hand if you had the experience of thinking of someone BUT refused to write down that person’s name. If so, what

was the emotion you were feeling that kept you from writing down that person's name?

- Look over list B. Raise your hand if you've ever had a dream about any name on that list. If so, which of your emotions do you think were trying to get your attention?
- Raise your hand if you have a deceased person on list A. If so, tell me how long it's been since he/she had passed away?
- Raise your hand if you have exactly the same number and same names on both lists.
- Raise your hand if you can tell me why there is a difference between the two lists.

Guiding Discussion Points:

Explain: List A (pre-test) represents basically what's going on here and now. It's the short list of what's going through your head right now. It's the "stuff you've got to manage right now to get through this moment" kind of list. Don't worry about having left a parent, best friend, or teammates name off the list. Ideally, this list might be "emotionally free." That is, absent of lots of emotional stuff that can distract you from being successful in the here and now. It's important to have a list A. Of course it's easy to understand if something very emotional has recently happened (or currently happening) it would show up on this list too. Still, for those of you that have a person on list A that is gone, has died, or no longer plays an active role in your life, it might be time for someone (like a counselor) to help you move that person from list A to list B. Our emotions can be better managed on list B than on list A.

The music (intervention) we listened to allowed those of you who were willing to re-connect with your emotional experiences. I'm sure that while the music played some of you remembered things you'd rather forget and maybe that had something to do with why you chose not to write down some names. Maybe having dreams about some of those things is a way that part of you is saying "I'm not going away just because you'd rather not remember me." Raise your hand if you like being told what to think or how to feel. The music we listened to today did not have lyrics that told us what to think or a rhythm that made us feel anything other than what was already inside ourselves! The music allowed each of us to remember and reconnect with our feelings. Let me encourage you to do that every now and then even if you get bored with the music=)

Generally list B (post test) on the other hand represents names with more emotional attachments. Names of people we have good emotional experiences with as well as those that left us feeling sad, angry, embarrassed, frightened, betrayed, etc. It's necessary and important to have this kind of list too. Could you imagine if all your list B emotions were on list A? That would mean you'd be angry, sad, and generally feeling emotionally unstable every minute of the day! Yikes!!! That's no good!

Fifth Grade: Lesson Two

Counseling helps you go through some of those things on both lists and can get them contained and placed right where they need to be. If for example something that happened a long time ago also made your list A, counseling can help move that back to where it belongs on list B and keep it there. Counseling can help you manage both lists so you can be successful, happy, and moving forward in life=)

*(See more on this activity in the book *Fifty Steps Closer; Group Counseling Guide in Reflections of School-Aged Boys & Girls.*)