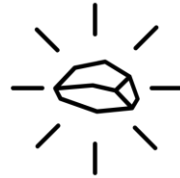


PL:Y



The Alchemist's Workshop

Advanced Interactive Workshop Design
for Experienced Facilitators

Workshop Series

(Day 1)

Dr. Mahmoud Natout



Check-In



امي نامت عبكير



نطرونا كتير



زعلي طول

آه فزعانة يا قلبي



الديك بيدن كوكو كو كو



بحبك يا لبنان

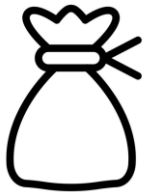


Intros.



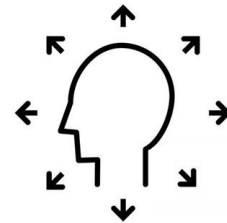
1. Name

2. Background



3. Attribute (as a trainer/professional)

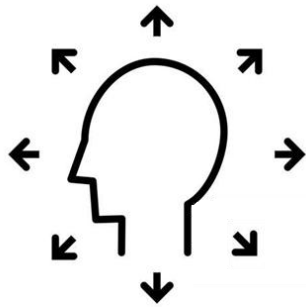
4. Intention



The Wind Blows

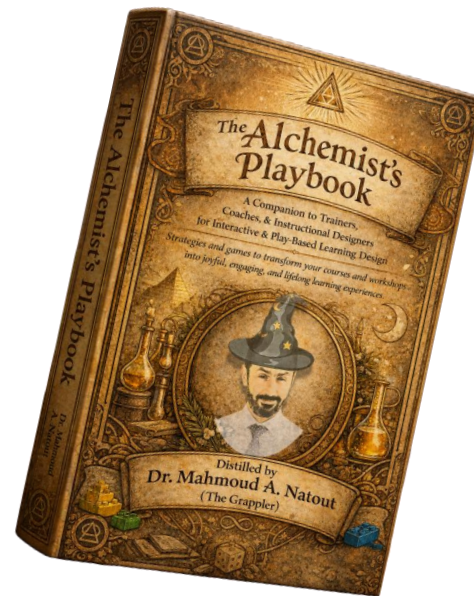


Intentions versus Expectations



Why Alchemy?

Alchemists sought to transform ordinary material into extraordinary things, with the ultimate goals of creating gold and discovering the elixir of life.



Why Alchemy?

What does gold look like for you when you're designing and facilitating a learning experience?



The Alchemist's Playbook

The Alchemist's Playbook
A Companion to Trainers, Coaches, & Instructional Designers for Interactive & Play-Based Learning Design
Strategies and games to transform your courses and workshops into joyful, engaging, and lifelong learning experiences.
Distilled by **Dr. Mahmoud A. Natout (The Grappler)**

Table of contents

p. 2
 p. 4
 p. 11
 p. 15
 p. 20
 p. 95
 p. 96
 p. 358
 p. 397

voice, fellow alchemist.
other side!

the electronic version)

The Alchemist's Workbench

Workshop

alchemist's Stone and Catalyst.
 Start from Experience.
 Then Transmute Them.
 Wisdom Embedded in the Crowd.
 Thread of the Learning Journey.
 Flow, and Form.
 Like a True Alchemist.
 ing unfolds.

The Alchemist's Per-Ludic Table

Difficulty Level	Materials & Setup Demand	Primary Play Forms Involved
Low	Low	Object Play • Abundance Play
Medium	Medium	Object Play • Abundance Play
High	High	Object Play • Abundance Play

Participants collaborate and interact closely to achieve a goal (Object Play), and coordinate and collective movement (Abundance Play).

Participants into small groups (3-6 per table).
Materials on each table.
Enough space for each group to work.
of a pyramid structure for reference (see below for more details).

Now, it can serve as the narrative spine of the session.
Showing the broad arc of the story to now familiar with it.
The story I used one participant to tell me about their work.
The way you see the world and the people in front of you.

h something a little different.
 of reflections on ideas that have shaped me, books I've
 ghts that have shaped me, no longer after the last page.

other thinker, writer, or practitioner has
 see it take that shape and I transmute it into
 a facilitation, and personal development.
 I when I design a workshop.

PL::Y

Table of contents

<u>Foreword</u>	<u>p. 2</u>
<u>Introduction</u>	<u>p. 4</u>
<u>The Why: Why does our work still matter?</u>	<u>p. 11</u>
<u>The Who: About me, <i>the Grappler</i>, your guide</u>	<u>p. 15</u>
<u>The How: Design Principles and Frameworks</u>	<u>p. 20</u>
<u>The What:</u>	<u>p. 95</u>
<u>The Alchemist's Game Cabinet (50 games)</u>	<u>p. 96</u>
<u>The Goldmine: A Case Experiment from the Laboratory of Life</u>	<u>p. 358</u>
<u>The Scrolls of Transformational Ideas</u>	<u>p. 397</u>



Now step into your portal of choice, fellow alchemist.
I'll see you on the other side!

(Click on the portal if you're reading the electronic version)



The Alchemist's Workbench



The Seven Principles of the Alchemist's Workshop



Alchemical Principle 1: Play is Your Philosopher's Stone and Catalyst.



Alchemical Principle 2: Reverse the Equation – Start from Experience.



Alchemical Principle 3: Get Excited About Games — Then Transmute Them.



Alchemical Principle 4: Group Is Guru – Extract the Wisdom Embedded in the Crowd.



Alchemical Principle 5: Find Your Meta – The Golden Thread of the Learning Journey.



Alchemical Principle 6: Balance the Tria Prima – Spark, Flow, and Form.



Alchemical Principle 7: Fall Madly in Love with Ideas – Like a True Alchemist.

The Alchemist's Per-Ludic Table

Name of the Game					
The Quick Climate Check-in	8–30	~5–7	Low → Medium	Easy	Low
The Wind Blows	8–30	~10	Medium → High	Easy	Low
Catch or Receive	8–30	~10–15	Low → Medium	Easy	Low
Let's Line Up	10–50	~10–15	Medium → High	Easy	Low
Give Me 5 Things in Common	10–100	~10–15	Low → Medium	Easy	Low
This or That	Any size	~10	Medium	Easy	Low
Spot the Odd One Out	Any size	~10	Medium	Easy → Medium	Low
Name and Signature Move	8–30	~10–15	Medium → High	Easy	Low
Spot the Difference	Any size	~10–15	Low → Medium	Easy	Low
Let It Rain	10–40	~10–15	Medium → High	Easy	Low
The Pyramid Builders	8–48	~30–45	Medium	Medium	Medium
The Toothpick Challenge	Any size	~10–15	Low → Medium	Medium	Low

Name of the Game

The Quick Climate Check-in

Category: Opening/Priming • Connection • Psychological Safety

A light, fast, and humanizing check-in that helps participants arrive, express, and connect



Materials & Setup Demand



Group Size



8-30 participants

Time



~5-7 minutes

Energy Level



Low → Medium

Difficulty Level



Easy

Play Personalities Activated



Joker • Explorer

Participants express their inner state through humor and lightness (Joker), and explore their own and other people's emotional landscape (Explorer).

Primary Play Form

Social Play • Im

Participants (Social Pl) (Imagin



Materials Needed

- Slides with a visual mood scale (Ex. 6 images representing different emotional states. 1 few examples below)

Intention

This game is designed to:

- Help participants arrive and settle into the space
- Surface the emotional and mental states present in the room
- Break the fourth wall between facilitator and participants and spark light participation from everyone
- Create early psychological safety through light, low-effort sharing
- Build rapport and human connection
- Prepare the ground for deeper engagement or a more reflective check-in (see the 'Catch or Receive' intentions setting game. You can use this lighthearted check-in to pave way towards the more patient and thoughtful intentions-setting activity).



The Process

1. Set the frame

Introduce the activity:
"Let's do a quick check-in to see how everyone is arriving."
Emphasize the wording:
"Not how you should feel—but the state you are arriving in."

2. Present the visual mood scale

- Show a slide with numbered images (Ex. 1-6), each representing a different mood or state.
- Explain:
- Participants can choose more than one number
- There are no right or wrong answers



Name of the Game

The Wind Blows



Category

Energizer • Transition • Connection • Psychological Safety • Scaffolding
A versatile game that can energize, connect, and gently open deeper layers of participation

Group Size	Time	Energy Level	Difficulty Level	Materials & Setup Demand
 8–30 participants	 ~10 minutes	 Medium → High	 Easy	 Low
Play Personalities Activated		Primary Play Forms Involved		
 Joker • Kinesthete • Storyteller This game activates playful expression through humor, movement, and spontaneous micro-storytelling, while naturally strengthening social connection.		 Movement Play • Social Play • Narrative Play Movement and interaction drive the game, while spontaneous prompts introduce elements of improvisation and micro-storytelling.		
Materials Needed		Setup & Preparation		
 Chairs equal to the number of participants minus one <i>(Example: 20 participants = 19 chairs. If you're joining the game, include yourself in the count.)</i>		 - Arrange chairs in a circle, about half a meter (≈2 feet) apart - Ensure enough space for safe and easy movement between chairs		
Intention				
 This game is designed to: - Energize the group at the start of a workshop or during transitions (ex. after breaks) - Create a safe and playful space for participation and connection				

The Goldmine

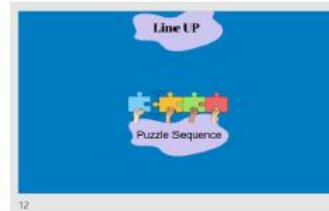
A Case Experiment from the Laboratory of Life



From there, I introduced the Hero's Journey (Slide 11) as the meta-narrative for the whole workshop.

But, as anticipated in the pre-design phase, I knew this might still remain too abstract. So, I moved immediately into a second intuitive prompt: a puzzle that led participants to guess the story of Jack and the Beanstalk (Slide 12).

So, instead of revealing the story, I invited the participants to guess, in small groups, what it was by solving the below puzzle pieces (printed and cut out on cardboard cards). Their task was to arrange them in chronological order:



Upon completing the puzzles, most participants identified the story. I asked one participant to summarize the story for everyone to ensure all participants were now familiar with it.

Then, in Slide 13, I made that narrative explicit and familiar, showing the broad arc of the story and how it maps onto the Hero's Journey. Now, it can serve as the narrative spine of the session.



3. The Scrolls of Transformational Ideas

We've played.
We've grappled.
We've grown.

Before we close, I want to leave you with something a little different.

This section is a collection of short, distilled reflections on ideas that have shaped me: books I've read, concepts I've grappled with, and insights that have stayed with me long after the last page was turned.

Think of them as scrolls.

They are not summaries.
They are not reviews.
They are **distillations**.

Each one captures a piece of gold—an idea that another thinker, writer, or practitioner has forged through their own experience. What I've done is take that gold and transmute it into something that speaks to the craft of learning design, facilitation, and personal development.

These are the ideas that sit quietly in the background when I design a workshop.
The ones that shape how I see a group.
How I listen.
How I intervene, or choose not to.

They influence not only *what* I do, but *how* I show up.

My hope is that as you move through these scrolls, something resonates.
An idea sharpens your thinking.
A perspective shifts how you design.
A question stays with you a little longer than expected.

Because in the end, becoming a better facilitator is not only about mastering tools.

It is also about expanding the way you see the world and the people in front of you.

Alchemist's Workbench



The Seven Principles of the Alchemist's Workshop



Alchemical Principle 1: Play is Your Philosopher's Stone and Catalyst.



Alchemical Principle 2: Reverse the Equation: Start from Experience.



Alchemical Principle 3: Get Excited About Games, then Transmute Them.



Alchemical Principle 4: Group Is Guru: Extract the Wisdom Embedded in the Crowd.



Alchemical Principle 5: Find Your Meta: The Golden Thread of the Learning Journey.



Alchemical Principle 6: Balance the Tria Prima: Spark, Flow, and Form.



Alchemical Principle 7: Fall Madly in Love with Ideas, Like a True Alchemist.

How creative do you rate yourself to be?



1



2

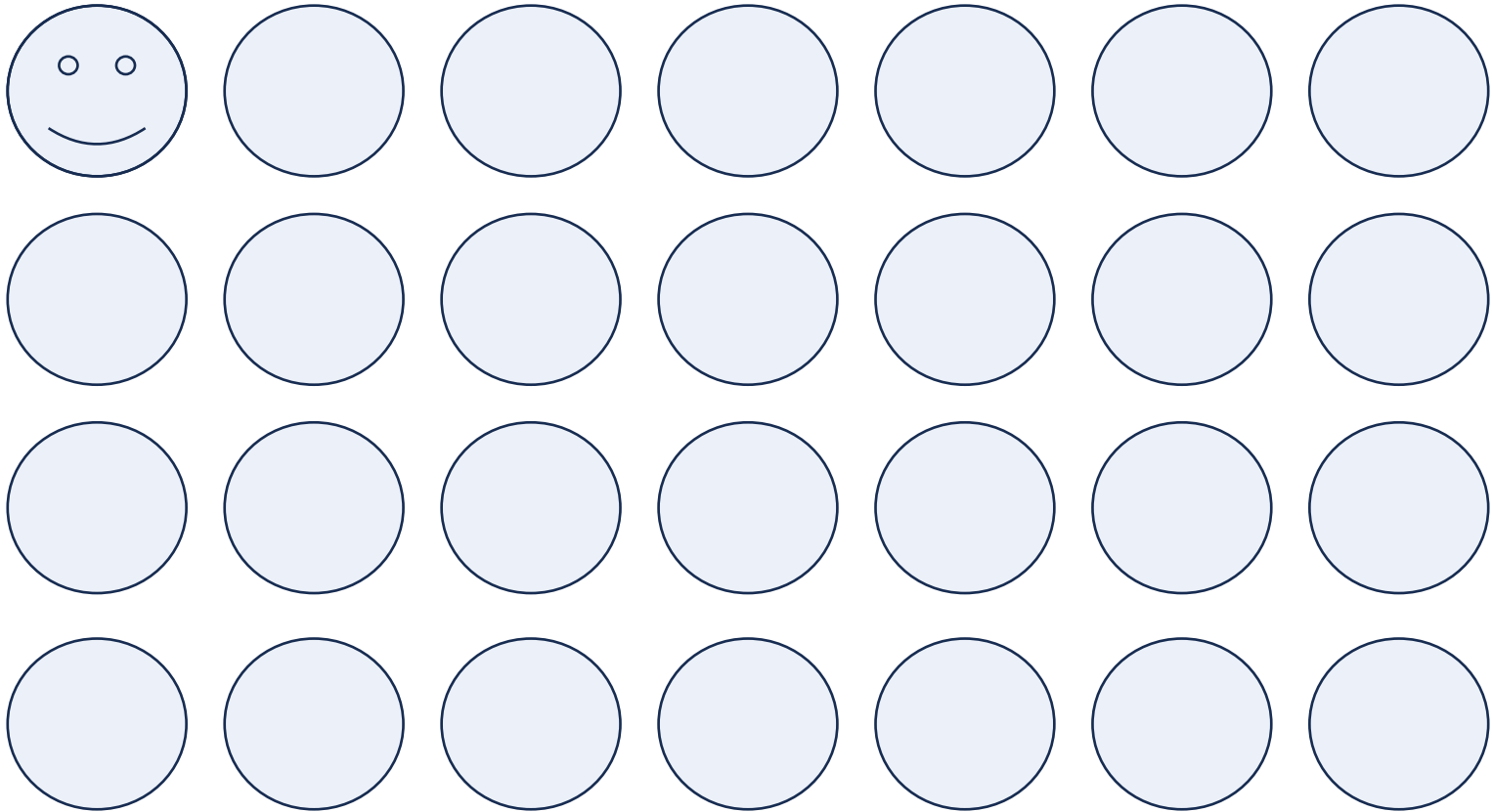


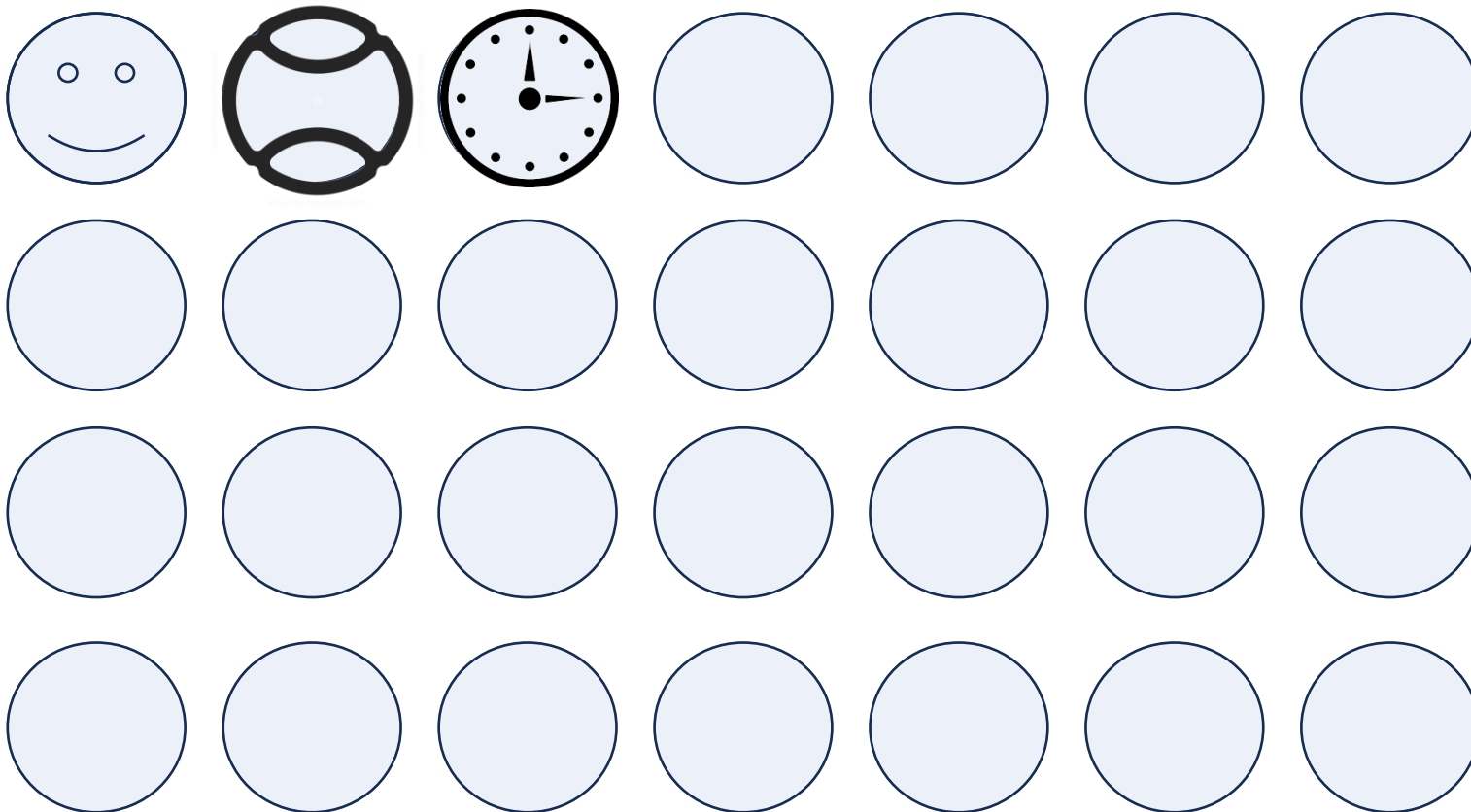
3



4

Alchemical Principle 1

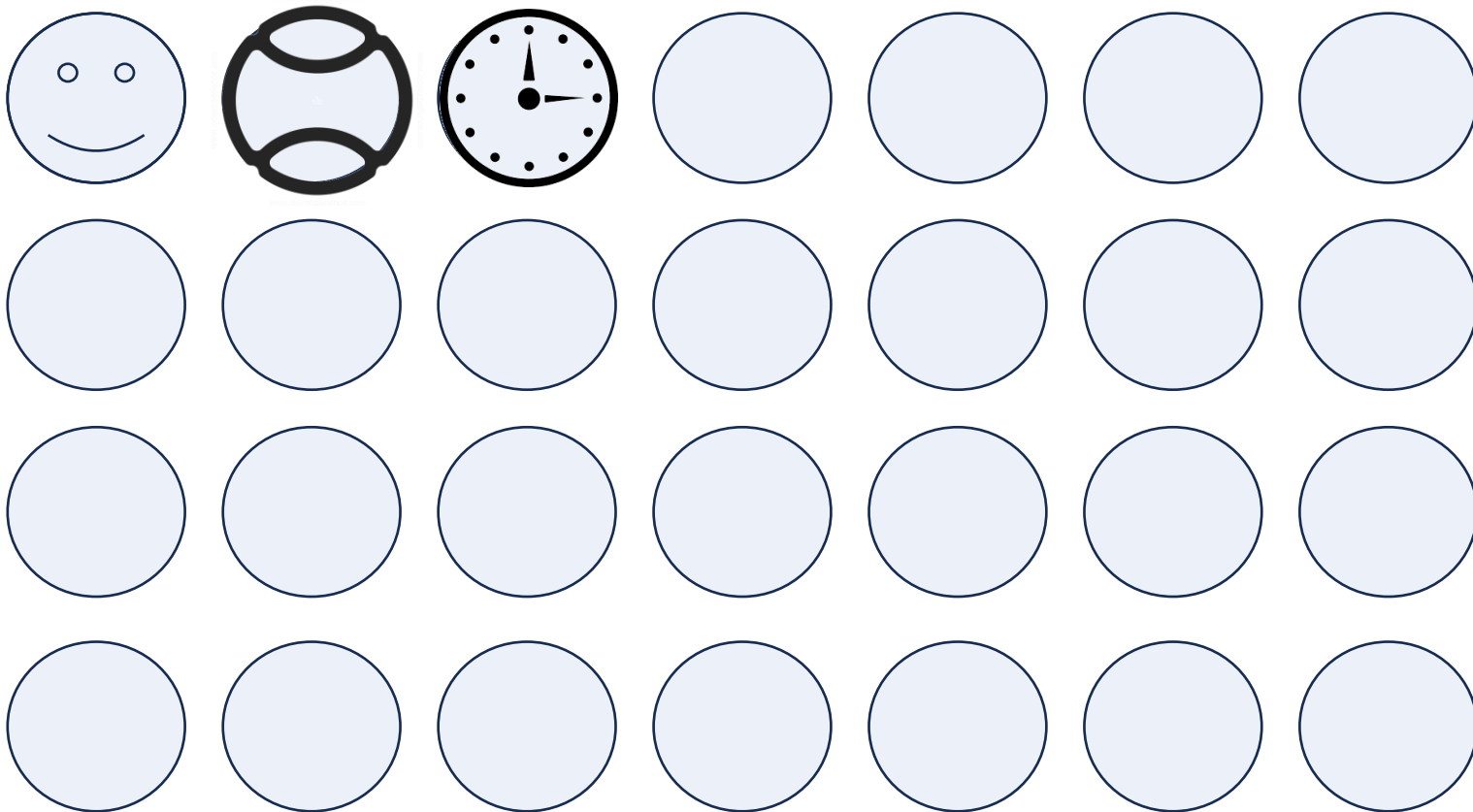


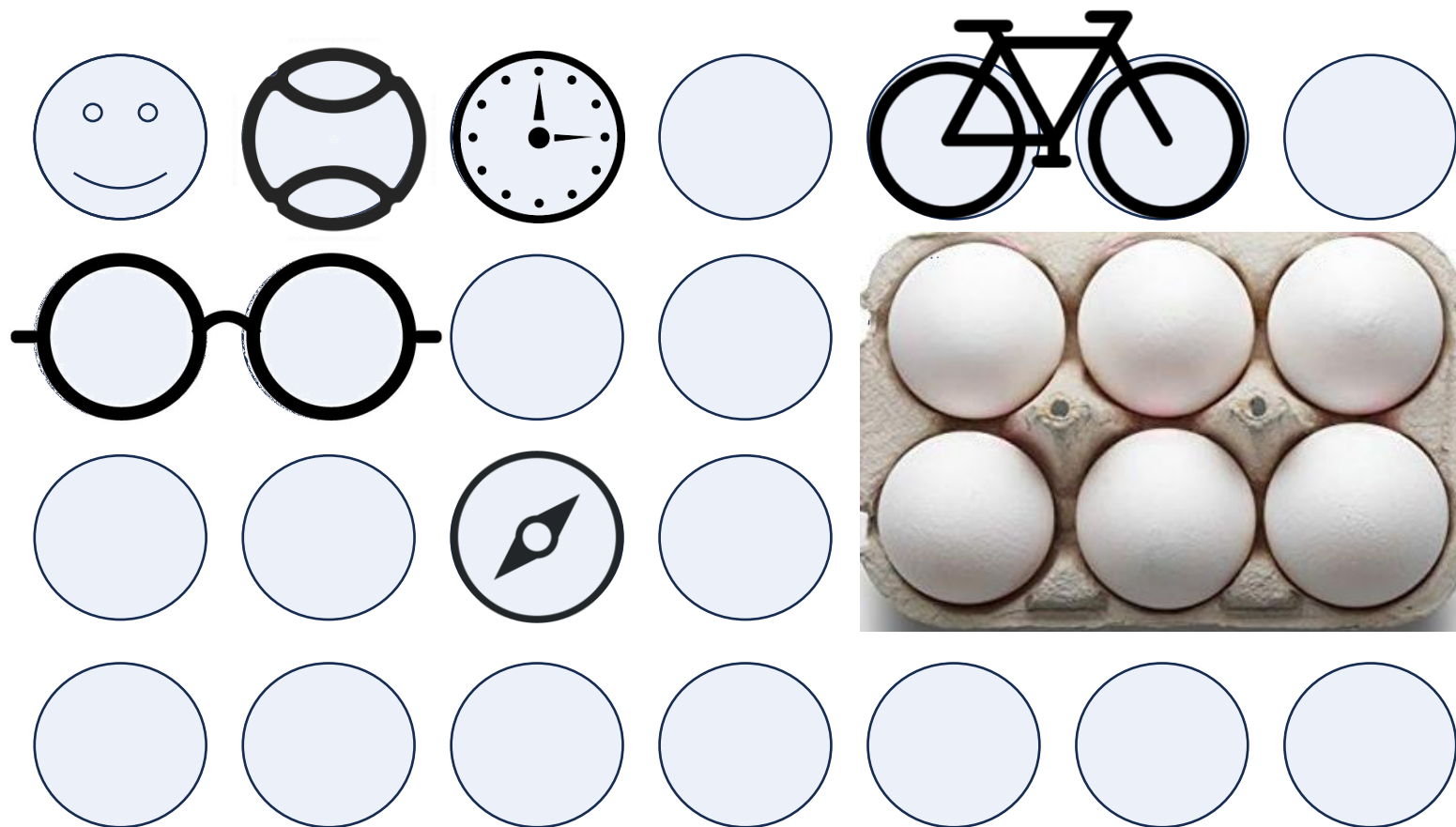


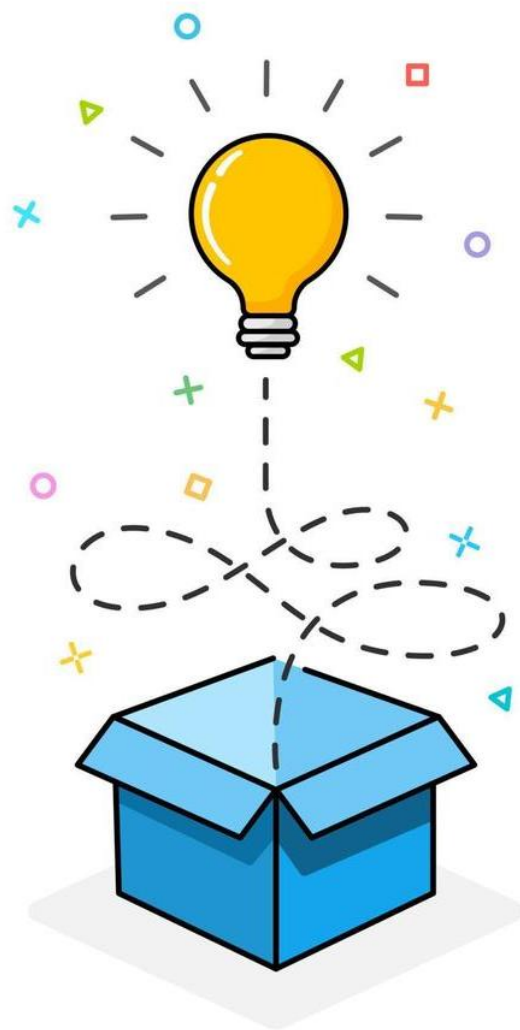
1:00

PL:Y

0 – 7? 7 – 14? 14 – 21? 21 – 28?

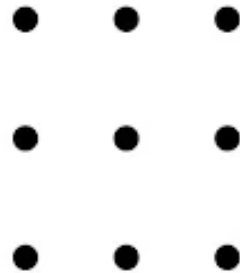






Thinking outside the box

9 dots puzzle



Psychologist J. P. Guilford

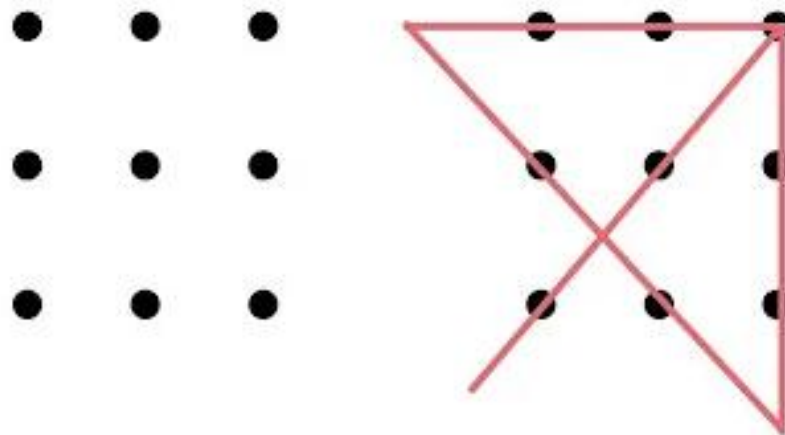
Study of creativity and divergent thinking

Challenged research subjects to connect all nine dots using just four straight lines without lifting their pencils from the page



Thinking outside the box

9 dots puzzle





John Cleese

English actor, comedian, screenwriter,
producer, and presenter

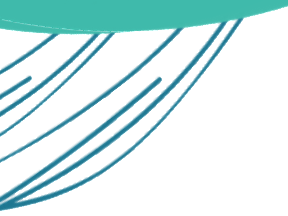
Alchemical Principle 1: Play is Your Philosopher's Stone



Philosopher's Stone

What it is: The legendary catalyst believed to transform base metals into gold and grant insight.

Metaphor: Play: the real catalyst that turns ordinary experience into transformative learning and opens a third space for experimentation and exploration.



“The opposite of play is not work; it’s depression.”

- Brian-Sutton Smith, Play Theorist

“We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.”

- George Bernard Shaw, Playwright

Play Memory in a Hat



The Eight Play Personalities

	The Joker Gets excited about humor, nonsense, and playful chaos.
	The Director Enjoys planning, organizing, and orchestrating experiences.
	The Competitor Thrives on challenge, strategy, and the thrill of winning.
	The Explorer Loves novelty, discovery, and new experiences.
	The <u>Kinesthete</u> Finds joy in movement and physical interaction.
	The Artist / Creator Enjoys making, building, designing, and inventing.
	The Collector Finds satisfaction in organizing, categorizing, and completing sets.
	The Storyteller Is energized by narrative, characters, and dramatic expression.

Your Play Personalities

In small groups:

Identify your dominant play personalities based on how you liked to play as a child / early adult.

The Alchemist's Workshop



Principle 1: Play is Your Philosopher's Stone and Catalyst

The Eight Play Personalities

	The Joker Gets excited about humor, nonsense, and playful chaos.
	The Director Enjoys planning, organizing, and orchestrating experiences.
	The Competitor Thrives on challenge, strategy, and the thrill of winning.
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	The Artist / Creator Enjoys making, building, designing, and inventing.
	The Collector Finds satisfaction in organizing, categorizing, and completing sets.
	The Storyteller Is energized by narrative, characters, and dramatic expression.



Brown, S., & Vaughan, C. (2009). *Play: How it shapes the brain, opens the imagination, and invigorates the soul*. Penguin.

Name of the Game

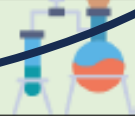
The Wind Blows



Category

Energizer • Transition • Connection • Psychological Safety • Scaffolding

A versatile game that can energize, connect, and gently open deeper layers of participation

Group Size	Time	Energy Level	Difficulty Level	Materials & Setup Demand
 8–30 participants	 ~10 minutes	 Medium → High	 Easy	 Low
Play Personalities Activated		Primary Play Forms Involved		
 Joker • Kinesthete • Storyteller		 Movement Play • Social Play • Narrative Play		
This game activates playful expression through humor, movement, and spontaneous micro-storytelling, while naturally strengthening social connection.		Movement and interaction drive the game, while spontaneous prompts introduce elements of improvisation and micro-storytelling.		
Materials Needed		Setup & Preparation		
				

Practical Tip 1.1: Start with Movement

If there is one practical insight from Dr. Brown's hierarchy of play, it is this:

Start with movement whenever possible.

Movement play is one of the most natural and universal forms of play. Almost everyone can participate in it easily.

Once participants are physically engaged, other forms of play become easier to activate.

This insight aligns with a famous principle from LEGO® Serious Play®:

"Move your hands, move your mind."

I believe this applies to movement in general.

When I move, I think differently. When groups move, conversations become more creative.

Body and mind are deeply interconnected.

So whenever possible, begin with motion.

It opens the door to imagination, storytelling, and creative thinking.



What are you doing exactly?



Play-Work

Name of the Game

Name and Signature Move

Category

Psychological Safety / Ice-Breaker • Activator

An embodied introduction that builds mirroring

Group Size

8-30 participants

Time

~10-15 minutes

Play Personalities Activated

Joker • Kinesthete

Participants draw through movement physically through exploring and showing up

Materials

• Simple line drawings (or part sketches)
• Blank paper
• Pens or markers

None

Name of the Game

Sketch My Back & I'll Sketch Yours

(Also known as Back-to-Back Drawing. But the Joker in me couldn't resist the word play!)

Category

Opening / Priming • Psychological Safety / Ice-Breaker

A structured communication and perception exercise distorted, and negotiated through language.

Group Size

8-30 participants

Time

~20-30 minutes

Energy Level

Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated

Director • Artist/Creator

Participants organize and guide information (Director) while translating abstract details into visual form (Artist/Creator).

Materials Needed

None

Name of the Game

Let's Line Up

Category

Activator / Energizer • Connection • Opening / Priming

A fast-paced, embodied activity that builds connection the group through playful coordination

Group Size

10-50 participants

Time

~10-15 minutes

Energy Level

Medium → High

Play Personalities Activated

Competitor • Director • Explorer

Participants collaborate and compete to organize themselves efficiently (Competitor) develop quick strategies and coordinate methods (Director), and discover new about each other (Explorer).

Materials Needed

None

Intention

This game is designed to:
• Build quick connections
• Lower social barriers

Name of the Game

Give Me 5 Things in Common

Category

Opening / Priming • Psychological Safety / Ice-Breaker

A simple yet powerful activity that builds connection gently invites participants into interaction

Group Size

10-100 participants

Time

~10-15 minutes

Energy Level

Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated

Explorer • Collector

Participants explore similarities with (Explorer) and gather shared traits and patterns between them (Collector).

Materials Needed

None

Intention

This game is designed to:
• Sharpen observation and attention to detail
• Wake up curiosity in a light and engaging way

Name of the Game

Spot the Difference

Category

Activator/Energizer • Connection

A simple, playful activity that sharpens attention, sparks curiosity, and builds light interaction

Group Size

Pairs (can scale to any group size)

Time

~10-15 minutes

Energy Level

Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated

Explorer • Joker • Kinesthete • Director

Participants engage curiosity and observation (Explorer), enjoy the playful trick element (Joker), interact physically through small embodied changes (Kinesthete), and make intentional choices about what to change (Director).

Materials Needed

None

Intention

Setup & Preparation

• Invite participants to pair up comfortably
• Ensure they have enough space to turn away

Primary Play Forms Involved

Social Play • Attunement Play • Imaginative Play

Participants interact in pairs (Social Play), tune into subtle differences in others (Attunement Play), and creatively manipulate appearance or expression (Imaginative Play).

Difficulty Level

Easy

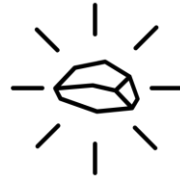
Materials & Setup Demand

Low

Check-out

- How are you feeling now?
- What is one thing you are taking with you from today?

PL.:Y



The Alchemist's Workshop

Advanced Interactive Workshop Design
for Experienced Facilitators

Workshop Series

(Day 2)

Dr. Mahmoud Natout



How are you arriving/feeling?

(1)



(2)



(3)



(4)



(5)



(6)

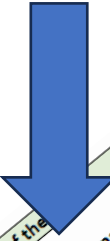
الحالة تعبانة يا ليلي خطبة ما فيش
وانتي غنيّة يا ليلي ونحننا دراويش
الحالة تعبانة يا ليلي خطبة ما فيش
وانتي غنيّة يا ليلي ونحننا دراويش
انتي ب وادي ونحننا ب وادي
كل لحظة تبعّدنا زيادة
أرض العنّا بلا سجادة
وانتي معوّدة تمشي عالريش

The Alchemist's Workshop



Principle 1: Play is Your Philosopher's Stone and Catalyst

Play-Work



Name of the Game

Let's Line Up 

Category

Activator / Energizer • Connection • Opening / Priming
A fast-paced, embodied activity that builds connection through playful coordination

Group Size	Time	Energy Level
10-50 participants	~10-15 minutes	Medium → High

Play Personalities Activated

Competitor • Director • Explorer

Participants collaborate and compete to organize themselves efficiently (Competitor), develop quick strategies and coordinate methods (Director), and discover new things about each other (Explorer).

Materials Needed

None

Name of the Game

Give Me 5 Things in Common

Category

Opening / Priming • Psychological Safety / Ice-Breaker
A simple yet powerful activity that builds connection and gently invites participants into interaction

Group Size	Time	Energy Level
10-100 participants	~10-15 minutes	Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated

Explorer • Collector

Participants explore similarities with others (Explorer) and gather shared traits and patterns between them (Collector).

Materials Needed

None

Intention

This game is designed to:
• Build quick connections
• Lower social barriers

Name of the Game

Spot the Difference 

Category

Activator/Energizer • Connection
A simple, playful activity that sharpens attention, sparks curiosity, and builds light interaction

Group Size	Time	Energy Level
Pairs (can scale to any group size)	~10-15 minutes	Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated

Explorer • Joker • Kinesthete • Director

Participants engage curiosity and observation (Explorer), enjoy the playful trick element (Joker), interact physically through small embodied changes (Kinesthete), and make intentional choices about what to change (Director).

Materials Needed

None

Intention

This game is designed to:
• Sharpen observation and attention to detail
• Wake up curiosity in a light and engaging way

Name of the Game

Sketch My Back & I'll Sketch Yours
(Also known as Back-to-Back Drawing. But the Joker in me couldn't resist the word play!)

Category

Opening / Priming • Psychological Safety / Ice-Breaker
A structured communication and perception exercise, distorted, and negotiated through language.

Group Size	Time	Energy Level
8-30 participants	~20-30 minutes	Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated

Director • Artist/Creator

Participants organize and guide information (Director) while translating abstract concepts into visual form (Artist/Creator).

Materials Needed

- Simple line drawings (or part sketches)
- Blank paper
- Pens or markers

Name of the Game

Name and Signature Move

Category

Psychological Safety / Ice-Breaker • Activator

An embodied introduction that builds connection through mirroring.

Group Size	Time
8-30 participants	~10-15 minutes

Play Personalities Activated

Joker • Kinesthete

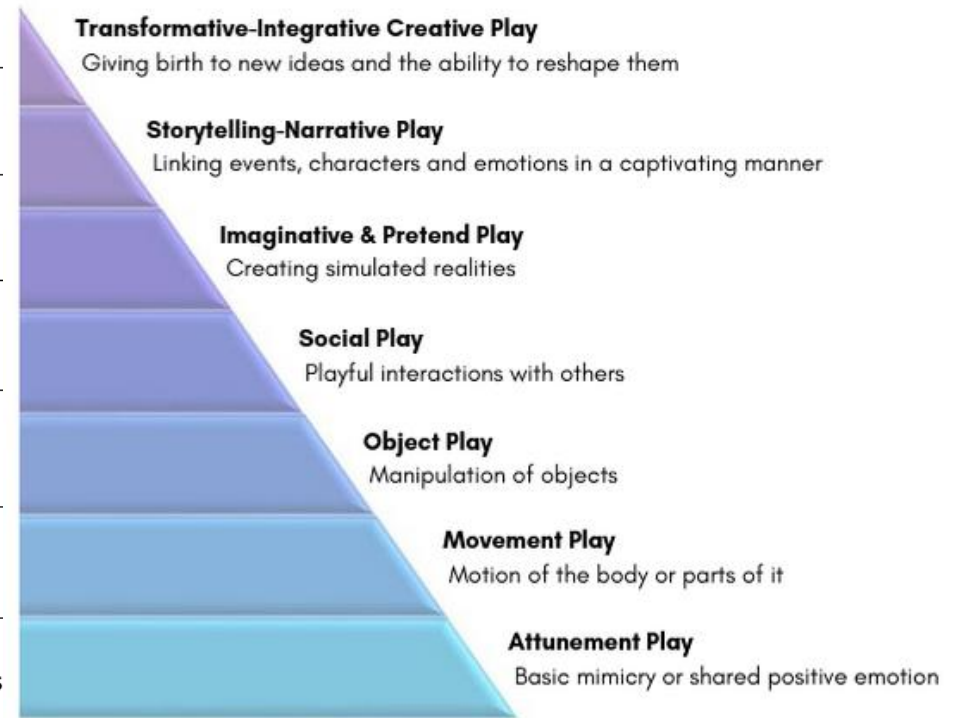
Participants draw through movement, physically through movement, and explore creative expression (Joker), and creatively manipulate appearance or expression (Kinesthete).

Materials Needed

None

The Eight Play Personalities

	The Joker Gets excited about humor, nonsense, and playful chaos.
	The Director Enjoys planning, organizing, and orchestrating experiences.
	The Competitor Thrives on challenge, strategy, and the thrill of winning.
	The Explorer Loves novelty, discovery, and new experiences.
	The <u>Kinesthete</u> Finds joy in movement and physical interaction.
	The Artist / Creator Enjoys making, building, designing, and inventing.
	The Collector Finds satisfaction in organizing, categorizing, and completing sets.
	The Storyteller Is energized by narrative, characters, and dramatic expression.



Name and Signature

Name of the Game				
Name and Signature Move				
Category				
Psychological Safety / Ice-Breaker • Activator/Energizer • Connection • Opening/Priming				
An embodied introduction that builds presence, voice, and recognition through movement and mirroring				
Group Size	Time	Energy Level	Difficulty Level	Materials & Setup Demand
 8–30 participants	 ~10–15 minutes	 Medium → High	 Easy	 Low
Play Personalities Activated		Primary Play Forms Involved		
 Joker • Kinesthete • Artist/Creator Participants dramatically express themselves through movement and voice (Joker), engage physically through gesture (Kinesthete), and explore creative ways of expression and showing up (Artist/Creator).		 Movement Play • Social Play • Attunement Play • Imaginative Play Participants embody expression through movement (Movement Play), connect as a group (Social Play), mirror and synchronize with others (Attunement Play), and creatively interpret identity through gesture (Imaginative Play).		
Materials Needed		Setup & Preparation		
				

Name and Signature

Debrief & Distillation



- What did you notice when the group mirrored you?
- How did it feel to be seen and echoed by everyone?
- What changed as the activity progressed?
- What helped you feel more comfortable participating?

Bridge to application:

- How does mirroring show up in communication at work or school?
- Where do we acknowledge, or fail to acknowledge, each other's voice?

Name and Signature

Transmutation Pathways



This game adapts easily to different contexts and themes.

1. Concept Embodiment Variation

Instead of names, participants express:

- A word or phrase from their work context
(Ex. “tight deadline,” “teamwork,” “policy,” “innovation”)

They embody it through voice and movement.

The group mirrors it.

This allows participants to:

- Bring abstract concepts into the body
- See how others interpret the same idea
- Surface shared (or different) experiences

2. Communication & Public Speaking

I use this activity to highlight:

- Finding your unique voice
- Expressing identity through presence
- How expression resonates with others

Name and Signature

The Grappler's Guidance



1. Your model sets the tone

If you model simplicity, participants will feel safe.

If you model boldness, they may stretch.

Start simple.

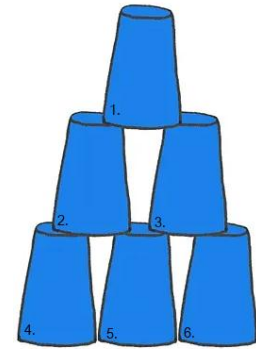
Let complexity emerge later.

Alchemical Principle 2

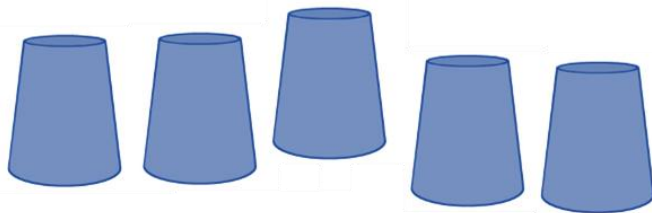


Let's Play Building a Pyramid

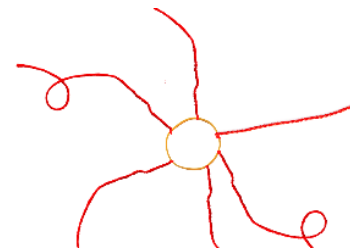
The Goal: build a pyramid out of the cups.



The Challenge: you must do this only using the tool and materials available to you. No direct hand contact with the cups is allowed.



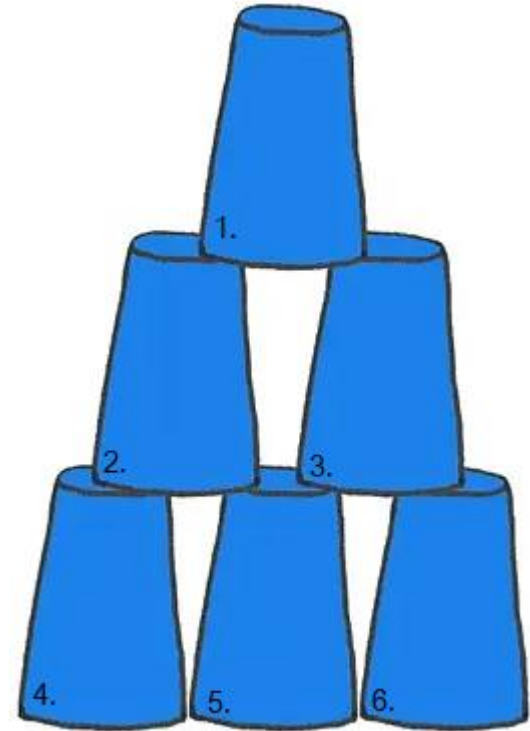
Your Materials



Your Tool

Let's Play Building a Pyramid

- Think of **6 things** you **prioritize** the most or give the most **attention** to when **designing a workshop**
- Number the cups from 1 to 6
- Write those things in order on the cups (priority 1 on cup 1, priority 2 on cup 2, etc.)

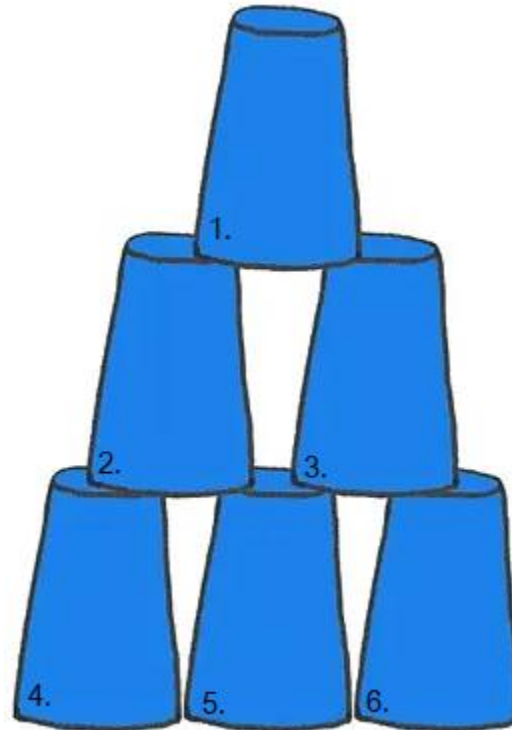


Building a Pyramid



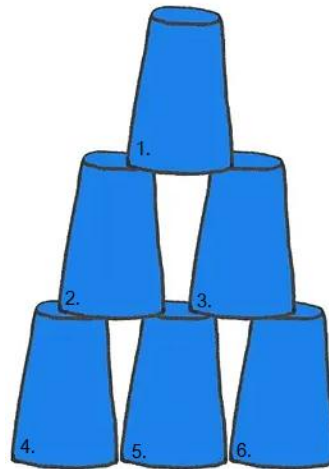
Building the Pyramid

01:00



Building the Pyramid

Present your pyramid



Name of the Game				
The Pyramid Builders				
Category				
Scaffolding/Catalyst • Connection A powerful group activity that structures thinking while surfacing collective wisdom and shared meaning				
Group Size	Time	Energy Level	Difficulty Level	Materials & Setup Demand
 8–48 participants (in groups of 3–6)	 ~30–45 minutes	 Medium	 Medium	 Medium
Play Personalities Activated		Primary Play Forms Involved		
 Director • Explorer • Kinesthete • Storyteller This game invites participants to organize and guide collective effort (Director), explore ideas and possibilities (Explorer), engage physically with the build (Kinesthete), and construct meaning through shared interpretation (Storyteller).		 Social Play • Object Play • Attunement Play Participants collaborate and interact closely (Social Play), manipulate physical objects to achieve a goal (Object Play), and coordinate timing and collective movement (Attunement Play).		
Materials Needed		Setup & Preparation		
 Per group: • 6 cardboard cups • Rubber band with strings attached (one string per participant. Preferably wool for strength) • Markers Tip: Use two rubber bands to ensure they don't snap during the game. Make extras for backup		 • Divide participants into small groups (3–6 per group) • Place materials on each table • Ensure enough space for each group to work comfortably • Optional but recommended: prepare a visual of a pyramid structure for reference (see below for more details)		

Alchemical Principle 2



Reverse the Equation
Start from Experience!

Alchemical Principle 2

Reverse the Equation: Start from Experience.

In alchemy there is an ancient idea known as **prima materia**, or *first matter*. It represents infinite potentiality, often symbolizing the initial, impure state that must undergo transformation.

In learning design, there is an equivalent.
That equivalent is experience.

Experience is the raw material from which learning emerges: movement, interaction, emotion, curiosity, fascination, immersion, confusion, discovery, surprise. All of these are forms of unrefined potential.



Paradigm shift

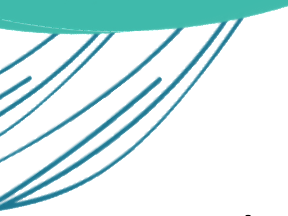
Instead of asking: What do I want them to **learn**?



We can ask: What do I want my participants to **experience**?

We start thinking about experiences such as:

- curiosity
- surprise
- Creativity
- Challenge
- joy
- immersion
- competence
- wonder
- delightful Aha! moments



Traditionally, workshop design follows a sequence like this:

Objectives → Methods → Activities

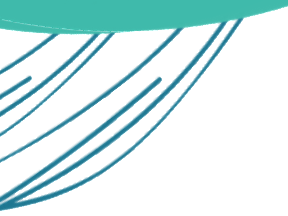
Experience is often treated as a byproduct. Something that happens along the way if we are lucky.

But the alchemist of learning works differently.

The sequence becomes:

Experience → Games & Activities → Methods → Outcomes

Experience comes first.

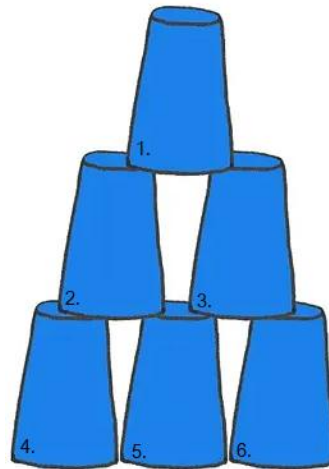


Once we identify the experiences we want to evoke, new design questions naturally follow:

- What forms of play could generate this experience?
- Which play personalities might be activated?
- What activities could immerse participants in this situation?

Building a Pyramid

Let's reflect on this experience





1. I extract the prima materia (your experience) through an activity
2. Harvest many experiences and ideas
3. Harness your experiences and ideas to connect to my main idea:

Alchemical Principle 2

Reverse the Equation: Start from Experience.

Debrief & Distillation



- Why did you choose these ideas?
- How did you decide on the order of importance?
- How did you work together as a group?
- What strategies did you use to make sure everyone was involved in contributing to the task?
- What challenges did you face, both in discussion and in building?
- What patterns or insights are emerging across groups?
- What surprised you?

Allow space for open reflection. This is where deeper insights often emerge.



The Grappler's Guidance

1. Start or end with the story of the three bricklayers

I sometimes start (or debrief with) this story:

Three bricklayers are asked what they're doing.

One says, "I'm laying bricks."

Another says, "I'm building a wall."

The third says, "I'm building a pyramid."



Same task, different perspectives:

- **The First Bricklayer (Task-oriented):** Focused only on the immediate task: laying bricks. This reflects a "job" mindset, often with lower engagement or motivation.
- **The Second Bricklayer (Goal-oriented):** Sees the intermediate goal (building a wall) often to make a living or feed a family. This reflects an "occupation" mindset.
- **The Third Bricklayer (Purpose-oriented):** Focuses on the larger vision: building a pyramid. He sees the "calling" in his work, connecting his daily actions to a greater, long-term purpose.

Transmutation Pathways



This is a highly versatile scaffold that can be adapted across contexts.

You can prompt participants to prioritize ideas based on the theme of your training.

Ex. Organizational Development

- Values alignment
- Culture building
- Strategic priorities

Ex. Team Development

- Communication norms
- Trust-building conditions
- Team agreements

Ex. Personal Development

- Core beliefs
- Habits
- Decision-making criteria

Example of how I applied Principle 2



Reverse the Equation
Start from Experience



ما الذي أريد أن أفعله في المرحلة القادمة من حياتي والذي
من شأنه أن:

1. يجعلني أشعر بالحيوية والنشاط
2. يمنحني شعورا بالتجدد
3. يعزز طاقتي
4. يعلق احساسي بالوقت

اللعب هو جزء من كل مرحلة من مراحل حياتنا



قراءة الكف



أدواتنا

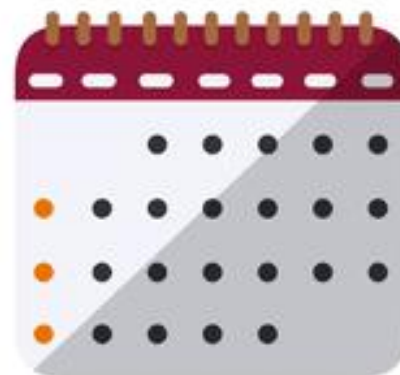


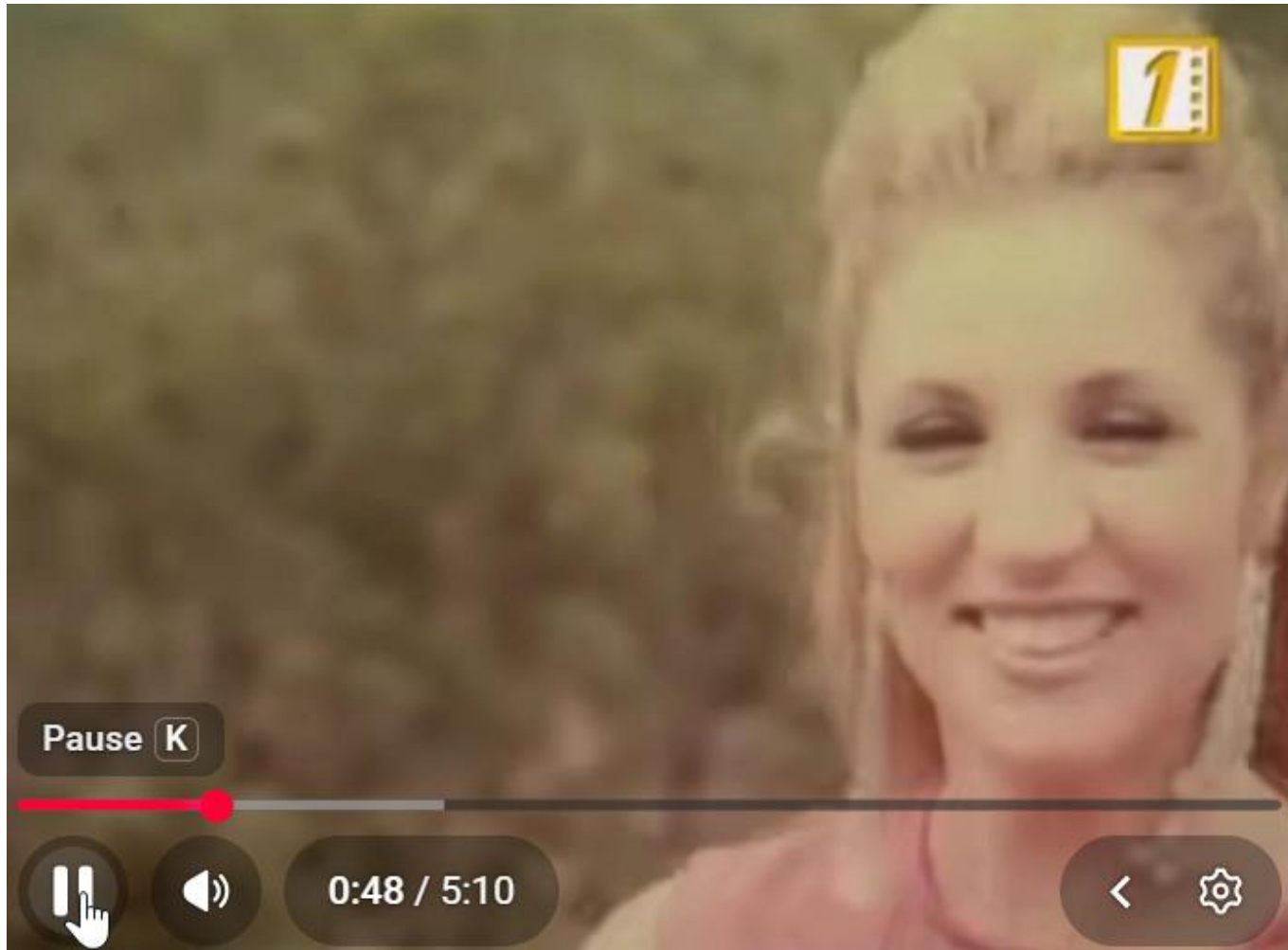
مراحل حياتنا



مراحل حياتنا









صباح - عالبساطة البساطة 1967



شارك لعبة كنت تحبها قبل سن الثانية عشرة. ماذا منحتك تلك اللعبة؟ (حرية، مهارة، انتماء، فضول)



1. ما النشاط أو اللعبة أو الهواية التي كنت تحب القيام بها في هذا المرحلة من حياتك؟

2. وكيف كان يجعلك هذا النشاط تشعر؟

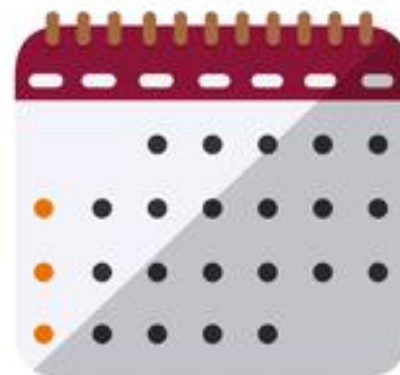
أمثلة: الطفولة – الإصبع الصغير (الخنصر)

ركوب الدراجة – شعور بالمغامرة
الرسم والأشغال اليدوية – الخيال



مراحل حياتنا

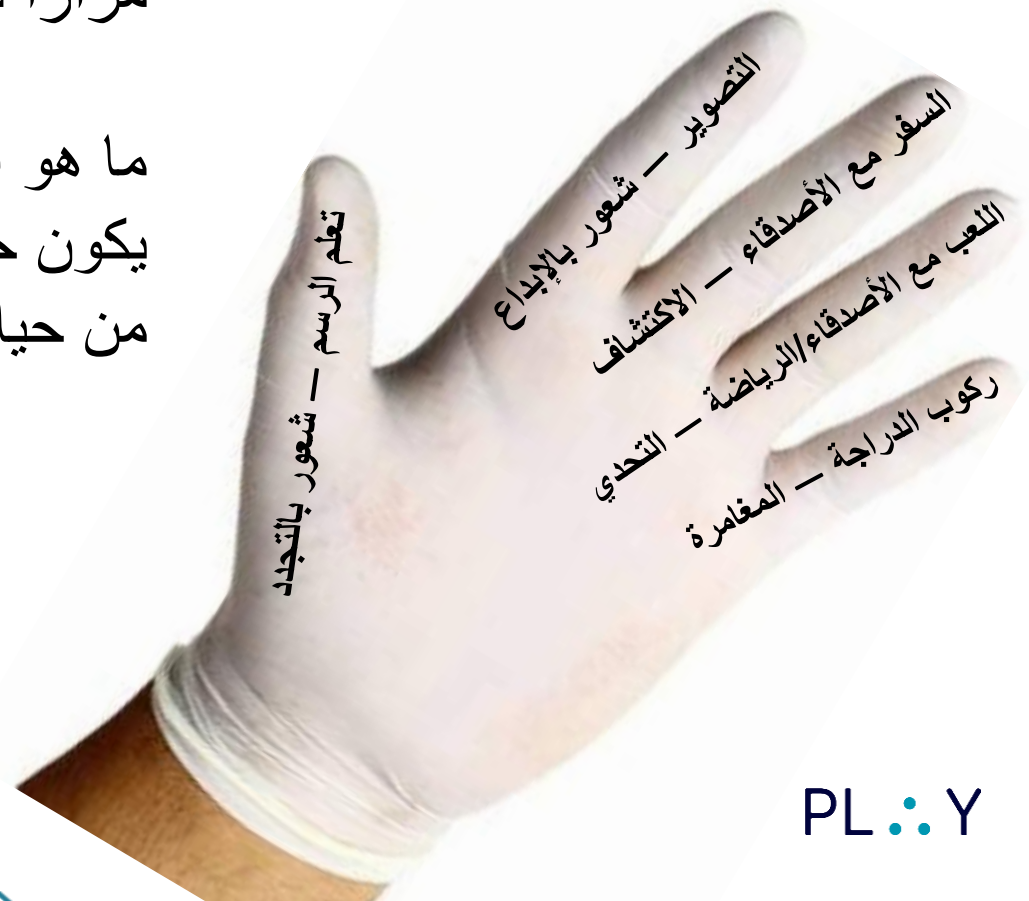




ارتدي قفازك

ما هو الشعور الذي يتكرر ظهوره
مرارًا في حياتك؟

ما هو الشعور الذي ترغب في أن
يكون حاضرًا أكثر في الفصل القادم
من حياتك؟





The Joker

Gets excited about nonsense & humor



The Director

Gets excited about planning & executing



The Competitor

Gets excited about winning



The Explorer

Gets excited about new experiences



The Kinesthete

Gets excited about movement



The Artist/Creator

Gets excited about making things

شخصيات اللعب



The Collector

Gets excited about organizing chaos



The Storyteller

Gets excited about characters & narratives

Let's Reflect



The Alchemist's Workshop



Principle 1: Play is Your Philosopher's Stone and Catalyst

Principle 2: Reverse the Equation: Start from Experience

Play-Work

Name of the Game

Let's Line Up

Category

Activator / Energizer • Connection • Opening / Priming
A fast-paced, embodied activity that builds connection in the group through playful coordination

Group Size	Time	Energy Level
10-50 participants	~10-15 minutes	Medium → High

Play Personalities Activated

Competitor • Director • Explorer

Participants collaborate and compete to organize themselves efficiently (Competitor), develop quick strategies and coordinate methods (Director), and discover new things about each other (Explorer).

Materials Needed

None

Intention

This game is designed to:

- Build quick connections
- Lower social barriers

Name of the Game

Give Me 5 Things in Common

Category

Opening / Priming • Psychological Safety / Ice-Breaker
A simple yet powerful activity that builds connection and gently invites participants into interaction

Group Size	Time	Energy Level
10-100 participants	~10-15 minutes	Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated

Explorer • Collector

Participants explore similarities with others (Explorer) and gather shared traits and patterns between them (Collector).

Materials Needed

None

Intention

This game is designed to:

- Sharpen observation and attention to detail
- Wake up curiosity in a light and engaging way

Name of the Game

Sketch My Back & I'll Sketch Yours

(Also known as Back-to-Back Drawing. But the Joker in me couldn't resist the word play!)

Category

Opening / Priming • Psychological Safety / Ice-Breaker
A structured communication and perception exercise that is fun, distorted, and negotiated through language.

Group Size	Time	Energy Level
8-30 participants	~20-30 minutes	Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated

Director • Artist/Creator

Participants organize and guide information (Director) while translating abstract concepts into visual form (Artist/Creator).

Materials Needed

- Simple line drawings (or part sketches)
- Blank paper
- Pens or markers

Intention

This game is designed to:

- Build quick connections
- Lower social barriers

Name of the Game

Spot the Difference

Category

Activator/Energizer • Connection
A simple, playful activity that sharpens attention, sparks curiosity, and builds light interaction

Group Size	Time	Energy Level
Pairs (can scale to any group size)	~10-15 minutes	Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated

Explorer • Joker • Kinesthete • Director

Participants engage curiosity and observation (Explorer), enjoy the playful trick element (Joker), interact physically through small embodied changes (Kinesthete), and make intentional choices about what to change (Director).

Materials Needed

None

Intention

This game is designed to:

- Sharpen observation and attention to detail
- Wake up curiosity in a light and engaging way

Difficulty Level

Easy

Materials & Setup Demand

Low

Primary Play Forms Involved

Social Play • Attunement Play • Imaginative Play

Participants interact in pairs (Social Play), tune into subtle differences in others (Attunement Play), and creatively manipulate appearance or expression (Imaginative Play).

Setup & Preparation

- Invite participants to pair up
- Ensure they have enough space to turn away

Let's Line Up

- Line up from January to December based on your birth month.
- Number of siblings (least to most)
- Cups of coffee/tea per day
- Number of countries traveled to
- Number of languages spoken
- Distance from home to venue

How can you connect this to your topic of interest?

Let's Line Up

- Line up from January to December based on your birth month.
- Number of siblings (least to most)
- Cups of coffee/tea per day
- Number of countries traveled to
- Number of languages spoken
- Distance from home to venue
- **Prime a theme:** Ex. Work-Life Balance
“On a scale from 0–10, how would you rate your work-life balance?
Take a few seconds to rate yourself silently. When I say go, line up according to the numbers you have.”

Alchemical Principle 3

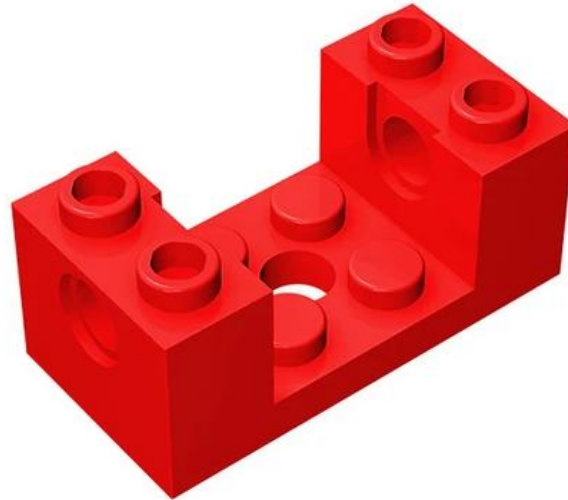
Get Excited About Games, then Transmute Them



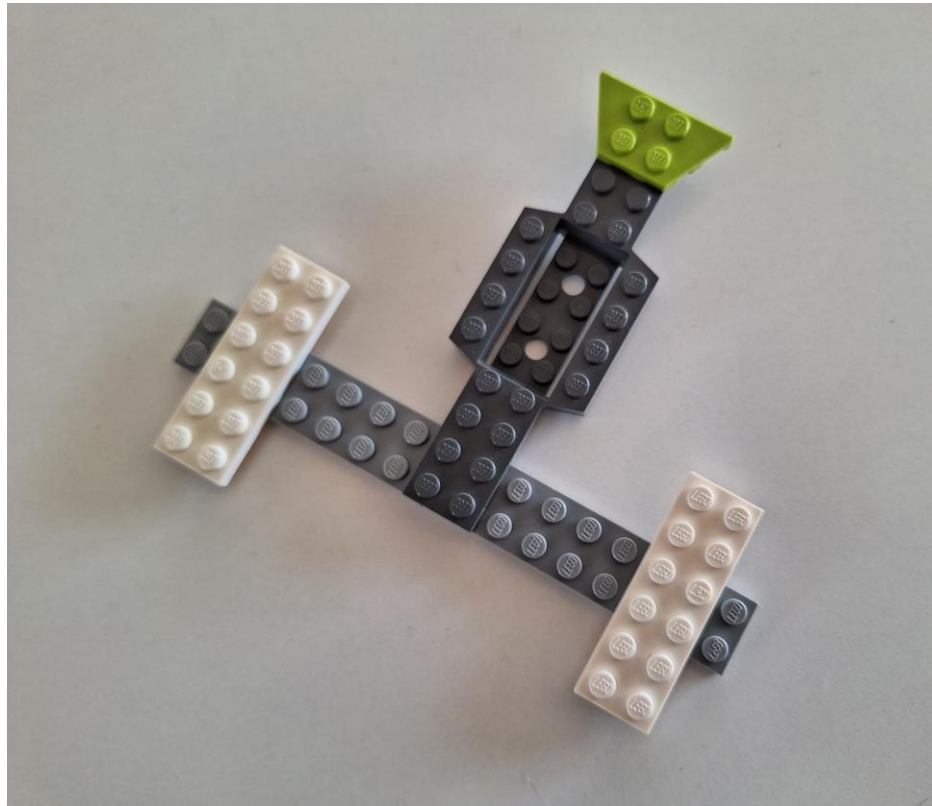
Get excited about games and transmute them to fit your objectives!

Games are like LEGO

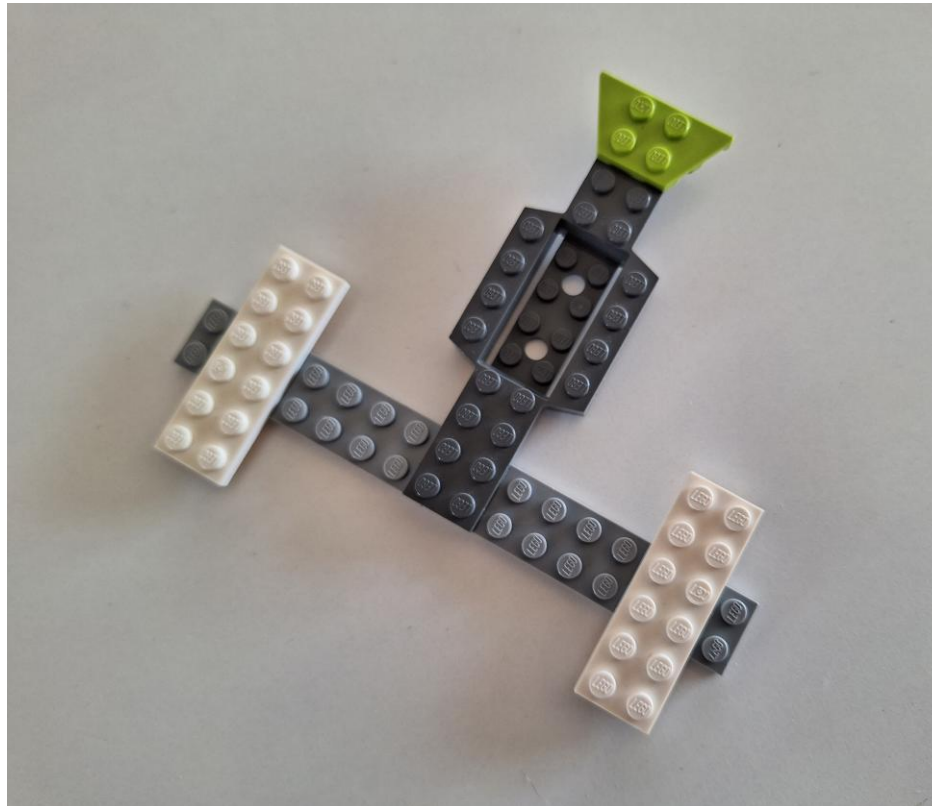
You can shape them in any way you wish
to fit your purpose



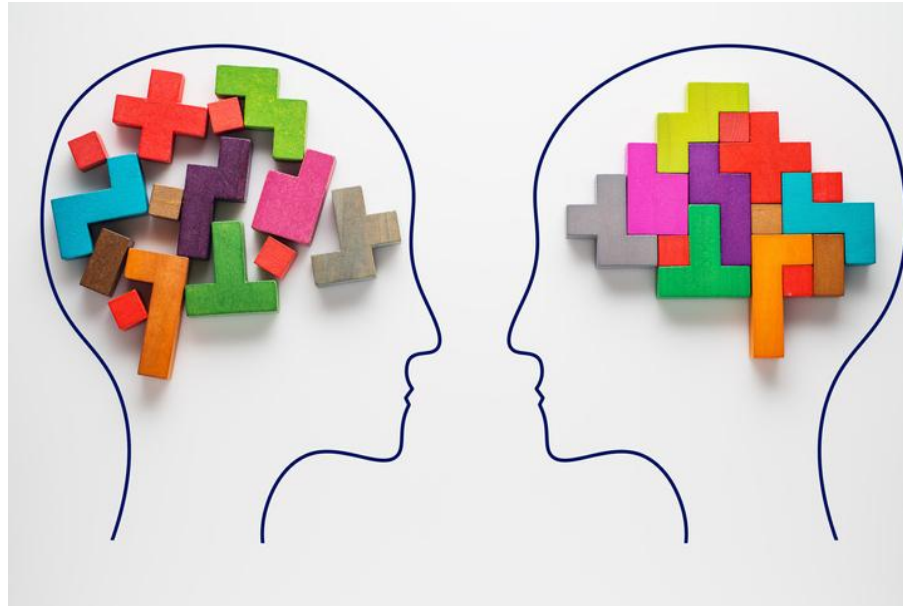
What do you see?



The power of symbolism



LEGO serious play



Move your hands, move your mind

Homunculus

Natural History Museum, London



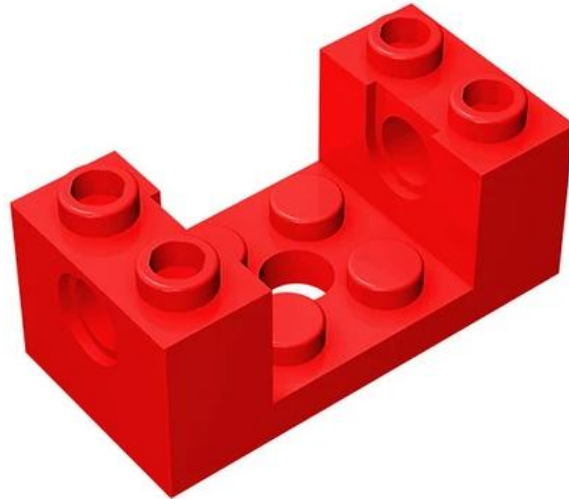
Indicates the amount of cortical area dedicated to motor or somatosensory functions of each body part

Principles of the LEGO serious play approach

- 1. Hands-On Engagement:** LEGO Serious Play encourages participants to use physical LEGO bricks to build and express their thoughts, ideas, and solutions.
- 2. Equal Participation:** Everyone in a LEGO Serious Play session is given an equal opportunity to contribute, since communication is done through building rather than just talking.
- 3. Metaphorical Thinking:** Participants are encouraged to think metaphorically by representing abstract concepts and complex ideas through their LEGO creations.

Nit3arraf 3a Lego

Introduce yourself through a basic LEGO model

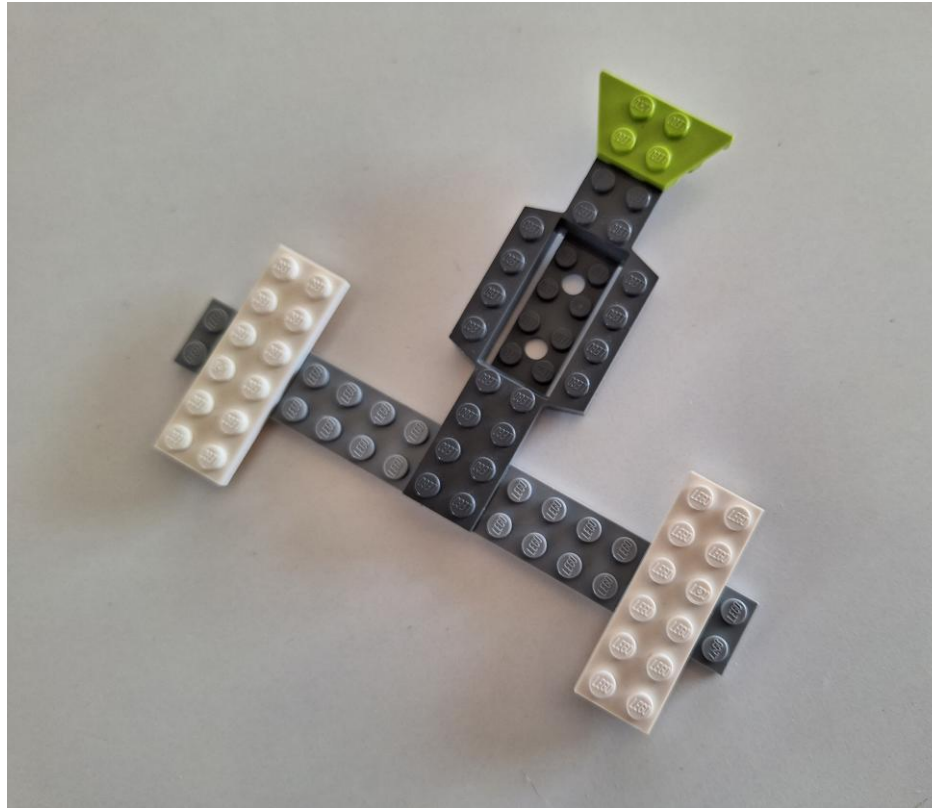


Reminder:

Don't forget the
power of symbolism
and metaphor

Suggestion: highlighting
1 value and 1 strength

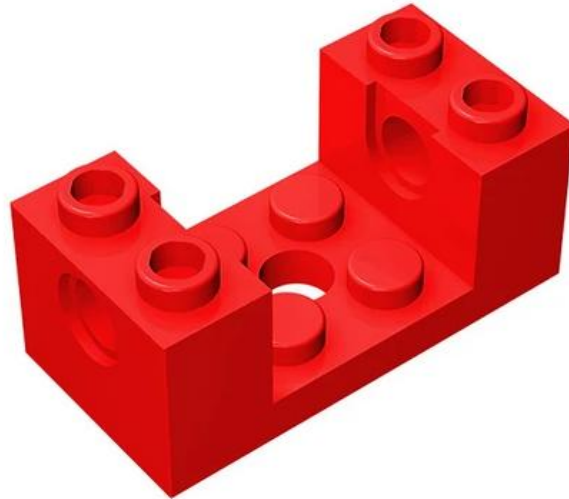
Mahmoud's



Suggestion: highlighting
1 value and 1 strength

Nit3arraf 3a Lego

Introduce yourself through a basic LEGO model



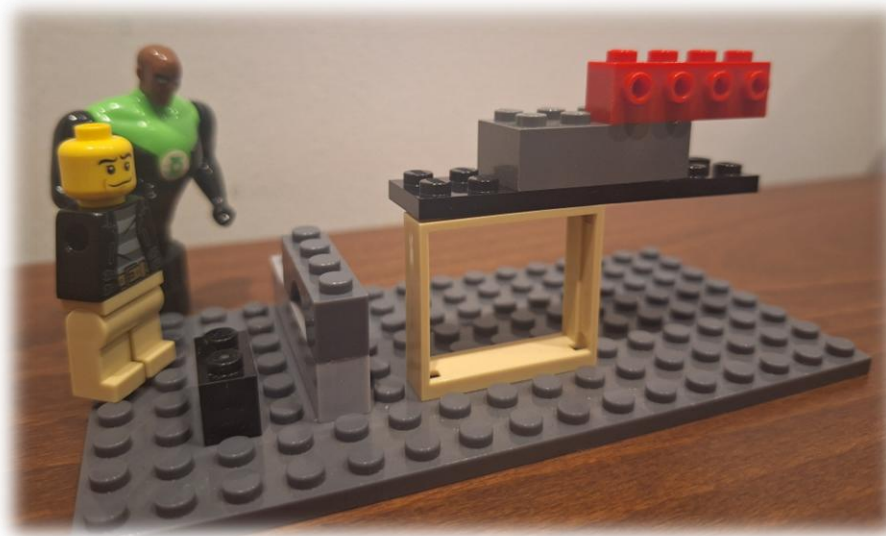
Reminder:

Don't forget the
power of symbolism
and metaphor

Suggestion: highlighting
1 value and 1 strength

Using LEGO, build (together) ...

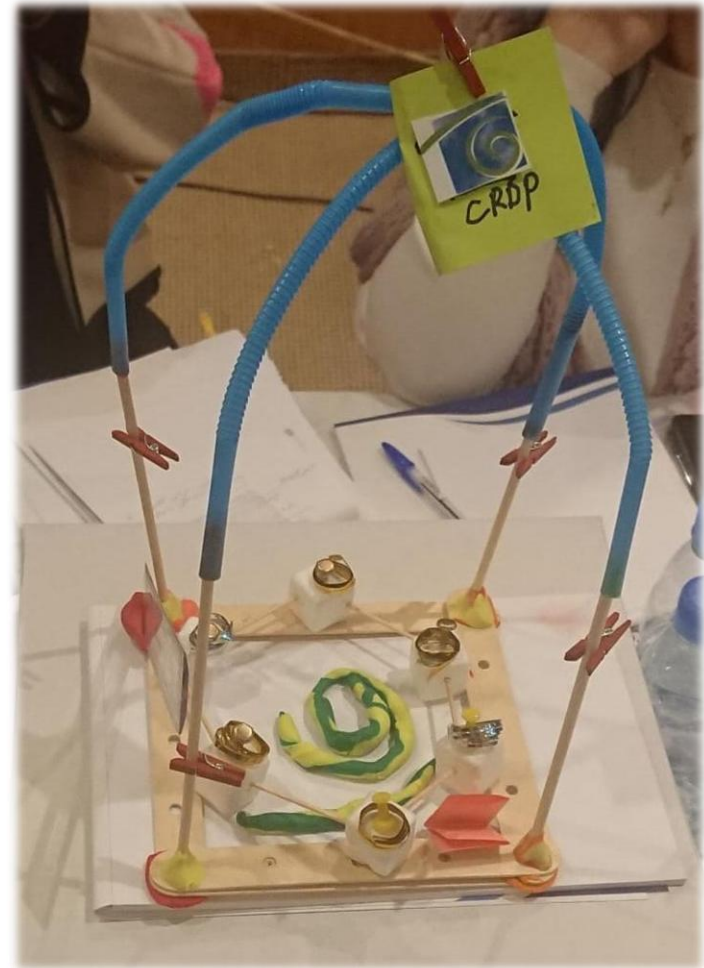
1. Your organization's strategy for 2026
2. What your life could look like if you ...
3. Your vision for dentistry as a profession in 5 years
4. Your school's climate after rolling out this policy



Lebanese Society of Pediatric Dentists



Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD)



Let's Reflect



Alchemical Principle 3

Get Excited About Games, then Transmute Them



Get excited about games and transmute them to fit your objectives!

The Alchemist's Workshop



Principle 1: Play is Your Philosopher's Stone and Catalyst

Principle 2: Reverse the Equation: Start from Experience

Principle 3: Get Excited About Games, then Transmute Them

Play-Work

Name of the Game

Name and Signature Move

Category

Psychological Safety / Ice-Breaker • Activator

An embodied introduction that builds mirroring

Group Size

8-30 participants

Time

~10-15 minutes

Play Personalities Activated

Joker • Kinesthete

Participants draw through movement physically through exploring and showing up

Materials

• Simple line drawings (or part sketches)
• Blank paper
• Pens or markers

None

Name of the Game

Sketch My Back & I'll Sketch Yours

(Also known as Back-to-Back Drawing. But the Joker in me couldn't resist the word play!)

Category

Opening / Priming • Psychological Safety / Ice-Breaker

A structured communication and perception exercise distorted, and negotiated through language.

Group Size

8-30 participants

Time

~20-30 minutes

Energy Level

Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated

Director • Artist/Creator

Participants organize and guide information (Director) while translating abstract details into visual form (Artist/Creator).

Materials Needed

None

Name of the Game

Let's Line Up

Category

Activator / Energizer • Connection • Opening / Priming

A fast-paced, embodied activity that builds connection the group through playful coordination

Group Size

10-50 participants

Time

~10-15 minutes

Energy Level

Medium → High

Play Personalities Activated

Competitor • Director • Explorer

Participants collaborate and compete to organize themselves efficiently (Competitor) develop quick strategies and coordinate methods (Director), and discover new about each other (Explorer).

Materials Needed

None

Intention

This game is designed to:
• Build quick connections
• Lower social barriers

Name of the Game

Give Me 5 Things in Common

Category

Opening / Priming • Psychological Safety / Ice-Breaker

A simple yet powerful activity that builds connection gently invites participants into interaction

Group Size

10-100 participants

Time

~10-15 minutes

Energy Level

Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated

Explorer • Collector

Participants explore similarities with (Explorer) and gather shared traits and patterns between them (Collector).

Materials Needed

None

Intention

This game is designed to:
• Sharpen observation and attention to detail
• Wake up curiosity in a light and engaging way

Name of the Game

Spot the Difference

Category

Activator/Energizer • Connection

A simple, playful activity that sharpens attention, sparks curiosity, and builds light interaction

Group Size

Pairs (can scale to any group size)

Time

~10-15 minutes

Energy Level

Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated

Explorer • Joker • Kinesthete • Director

Participants engage curiosity and observation (Explorer), enjoy the playful trick element (Joker), interact physically through small embodied changes (Kinesthete), and make intentional choices about what to change (Director).

Materials Needed

None

Intention

Setup & Preparation

• Invite participants to pair up comfortably
• Ensure they have enough space to turn away

Difficulty Level

Easy

Materials & Setup Demand

Low

Primary Play Forms Involved

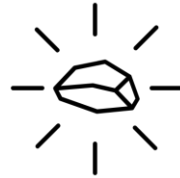
Social Play • Attunement Play • Imaginative Play

Participants interact in pairs (Social Play), tune into subtle differences in others (Attunement Play), and creatively manipulate appearance or expression (Imaginative Play).

Check-out

- How are you feeling now?
- What is one thing you are taking with you from today?

PL.:Y



The Alchemist's Workshop

Advanced Interactive Workshop Design
for Experienced Facilitators

Workshop Series

(Day 3)

Dr. Mahmoud Natout



Check-in



The Alchemist's Workshop



Principle 1: Play is Your Philosopher's Stone and Catalyst

Principle 2: Reverse the Equation: Start from Experience

Principle 3: Get Excited About Games, then Transmute Them

Play-Work

Name of the Game

Name and Signature Move

Category

Psychological Safety / Ice-Breaker • Activator

An embodied introduction that builds mirroring

Group Size

8-30 participants

Time

~10-15 minutes

Energy Level

Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated

Director • Artist/Creator

Participants organize and guide information (Director) while translating abstract details into visual form (Artist/Creator).

Materials Needed

- Simple line drawings (or part sketches)
- Blank paper
- Pens or markers

Play Personalities Activated

Joker • Kinesthete

Participants draw through movement, physically through movement, and creatively through showing up.

Materials

- None

Name of the Game

Let's Line Up

Category

Activator / Energizer • Connection • Opening / Priming

A fast-paced, embodied activity that builds connection the group through playful coordination

Group Size

10-50 participants

Time

~10-15 minutes

Energy Level

Medium → High

Play Personalities Activated

Competitor • Director • Explorer

Participants collaborate and compete to organize themselves efficiently (Competitor) develop quick strategies and coordinate methods (Director), and discover new about each other (Explorer).

Materials Needed

None

Intention

- This game is designed to:
- Build quick connections
- Lower social barriers

Name of the Game

Give Me 5 Things in Common

Category

Opening / Priming • Psychological Safety / Ice-Breaker

A simple yet powerful activity that builds connection gently invites participants into interaction

Group Size

10-100 participants

Time

~10-15 minutes

Energy Level

Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated

Explorer • Collector

Participants explore similarities with (Explorer) and gather shared traits and patterns between them (Collector).

Materials Needed

None

Intention

- This game is designed to:
- Sharpen observation and attention to detail
- Wake up curiosity in a light and engaging way

Name of the Game

Spot the Difference

Category

Activator/Energizer • Connection

A simple, playful activity that sharpens attention, sparks curiosity, and builds light interaction

Group Size

Pairs (can scale to any group size)

Time

~10-15 minutes

Energy Level

Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated

Explorer • Joker • Kinesthete • Director

Participants engage curiosity and observation (Explorer), enjoy the playful trick element (Joker), interact physically through small embodied changes (Kinesthete), and make intentional choices about what to change (Director).

Materials Needed

- None

Intention

- This game is designed to:
- Invite participants to pair up
- Ensure they have enough space to turn away comfortably

Difficulty Level

Easy

Materials & Setup Demand

Low

Primary Play Forms Involved

Social Play • Attunement Play • Imaginative Play

Participants interact in pairs (Social Play), tune into subtle differences in others (Attunement Play), and creatively manipulate appearance or expression (Imaginative Play).

Setup & Preparation

- Invite participants to pair up
- Ensure they have enough space to turn away comfortably

Give Me 5 Things in Common



Category

Opening / Priming • Psychological Safety / Ice-Breaker • Connection

A simple yet powerful activity that builds connection, surfaces shared human experiences, and gently invites participants into interaction

Group Size 	Time 	Energy Level 	Difficulty Level 	Materials & Setup Demand 
10–100 participants	~10–15 minutes	Low → Medium	Easy	Low
Play Personalities Activated 		Primary Play Forms Involved 		
Explorer • Collector Participants explore similarities with curiosity (Explorer) and gather shared traits, experiences, and patterns between them (Collector).		Social Play • Attunement Play Participants engage in direct interaction (Social Play) while tuning into each other's verbal and non-verbal cues to discover common ground (Attunement Play).		

Transmutation Pathways



This game can easily be adapted to serve different themes:

- **Communication Skills** → verbal vs non-verbal communication
- **Empathy & Listening** → tuning into others' experiences
- **Diversity & Inclusion** → finding commonalities within difference
- **Team Cohesion** → building relational bridges
- **Creativity & Curiosity** → asking better questions
- **Psychological Safety** → lowering barriers to participation

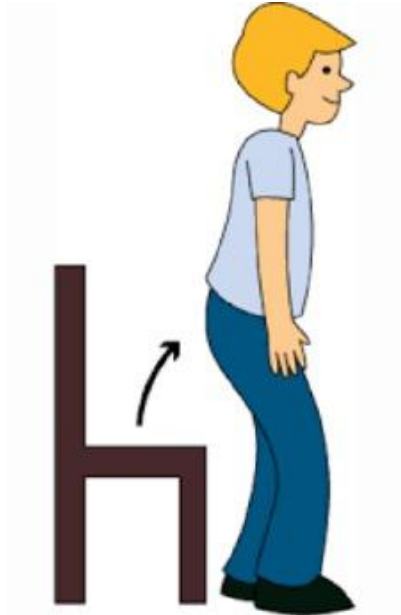
You can also:

- Increase group size (groups larger than 4) to raise complexity
- Add constraints (ex., no obvious answers, themed rounds)
- Introduce storytelling (“find 3 shared experiences”)

Alchemical Principle 4



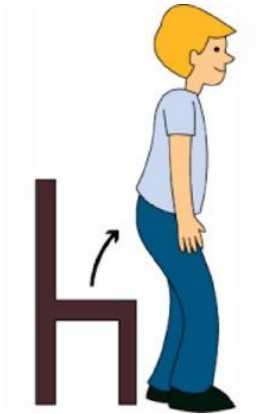
This or That

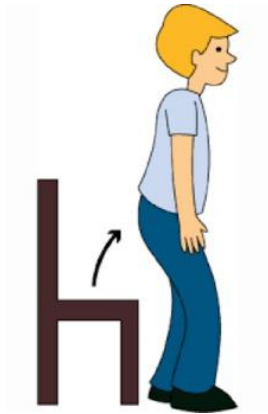


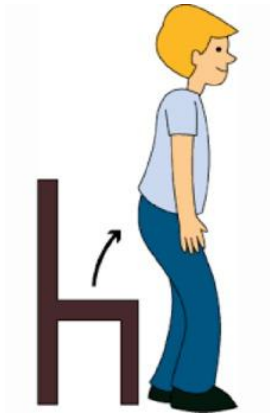
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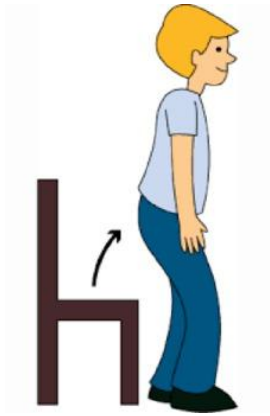


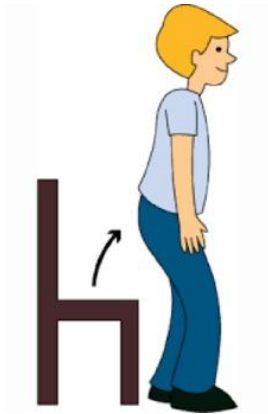
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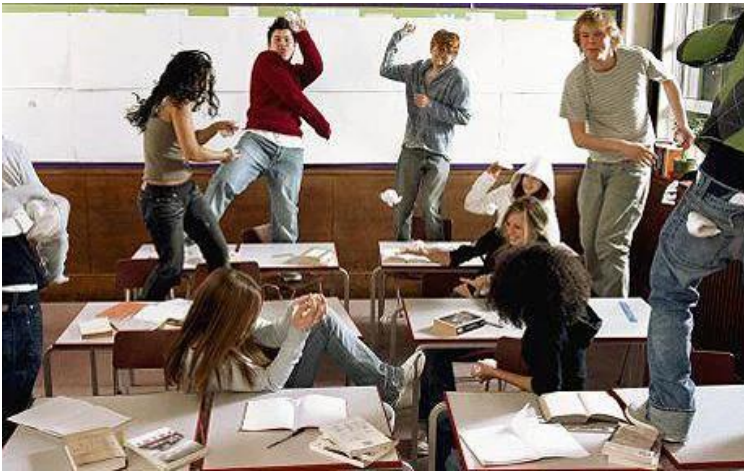
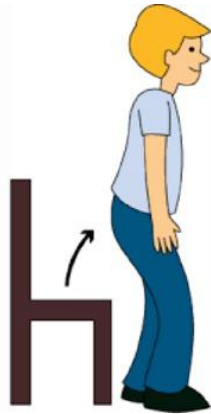












Kids these days!

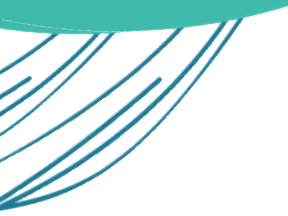
This generation is more challenging than any other generation.

Kids are kids!

This generation is basically like any other generation.

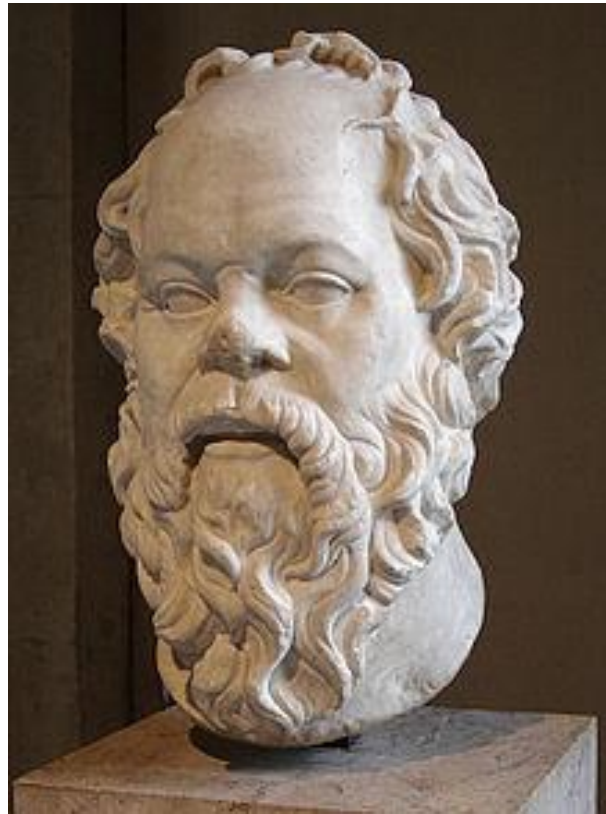


A school in Beirut

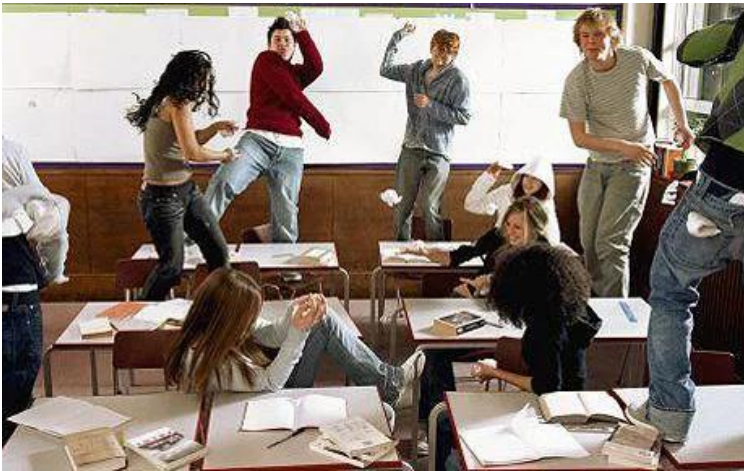
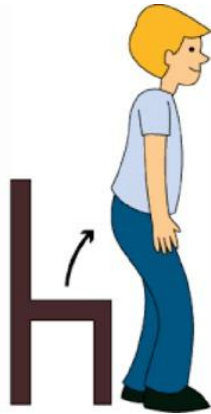


“The children now love luxury. They have bad manners, contempt for authority, they show disrespect to their elders ...

They no longer rise when elders enter the room ... they contradict their parents ... and are tyrants over their teachers”



Socrates 5th Century BC



Kids these days!

This generation is more challenging than any other generation.

Kids are kids!

This generation is essentially like any other generation.

Your children are not your children.

They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.

[...]

You may house their bodies but not their souls,

For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow, which you cannot visit,
not even in your dreams.

[...]

For life goes not backward nor tarries with yesterday.

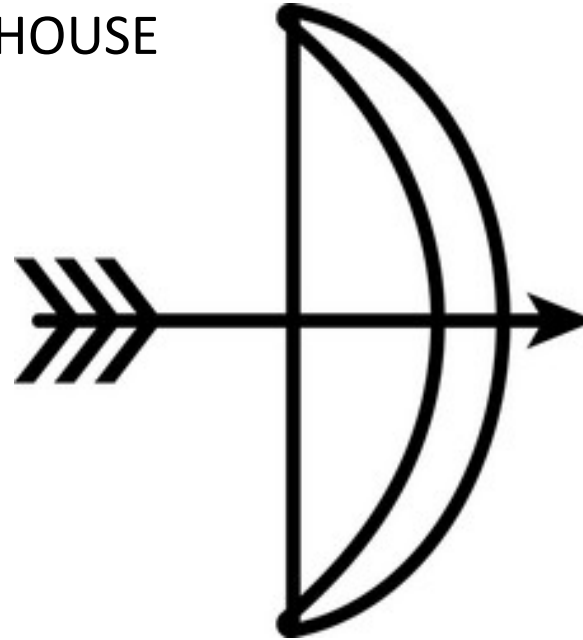
You are the bows from which your children as living arrows are sent
forth.

The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite, and He bends you
with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.

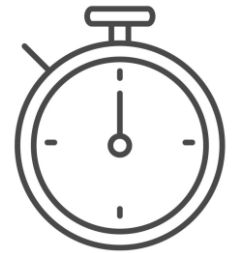


Let's Play

1. Draw an emblem for your HOUSE
2. Create a bow and arrow
3. Shoot the farthest arrow

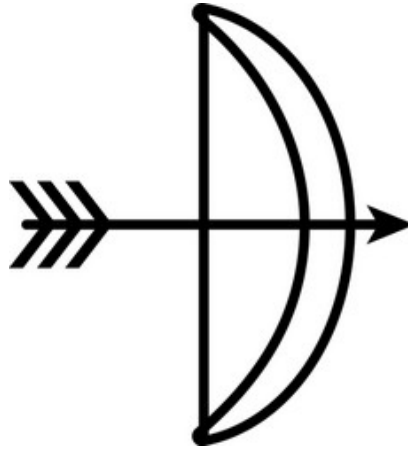


5 min.





Share your stories



1. When were you the bow for someone else?
2. When was someone else your bow?

Alchemical Principle 4

Group Is Guru: Extract the Wisdom Embedded in the Crowd.



Your group of participants are the greatest resource you have!

The power of having people extract from one another experiences, inspirational stories, new perspectives, skills, wisdom, knowledge.

Education = Educe!

Extract ... Don't Just Deliver!

Let's Reflect



1. What forms of play/games did I use?
(movement, social, object, narrative, creative, etc.)
2. How did I use them to **scaffold** learning, reflection, and connection?



Brown, S., & Vaughan, C. (2009). *Play: How it shapes the brain, opens the imagination, and invigorates the soul*. Penguin.

The Grappler's Tip



When sharing in groups, have participants share other's stories or findings (not their own), if the process allows.

Four (or more) benefits:

1. Saves time
2. Enhances listening
3. Boosts empathy and recognition
4. Diffuses power dynamics

The Grappler's Cautionary Story



Make sure your games are inclusive: give options.

Dawaer – UNDP Media Campaign Launch, Beirut Digital District

The Alchemist's Workshop



Principle 1: Play is Your Philosopher's Stone and Catalyst

Principle 2: Reverse the Equation: Start from Experience

Principle 3: Get Excited About Games, then Transmute Them

Principle 4: Group Is Guru: Extract the Wisdom Embedded in the Crowd

Play-Work

Name of the Game

Name and Signature Move

Category
Psychological Safety / Ice-Breaker • Activator

Group Size
8-30 participants

Time
~10-15 minutes

Energy Level
Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated
Director • Artist/Creator

Materials Needed
• Simple line drawings (or part sketches)
• Blank paper
• Pens or markers

Intention
This game is designed to:
• Build quick connections
• Lower social barriers

Name of the Game

Let's Line Up

Category
Activator / Energizer • Connection • Opening / Priming

Group Size
10-50 participants

Time
~10-15 minutes

Energy Level
Medium → High

Play Personalities Activated
Competitor • Director • Explorer

Materials Needed
None

Intention
This game is designed to:
• Sharpen observation and attention to detail
• Wake up curiosity in a light and engaging way

Name of the Game

Give Me 5 Things in Common

Category
Opening / Priming • Psychological Safety / Ice-Breaker

Group Size
10-100 participants

Time
~10-15 minutes

Energy Level
Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated
Explorer • Collector

Materials Needed
None

Intention
This game is designed to:
• Sharpen observation and attention to detail
• Wake up curiosity in a light and engaging way

Name of the Game

Spot the Difference

Category
Activator/Energizer • Connection

Group Size
Pairs (can scale to any group size)

Time
~10-15 minutes

Energy Level
Low → Medium

Play Personalities Activated
Explorer • Joker • Kinesthete • Director

Materials Needed
None

Intention
This game is designed to:
• Sharpen observation and attention to detail
• Wake up curiosity in a light and engaging way

Name of the Game

Spot the Difference



Category

Activator/Energizer • Connection

A simple, playful activity that sharpens attention, sparks curiosity, and builds light interaction

Group Size 	Time 	Energy Level 	Difficulty Level 	Materials & Setup Demand 
Pairs (can scale to any group size)	~10–15 minutes	Low → Medium	Easy	Low
Play Personalities Activated 	Primary Play Forms Involved 			
Explorer • Joker • Kinesthete • Director Participants engage curiosity and observation (Explorer), enjoy the playful trick element (Joker), interact physically through small embodied changes (Kinesthete), and make intentional choices about what to change (Director).		Social Play • Attunement Play • Imaginative Play Participants interact in pairs (Social Play), tune into subtle differences in others (Attunement Play), and creatively manipulate appearance or expression (Imaginative Play).		

Debrief & Distillation



- What was easiest to notice? What was hardest?
- What helped you spot the differences?
- What did you miss, and why?

Bridge to application (choose your direction based on your topic):

1. Noticing Change vs. Missing Growth

- How often do we overlook small improvements in others?
- Do we only notice big, visible changes?

2. Recognizing Consistency

- Do we take consistent performance for granted?
- How often do we acknowledge what is steadily working well?

3. Leadership & Feedback

- What do you tend to notice more: mistakes or progress?
- What impact does that have on people?

4. Bias & Perception

- What influences what we notice?
- How might bias shape our attention?

Alchemical Principle 5

Find Your Meta: craft meta-themes and meta-narratives to structure learning journeys that feel coherent, meaningful, and memorable.



Workshop on





The Emperor's New Clothes

A folktale written by Danish author Hans Christian Andersen



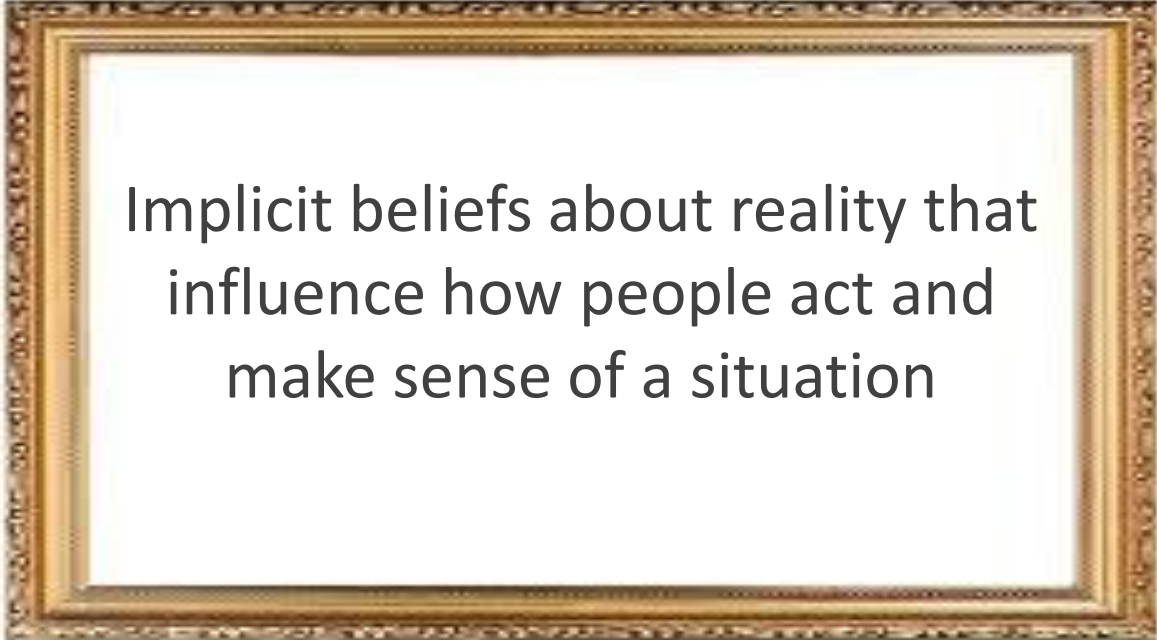
Why did everyone refrain from speaking up?

The Emperor's New Clothes

The clothes can only be
seen by clever people



Frames

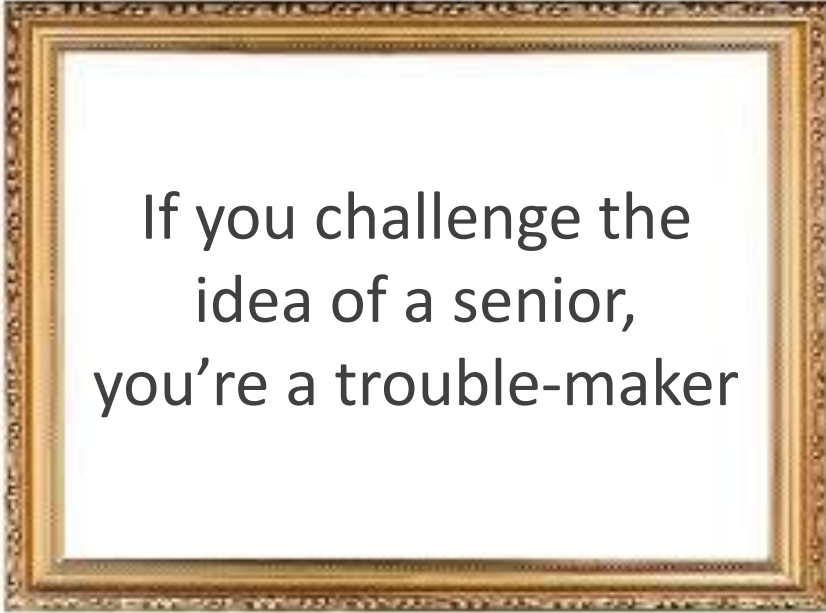


Implicit beliefs about reality that
influence how people act and
make sense of a situation

Examples

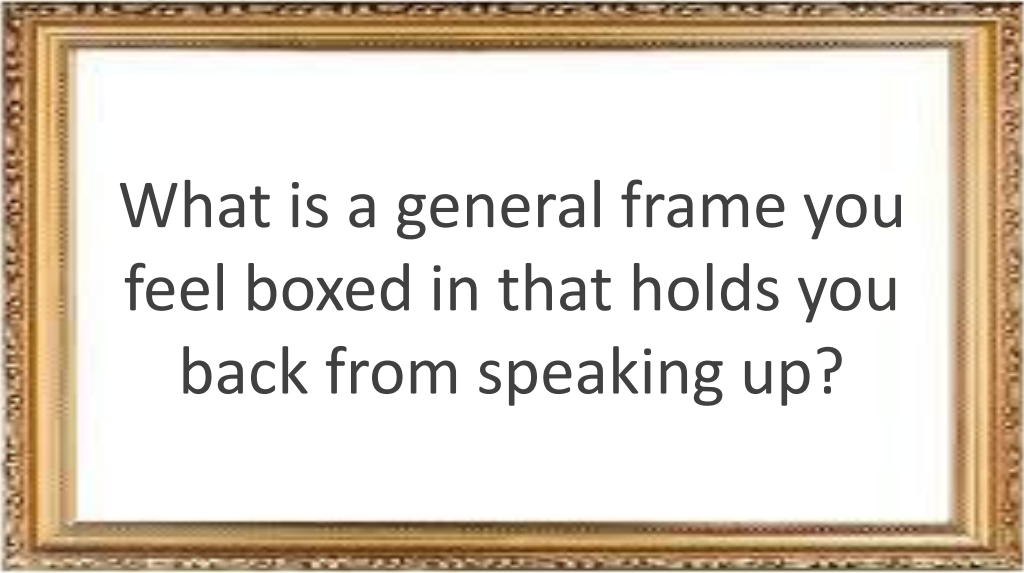


If you don't give an
opinion on every
single issue,
you're incompetent



If you challenge the
idea of a senior,
you're a trouble-maker

Framing



What is a general frame you feel boxed in that holds you back from speaking up?

Group Activity

Let's Reflect



Alchemical Principle 5

Find Your Meta: craft meta-themes and meta-narratives to structure learning journeys that feel coherent, meaningful, and memorable.



Alchemical Principle 5

In groups of 2/3: use the available children's books or objects in the library to explore a theme, narrative, story, art, fairy tale, etc. that could work as a meta-theme for a future workshop.



The Alchemist's Workshop



Principle 1: Play is Your Philosopher's Stone and Catalyst

Principle 2: Reverse the Equation: Start from Experience

Principle 3: Get Excited About Games, then Transmute Them

Principle 4: Group Is Guru: Extract the Wisdom Embedded in the Crowd

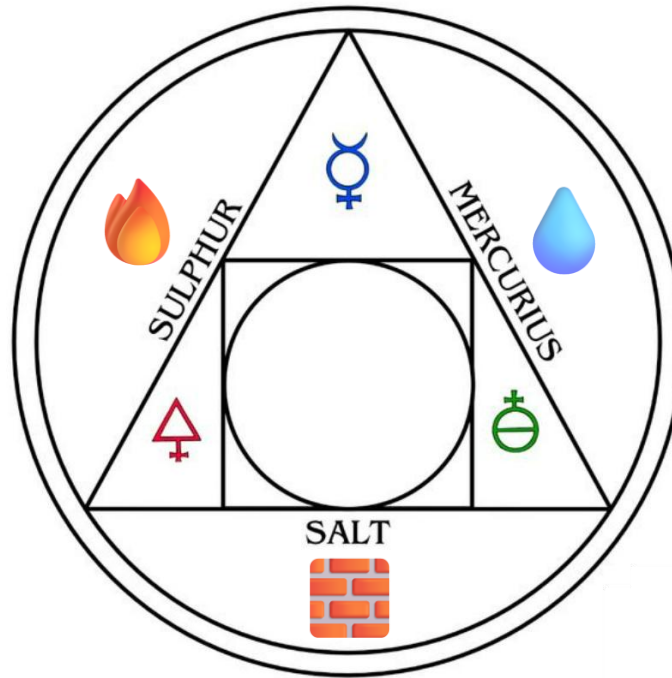
Principle 5: Find Your Meta

The Ostrich Dance

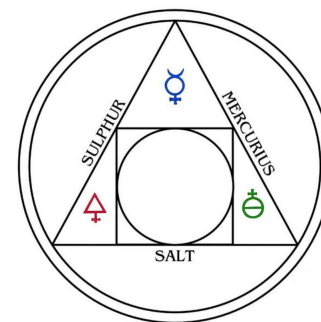


Alchemical Principle 6

The Tria Prima



Alchemical Principle 6



Balance the Tria Prima (Spark, Flow, Form):

 **1. Sulfur — Energy, Passion, Spark:** Curiosity, engagement, challenge, surprise, and playfulness (gives it spark)

 **2. Mercury — Flow, Movement, Flexibility:** The transitions, fluidity, and responsiveness - activities that change state: thinking → moving → doing → reflecting → creating (gives it flow)

 **3. Salt — Structure, Form, Scaffolding:** Scaffolds that help participants connect ideas and build understanding (gives it form)

Tria Prima

Trainers, like alchemists, learn to balance all three:

Too much Salt → boring.

Too much Sulfur → chaotic.

Too little Mercury → formless.

The art is in the balance.



Remember:

- Have a golden thread run through your whole process.
- Make play part of the process and the process part of play.

Example of how I apply Principle 6



Climbing the Beanstalk

Turning Failure into Fuel

With **Dr. Mahmoud Natout**
Play-Based Learning Specialist
Consultant, Coach, Trainer
Lecturer in Psychology and Education

The Alchemist's Workshop



Principle 1: Play is Your Philosopher's Stone and Catalyst

Principle 2: Reverse the Equation: Start from Experience

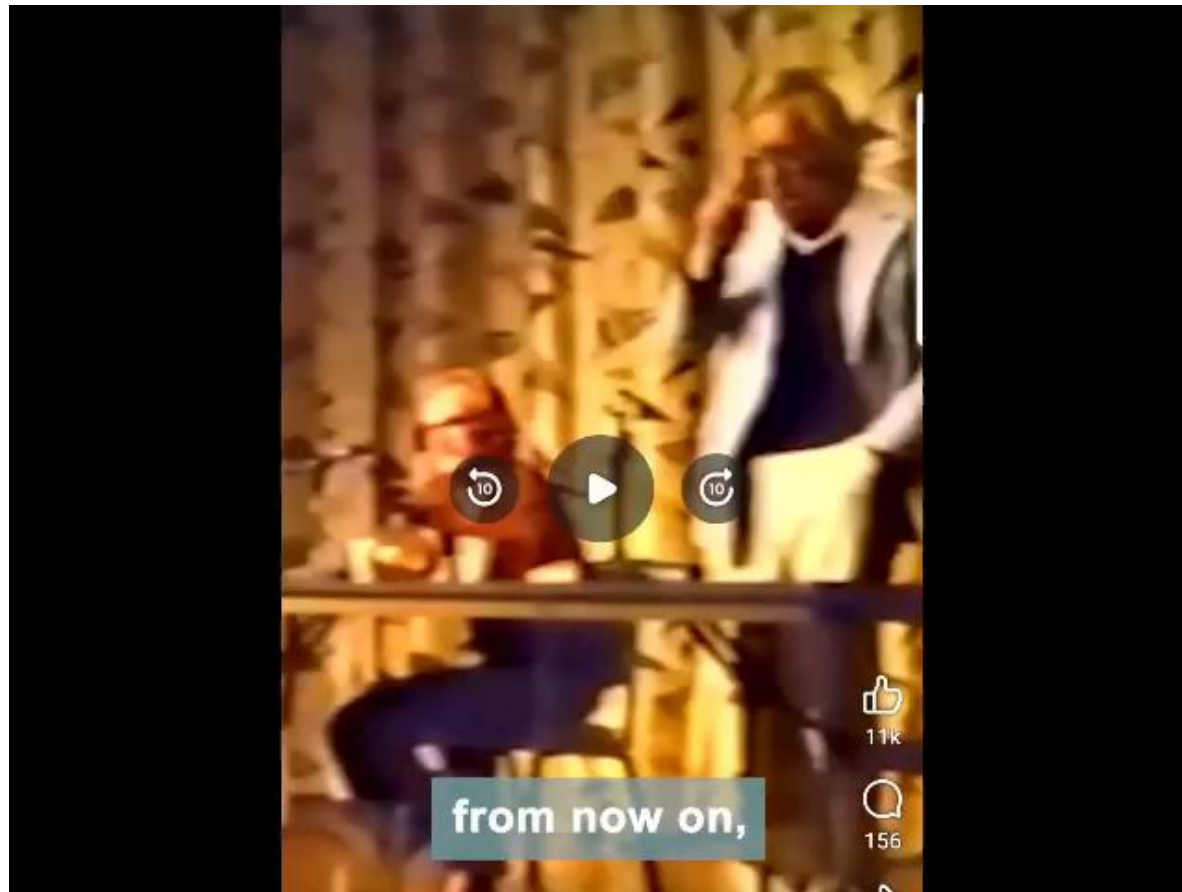
Principle 3: Get Excited About Games, then Transmute Them

Principle 4: Group Is Guru: Extract the Wisdom Embedded in the Crowd

Principle 5: Find Your Meta

Principle 6: Balance the Tria Prima (Spark, Flow, Form)

Alchemical Principle 7



Ray Bradbury

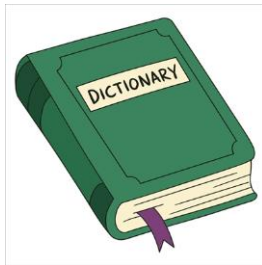
American author and screenwriter

Alchemical Principle 7

Fall madly in love with ideas:

theories, metaphors, jokes, puns, ridiculous ideas, poems, cartoons, fairytales, music, stories, arts, etc.

Creativity is about making connections!



Resources & References:

Carse, J. (2011). Finite and infinite games. Simon and Schuster.

Brown, S., & Vaughan, C. (2009). Play: How it shapes the brain, opens the imagination, and invigorates the soul. Penguin.

Jackson, A., & Boal, A. (2005). Games for actors and non-actors. Routledge.

John Cleese's Legendary 1991 Speech About Creativity:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nvKeu46jgwo>

What makes a hero? - Matthew Winkler

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hhk4N9A0oCA&t=25s>

Check-out



- How are you feeling now?
- What are 3 things you are taking with you from this experience?