

Family Activity

Chain Reaction

Time

30–45 minutes

Overview

Have you ever noticed that when someone around you laughs, it's hard not to join in? Emotions are contagious—when we feel happy, it spreads to the people around us. In this activity, families play a game called Chain Reaction, where one family member at a time draws a piece of paper with an action written on it. They perform that action with the goal of getting the other members of the family to mirror the emotion behind that action. The player receives one point for every family member who mirrored their action. For example, a family member selects a piece of paper that says “laugh” on it. That family member laughs and the other players try their best not to give in to the chain reaction of contagious laughter. The player performing the action gets one point for each player who responds by displaying the emotion behind the action. The family member who is able to make the most players mirror his or her actions wins the game!

Outcomes

Families will:

- Understand how one family member's emotional state impacts the entire “emotional ecosystem” of the family
- Apply that knowledge to future interactions
- Create personalized prompts that can be used in the future to create an intended chain reaction of emotions

Materials

For this activity, families will need:

- Paper (for recording scores and writing additional activity prompts)
- Pencils or other writing instruments
- Action Bank (activity sheet included here)
- Scissors
- Bowl, bag or other container to hold the activity prompts

Instructions

1. Print out the Action Bank on the last page of this activity.
2. Using a pair of scissors, cut out each action square.
3. Fold each action square so that you can't see what is written on it.
4. Gather family members together—you'll need at least three people to play Chain Reaction.
5. Think of some more actions that could create chain reactions in your family members. Write down

those actions and the emotions you think the action will create. Have each player create 2–3 action prompts of his or her own. Fold all of the new action prompts and add them to the others.

6. Put all of the action prompts in a container of some kind. It could be a bowl, bag or even a hat. Get creative!
7. Provide each player with a piece of paper and a writing instrument.
8. Have each family player write down the names of each of the players on his or her paper. Each player should draw a line under the names on his or her sheet. Players will use this sheet to keep track of scores during the game.
9. The player with the closest upcoming birthday will begin the game.
10. When it is his or her turn, the player selects a piece of paper from the container. He or she then acts out the action on that piece of paper. It is the actor's goal to get as many players to respond to his or her action as possible.
11. As that player performs the action, every other player watches the performance. If the watchers react to the actor, the actor receives a point.
12. Count how many watchers responded to the actor and that is the number of points earned by the actor for that round.
13. Play continues counterclockwise until all actions are used.
14. When all of the actions have been used, tally up the points earned by each player. The player with the most points wins Chain Reaction!
15. Once you've played Chain Reaction, see what your family members have learned by asking the following reflection questions:
 - What did you notice about how emotions spread in groups? How do you think this plays out in everyday life?
 - How do our actions impact our emotions? How do our actions impact the emotions of others?
 - What role can each family member play in spreading positive feelings like joy and happiness?

Extend the Learning

Build on the connections forged by the Chain Reaction: Conduct a series of interviews with your family members to learn what happiness looks like for them. Devote time to one-on-one conversations with members of your family and ask the following interview questions:

- What does happiness look like and feel like for you?
- How does it make you feel when members of our family experience happiness? How does it make you feel when they experience sadness or anger?
- Can you tell me about a time you've experienced a challenge or difficulty in your life? What were your feelings like then? How did it impact your family members? How did you get through that difficult time and what did you learn from it?
- What is one action you could take to experience more happiness? What is one action I could take that could help you experience more happiness?

Handout: Action Bank

Use your scissors to cut out these different actions and emotions. Once you have cut them out, fold them and put them in a bowl, bag or other container.

Laugh Joy	Scowl Anger	Yawn Boredom	Hum Happiness
Worry Fear/ Anticipation	Hug Happiness/ Sadness	Yell Anger/Joy	Whisper Fear/Anticipation
Smile Happiness	Frown Sadness	Put Your Head in Your Hands Fear/Sadness	Cry Sadness
Hunch Fear/Sadness	Shrug Boredom/Confusion	Lean Back Boredom	Annoy Anger/Boredom
Surprise Fear/Happiness	Play Happiness	Stand Tall Confidence	Suspect Fear
Dance Joy	Cross Arms Anger/Boredom	Lean Forward Interest/Anticipation	Back Away Fear/Anger
Speak Fast Fear/Anger/Excitement	Speak Slowly Boredom/Confusion/ Sadness	Complain Anger/Boredom	Pace Fear/Anticipation
Curl Up Fear/Sadness	Stretch Out Happiness/ Confidence	Hands on Hips Anger/Anticipation	Whistle Happiness
Tap Happiness/Anticipation	Wiggle Discomfort/Boredom	Purse Your Lips Anger/Confusion	Raise Your Eyebrows Surprise

Handout: Action Bank

Remember, you can make your own prompts and add them to the Action Bank!
