

I'M A TREE

Objectives:

- Sharing control while co-creating with peers
- Practicing flexibility, spontaneity, pacing, and Yes Anding

How to Play:

- Instruct students to stand in a circle.
- One student steps forward and makes an initial offer by stating “I’m a tree.” They pose in a position that is demonstrative of a tree.
- A second student is instructed to imagine what might belong or be seen in a picture with a tree, such as a bird, a squirrel, grass, a park etc. Once a second student has an idea, they step forward and make a second offer by stating what they are, such as: “I am a _____(bird)_____” (while miming being the bird).
- A third student is instructed to imagine what else might belong or be seen in a picture with the tree and the bird (a bird’s nest, bird eggs, a cat climbing the tree to catch the bird etc.) Once a third student has an idea, they step out and make their offer: “I am a _____(bird egg)_____.”
- The first student (the tree) then selects one student to stay in the middle of the circle (by pointing at them, saying their name, or stating “I’ll leave the _____(bird or bird egg)_____.” The tree and the student that was not selected to remain in the middle of the circle go back to the outside of the circle, while the student who stayed in the circle re-states what they are. For example, if the first person selected the bird to remain, that person would re-state “I am a bird,” while the students representing the tree and bird egg returned to the outside of the circle.
- The group is then instructed to imagine an “entirely new picture” that has a bird in it. Ask the group what else might belong or be seen in a picture that has a bird in it. Two more students then add offers to this picture one at a time, and then “the bird” selects one student to remain in the circle. The student who is chosen to remain in the circle then repeats what they are.
- Repeat.

Variations:

- This game can be played in “all play” mode. Essentially, one person at a time adds to the “picture” until all students have added something, or until the picture feels complete. Then, the first person chooses something to leave behind, all other students clear off the stage, and a new picture is started based on the left behind person/place/thing.

Leader Considerations and Assessment:

- What does the group need energetically so that everyone has a chance to participate in this game?
- What areas may need leader troubleshooting?

Troubleshooting:

- **Disjointed Offers:**
 - Often, student 1 will make an offer, student 2 will make an offer, and student 3 will add an offer that goes with student 1 but not student 2. This can be indicative of a student only partially listening or following the game. This can also indicate a student who hears both offers, but has a difficult time shifting away from their idea after hearing the first offer. Students demonstrating this type of rigidity may fail to integrate the second offer or re-calibrate their idea based on the second student’s information.
 - Some students may struggle with relinquishing their ideas, and they may need support to develop this skill. One way to support a student through this process is to acknowledge that their idea fits with the first offer and then ask them what a third offer might be that would also fit with that picture. This helps the student “complete” their idea, which can be less challenging for some students who struggle with rigidity. Once this has been done, then see if the student might also be able to come up with a new third offer that fits the established picture, or if they would like to

pass until a new round. For example, consider a situation in which the first offer was “cat,” the second offer was “a lap” and then the third person offered “zoo.” “Zoo” could fit with “cat,” but doesn't really fit with “cat and lap” together. The third player can be asked what they were imagining, (perhaps a big cat in a zoo, such as a tiger). They can then be asked what a third offer would be that would fit with “cat and zoo” to help them complete their idea. Then, they can be invited to rewind, and reflect that “zoo” doesn't really fit with “cat and lap” all the way. They can be asked if they can think of a new idea that might fit with “cat and lap” more seamlessly, or they can return to the outside of the circle to see what ideas other people may have. Sometimes students are able to tweak their offers slightly to make them make sense within the pre-existing context.

- Students may need support to ensure that their offer fits the full picture, not just the first offer. Teachers can ask the third student to explain how they see their offer fitting with both previous offers. If they can't, the teacher can invite the student to think of a new offer that might fit with both offers, or to “pass” and let another student add an offer that matches both offers.
- **Difficulty taking turns:**
 - Sometimes two students may enter the circle at the same time and add their ideas simultaneously. This is a good opportunity to pause the game and explore turn-taking. Sometimes the game is moving so quickly that this is unpreventable, which requires students to problem solve (do the three ideas we have fit together? Or does one person need to return to the outside of the circle to add a third idea that fits the first two?) Other times, students may not notice their peers moving into the circle, and exploring ways to increase students' focus of the entire group may be beneficial.
- **Impulse Control:**
 - It may be helpful to pause the game and explore the idea of sharing control. If there are ten people in the group, students can be reminded that they should be going 1/10th of the time. Coach students around how they know if it is their turn (they haven't gone in a while), and how to know that it likely isn't their turn (they just went). While group members aren't entirely responsible for managing each other's experiences, this concept relates back to the improv idea of “being fun to play with.”
 - If a group really struggles with turn taking, it may help to initially play this game with all the students lined up along the back of the stage/classroom wall. Then, students take their turns in order, which takes the pressure off of turn taking and orients students towards sharing control by co-creating a cohesive world.
- **Processing Speed Variation:**
 - It can be helpful to use visual language with students during this game and encourage students to visualize scenes. For example: “When you imagine a dog, what do you think might be next to it/ around it/above it/near it/with it” or “If you saw a picture of a tree, what might also be in the picture?” or “If you walked into a kitchen and saw an orange, what else might you see around the orange?”
 - Some students may process more slowly than others and have a difficult time getting into the game. It may be helpful to institute a group rule that the entire group takes a deep breath together, and the teacher re-states what is already in the circle before a new offer is made. The game can also be paused while a particular student receives coaching, if needed.

Topics for Processing:

- “Which pictures did the group like the most? Why?” Often, groups like the simple or “obvious” choices, rather than offers made with the intent of being funny. Sometimes “funny” offers get a big laugh, but are hard to on to. Why is that?
- Did the offers we were making fall within the circle of expectations?
- What can we do to Yes And each other even more deeply in this game? (Generally, staying on topic and adding on to what has already been created is the most helpful way to deeply Yes And each other).