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Making Psychology Fun and Relevant, III

by Robert Leach



Relevance, Inc.

THIRTEEN

RELEVANCE EXERCISES

FOR

PSYCHOLOGY

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The legendary baseball great, Yogi Berra, once said, "ninety percent of baseball is half mental." Although immediately we know something does not compute, there seems to be some wisdom in this statement. I think Yogi was trying to tell us that much of the great game of baseball is psychological. That is certainly not only true of baseball but also is applicable to the field of education.

As educators we know that our knowledge of our subject matter plays only a part in the success we will enjoy with our students. Such psychological factors as our enthusiasm, a positive attitude, and the encouragement we give our students as well as stimulating teaching strategies are much more important to the learning process.

Today we see the use of psychology everywhere in education. The most obvious manner it is used is in the area of motivation. Standardized test scores are the barometer in which our country measures the ability of both the teachers and students. By using the concepts of operant conditioning and reinforcement, financial incentives are being offered to teachers to get their students to improve their performance.

I might be old-fashioned but I preferred the days when society relied on our dedication, expertise, and creativity to inspire our students.

Nevertheless, this approach seems to be here to stay. I have tried, in

"Making Psychology Fun And Relevant, III, to focus on more positive uses of psychology. Among the topics I think you and your students will enjoy are Your Outlook And Attitude, Focus And Concentration, Vicarious Pleasure, Understanding Morality, and Self-Actualization Or Lack Of Self-Esteem. As I did in "Making Psychology Fun And Relevant, Volumes I and II," I have developed open-ended, thought provoking questions. I am sure that both you and your students will find these psychology related topics to be intellectually stimulating and fun.

I recommend that, after you introduce each lesson, you have the students discuss the questions in small groups before writing their answers. The activities are ideally suited for cooperative learning, although they may also be used very effectively as individual assignments. I also recommend that you, after giving students approximately a half hour for group discussion, have a class discussion. The beauty of this method is that, no matter whom you call on, all of them will have an answer. Believe me, once the class gets started, you will have plenty of enthusiastic students excited about volunteering their answers.

Included in your booklet is an activity called "Pass The Paper And Pen." I highly encourage you to use this lesson prior to having the students perform the cooperative learning activities. It is necessary for them to learn

to work as a team, and "Pass The Paper And Pen" will help to encourage this.

All of the activities can be completed in one class period. Each activity includes a thorough explanation that will make the procedures clear to both teachers and students. I am confident that you and your students will have as much success with these activities as I have had with mine. I sincerely hope this will be a very exciting and positive year for you in your teaching career.

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events, and concepts is a skill ncreases our chances for red into our long-term
y concerned that American nation. Standardized tests are at are the important factors that We will investigate this topic
group and be prepared to
of which ones are most y remembering important
nd rial r, etc.) remembering

2. The findings of studies are often reported that point out the failures of the American public education system. One study found that only a small percentage of students knew that Abraham Lincoln was

__ Other

President during the Civil War. Why do you suppose so many high school students do not remember this information?

- 3. A few very gifted people are fortunate enough to have a photographic memory. The rest of us have to "study" in order to remember information. One method is to repeatedly go over important information. List 3 other devices, strategies, or methods that improve your ability to concentrate and remember.
- 4. There are 2 hemispheres in your brain. One hemisphere helps us to create while the other side helps us to remember, recall, and recognize information. Which type of thinking do you enjoy more, that which requires creating or the type that involves remembering information? Why?
- 5. There is an old saying that goes, "if you don't use it, you'll lose it. This is certainly true when it comes to the functioning of your brain. The great American writer, Mark Twain, once said that it was worse to have the ability to read and choose not to do it than to be illiterate. If reading is so good for our brain and memory, why do you suppose that so many Americans spend so little of their leisure time doing it?
- 6. Your education up to this point has involved a great deal of learning. Your ability to remember information has played a big part in the

learning process but there have been many other factors. Draw a pie or write an equation showing the most important skills one acquires in learning.

Psychology	Name
Trash Talking: Is It Good-Natured Teasing	Date
Or Bullying?	Period

There is a controversy today on the influence of teasing on children and teenagers. Some psychologists believe the teasing is fun and leads to friendships. Others believe it is a mean-spirited bullying that can lead to the mass murders we saw at Columbine High School.

Youngsters and athletes more commonly refer to this verbal jousting as "trash talking." Does it create and build friendships or tear down ones self-esteem? We will investigate this topic in the questions below.

Directions:

- 1. Teasing or trash talking is a way of putting some one down. At one time it was considered a sign of low self-esteem if you put other people down. Do you think this is still true? Explain.
- 2. Michael Jordan and Larry Bird, pro basketball legends, were considered expert trash talkers. Do you think trash talking during athletic events is a part of the gamesmanship or is it a sign of poor sportsmanship? Explain.
- 3. There is a certain respect and admiration amongst teenagers for those that are good at talking trash. Do you agree? Explain.

4.	A new student has transferred to your school. Would this person be
	more likely to become popular being nice or being a trash talker?
	Explain.

- 5. Do you feel that talking trash is more likely to create an atmosphere of fun or anger for teenagers? Explain.
- 6. In the year 2000, a study was conducted at a boy's camp for 9-14 year olds on the correlation between teasing and friendships. The results showed that the boys who teased each other were more likely to become friends. Do you think the results would be the same for teenage girls? Why?
- 7. Imagine you are a teacher and you have witnessed a student talking some "serious trash" to another student. Would you take disciplinary action or consider it just teenagers being teenagers? Explain.

Psychology	Name
Change: Time Saving Progress Or	Date
Increased Stress?	Period

Legendary UCLA basketball coach, John Wooden, once said, "all progress comes from change but not all change is progress." New inventions have changed our lives significantly. We can be relatively certain that the future will bring even more change and advancement. Do these changes bring convenience and more free time or do they create more stress? We will look at this in the questions below.

Directions:

- 1. Microwave ovens, remote controls, the computer, and countless other inventions allow us to do things more quickly. Do you think these advancements provide more free time and convenience or make us try to do more things in a short amount of time? Explain.
- 2. The cordless phone has allowed people to do two things at one time. Do you think this improves our life or causes more stress? Explain.
- 3. One feature that many people have today with their phone service is call waiting. Phone conversations can be interrupted to take another phone call. Is this a convenience or a distraction? Explain.

- 5. Modern science allows us to change our appearance significantly. Wearing braces or contact lenses has been common and socially acceptable for years. Some people find other procedures like breast implants, tummy tucks, or wearing hairpieces are less acceptable. List 3 changes to one's appearance that you believe are acceptable and 3 you believe are unacceptable.
- 6. Some people believe the computer can bring us closer to other people with E-mail and chat rooms. Others believe it takes us away from people (particularly our families) too much. Which belief do you believe is more accurate? Why?

Psychology	Name
Vicarious Pleasure	Date
	Period

Americans get much of their pleasure in life vicariously. That is to say that we derive pleasure through watching the accomplishments of others. One of the most common ways this is done is by being a fan of a particular sports team. People not only get incredibly excited about a team's success but also their self-esteem is enhanced when their team is winning. The concept of supporting a successful team in order to gain in self-esteem is known as identification. How much of this vicarious pleasure is driven by a desire for fun and how much is motivated by improving our self-esteem? We will look at this concept in the questions below.

Directions:

- 1. The Los Angeles Lakers have had a long history of success in basketball and the Los Angeles Clippers have had a history of futility. Consequently, it is common to see shirts and caps with Lakers' logos worn by fans but very rare to see Clipper garb worn by any one. List 3 reasons why so many people tend to buy the shirts and caps of winning teams.
- 2. A study on fans in sports revealed that when the team for which a fan is rooting wins, he/she experiences a boost in his/her mood. If his/her team loses, he/she experiences a mild depression. Why is it that people that didn't even participate in the game take the outcome so seriously? Explain.

- 3. Occasionally there are sports teams that lose a great deal but retain a loyal fan base. The New York Mets were very loveable losers in their first year of existence. The Chicago Cubs rarely have winning teams but sell out Wrigley Field nearly every game. What are some other factors that can make teams popular when they don't win very much?
- 4. Many huge sports fans developed their interest in sports at a young age. Youth sports organizations such as little league baseball, Pop Warner Football, and AYSO soccer are highly successful and competitive. Some horror stories have been played out in recent years involving parents who took the results of these games too seriously. Do you think intense parents are trying to motivate their children or get vicarious pleasure from the success of their kids? Explain.
- 5. Is it more fun to watch your favorite team play your favorite sport or is it more fun for you to personally play in the game? Explain.
- 6. With the success of women in sports, the increased popularity of golf, and some new extreme sports, the amount of people actively playing sports is on the rise. Despite the high cost of attending live sporting events, Americans still spend huge sums of money to see their teams play. List 5 sports that your group feels are the most fun to play and 5 sports that are the most fun to watch.

USE PRAISE FREQUENTLY

WITH YOUR STUDENTS!!!!

IT IS VERY GOOD PSYCHOLOGY!!!

IT WILL MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD TOO!!!

Psychology	Name	
Attitude And Outlook	Date	_
	Period	

Our attitudes are important factors in determining our behavior. According to Martin Fishbein and Icek Ajzen, two noted psychologists, our attitudes are determined by 5 to 9 beliefs we have about an issue. People are often categorized based on the attitudes they hold. A person's attitudes determine whether the classification is liberal or conservative. Another common classification which is based on our attitudes is whether you or optimistic or pessimistic. We are going to look at some attitudes about various issues that are important to teenagers.

Directions:

- 1. The most important attitude we have is the feelings we have about ourselves. This is described as our self-esteem. Let us suppose that a person feels inferior. Would this person be more likely to improve their attitude by focusing on positive thoughts about himself/herself or by trying to achieve challenging and exciting goals? Explain.
- 2. The attitude that is most commonly investigated in psychology is whether one's outlook is optimistic or pessimistic. Optimists tend to have a good outlook no matter what happens to them. Do you think it is possible to have a positive attitude when bad things happen to you? Explain.
- 3. We often hear the expressions that a person has a "good attitude" or a "bad attitude." List 3 characteristics of a person with a good attitude and 3 characteristics of a person with a bad attitude.

- 4. Peer pressure can cause students to perform behaviors that go against their attitudes or beliefs. Does a desire to be popular cause some teenagers to do things against their attitudes? Explain.
- 5. Big companies make millions of dollars selling clothing and shoes to teenagers. These companies have found that they can influence your attitude to buy certain athletic shoes by having successful athletes endorse the shoes. Who are the current athletes and celebrities that teenagers admire the most? List 3 reasons why teenagers buy the expensive products that they endorse?
- 6. Some people think teenagers analyze issues before formulating an attitude about them. Others think they do what they feel like doing and come up with reasons why they did it afterwards. Which description do you feel is more accurate for teenagers? Explain.

Psychology	Name	
Sex Roles And Socialization	Date	_
	Period	

From the time of our birth, society and parents attempt to influence our sexual identity. Girls are dressed in pink and boys in blue. Youngsters are taught that some behaviors are masculine and some are feminine. This type of sex typing goes on in our society as we progress throughout life. Some people believe these roles are beginning to change. Certainly new perceptions on what is acceptable masculine and feminine behavior can provide new opportunities for both genders.

Directions:

- 1. At one time it was believed that girls were "sugar and spice and everything nice." They were taught to be unaggressive. Today many girls are encouraged to be aggressive in sports and some compete on wrestling and football teams. Are these changes good for women and our society? Explain.
- 2. Our society has established that some behaviors are thought of as masculine and some behaviors are thought of as feminine. List 5 of each.
- 3. Our society is so involved with sex typing that even cars are thought of as masculine or feminine. List 3 cars that you consider masculine and 3 that you consider feminine.

- 4. It is rare to see male "yell leaders" in high school sports but it is a long tradition in college. Why do you suppose it is so much more acceptable in college than in high school?
- 5. Today we see many men in traditionally female occupations like nursing, teaching, and dancing. We also see many women in traditionally male occupations like business ownership, doctors, and crime fighting. What are the advantages of these changes?
- 6. Today physical fitness has become a high priority for many Americans. Some women are "into" body building as much as many of the men. Do you admire both men and women equally who have taken the time and effort to build up their physiques? Explain.
- 7. Some people believe that the feminist movement had a large impact on bringing equality to women in our society. It also seemed to influence how women wanted to be treated by men and how men felt they should treat women. There seems to be some confusion today on the part of men and women in this area. You will help the next generation immensely if you can clarify how gentlemen should behave and what constitutes ladylike behavior. List 3 behaviors that would be characteristic of a gentleman and 3 behaviors or qualities that would be present in a lady.

Psychology	Name
Religion And Behavior	Date
	Period

The study of psychology is mainly an investigation into the factors that influence behavior. There are probably few things that can have a more profound influence on ones behavior than religion. Some people have had the belief that religion and psychology are incompatible. Nevertheless, many psychologists today emphasize the importance of spirituality in mental health.

Directions.

Answer the following questions within a group and be prepared to discuss your answers with the rest of the group.

- 1. Sigmund Freud, the great personality theorist, believed our superego or conscience is instrumental in guiding our behavior. It tries to direct us to do what's right and we feel guilty when we go against our conscience. Some religions also have used the feeling of guilt to direct our behavior. Do you think the feeling of guilt stops most teenagers from doing inappropriate behavior? Explain.
- 2. Some people that have a deep faith in a religion are cynical about the study of psychology and psychotherapy. Since both religion and psychotherapy attempt to direct people to healthy behaviors, why do you suppose some religious people do not respect the field of psychology?
- 3. Psychology studies the behavior of organisms. List 3 behaviors that most religions try to restrict.

- 4. There are many different values about living life that are common among different religions. List 3 beliefs about how to live your life that many religions have in common.
- 5. It would seem logical that the vast majority of religions if not all of them consider sex before marriage inappropriate or sinful. Yet some people who consider themselves religious or spiritual engage in "premarital sex." Do you feel that sex outside the marriage relationship is always wrong? Explain.
- 6. According to psychological research, a person with a pleasing personality possesses the qualities of kindness and consideration. Most religions encourage people to behave in a kind and considerate manner. Do you believe that teenagers that practice a religion would tend to have more pleasing personalities? Explain.

Psychology	Name	
Cohabitation	Date	
	Period	

During the 1990's, a large increase in the amount of American couples cohabitating took place. Cohabitation is the choice to live with an individual in a romantic relationship without being married. Although this has often been referred to as "living in sin," this living arrangement has grown in acceptability. Does this lifestyle practice help or hurt the quality of life in our society? We will investigate this topic with the questions below.

Directions:

- 1. List 3 advantages and 3 disadvantages of living with a boyfriend/girlfriend.
- 2. Do you feel that living with a love interest increases or reduces your chances for future marital happiness? Why?
- 3. Most partners that live together make the choice of breaking up or getting married within 5 years. Some, however, choose to live together rather than ever get married. Why do you suppose some couples make this choice?
- 4. People who cohabitate are living a lifestyle that is immoral. Do you agree? Why?

- 5. Some psychologists believe that living with a boyfriend/girlfriend before marriage takes away the excitement that you would experience for the wedding, honeymoon, and early stages of the marriage. Do you agree? Why?
- 6. According to a University of Wisconsin study, about 50% of couples live together before a first marriage. Despite its growing acceptability, virtually none of the religious leaders approve of cohabitation. Does this increasing practice of cohabitation help or hurt the quality of life in our society? Explain.

Psychology	Name	
Understanding Morality	Date	
	Period	

Most of us have been told to follow the "golden rule" at one time or another. This rule states that we should do unto others as we would have them do unto us. Although this is a wonderful ideal for which all people should strive, not all adolescents and adults are able to practice this.

Moral choices have been very much in the news in the United States. Ex-President Bill Clinton's personal behavior and the shootings of teenagers by their classmates are a couple of examples of the immorality that has become commonplace. What are the factors or variables that help people develop a sense of what is right and what is wrong? We are going to investigate some of the factors that go into the development of good morals.

Directions:

Answer the following questions within a group and be prepared to share your answers with the rest of the class.

- 1. List 3 factors or teachings that stop you from doing inappropriate or immoral behaviors.
- 2. List 3 behaviors that would hurt the consciences of your group members if each of you were to do them.
- 3. Cheating on schoolwork has become more common in both high school and college. Do you blame it more on lack of morals on the part of students or a system that makes it too easy to cheat? Explain.

- 4. A small but growing number of students have chosen to shoot classmates that were belittling them. In most instances, the students doing the shootings were humiliated over a long period of time. Both sides engaged in immoral behavior. Why do you suppose the morals of the murderers did not stop them from killing?
- 5. Many children and adults refrain from performing some immoral behaviors because of punishment or fear of the consequences. At this point in your life is it a fear of punishment or wanting to do the right thing that guides most of your choices? Explain.
- 6. Rap music has been criticized by many adults because it encourages degrading and immoral behavior. Do you agree that it encourages immoral behavior? Explain.
- 7. At one time, there were clear ideas of moral and immoral behavior. Now society has much more "gray area" as far as good and bad behavior. List 3 moral beliefs that your group agrees are absolute "wrongs" or "rights" that you would pass on to the next generation.

Psychology	Name	
Focus And Concentration	Date	
	Period	

What separates the greatest performers and athletes from others is the ability to perform at their best under pressure. Some people with great talent were unable to be successful because of a phenomenon known as choking. These people had the talent but nervousness along with being distracted by their own negative thoughts prevented them from performing to their capabilities.

The ability to block out distractions and focus on the task at hand is an extremely beneficial skill. We will examine this topic in the questions below.

Directions:

- 1. It is fairly common for people to get nervous before giving a speech. List 3 things the speaker can do to reduce the nervousness and focus on delivering a great speech.
- 2. Past and present great athletes like Tiger Woods, Joe Montana, Michael Jordan, Jerry West, and Reggie Jackson were famous for performing their best when the outcome was on the line in the most important games. They seemed to make the great play or shot at the key moment. Sports writers have often said that these players have "ice water in their veins" because they remain cool under pressure. Why do you think these players were at their best at the most crucial part of the biggest games?

- 3. Tradition determines how much opposing fans and players can do to try to break a player's concentration during a contest. In basketball, we often see fans waving balloons at a player shooting an important free throw. In addition, players "trash talk" opposing players to "mess" with their game. In sports like tennis and golf, opposing players and fans must remain quiet while the players are competing. Do you think the rules should allow the fans to try to distract the players in golf and tennis as they do in baseball, basketball, and football? Why?
- 4. We often hear how important it is to young people to have support from family and friends when they participate in events. If you were participating in a debate or playing in a sports event, would the presence of your parents be more likely to make you nervous or inspire you? Why?
- 5. If you were on an athletic team and it was the critical point in the game, would you want to be the one that your team would rely on to make the big play? Why?
- 6. It is becoming more and more common for people to try to do 2 or more things at once. Eighty-five percent of people who own cell phones use them while they are driving. A large number of students do their homework while listening to music. Is it possible to give your best efforts when your focus is split between two things? Explain.

Psychology Reinforcement, Punishment, And Behavior	NameDatePeriod
Introduction:	

The great psychologist, B.F. Skinner, did much important research in the field of operant conditioning. Not surprisingly, he found that people and animals were more likely to perform behaviors for which they receive rewards or incentives. Much of our behavior is not only shaped by the use of rewards but punishment as well. We will examine some practical uses of these concepts in our own lives.

Directions:

Discuss the following questions within a group and be prepared discuss your answers with the rest of the class.

- 1. List 3 types of rewards used by parents, teachers, and bosses that are effective in getting teenagers to do their best work.
- 2. List 3 types of punishment used in society, schools, and families that are effective.
- 3. The best reward one can get in their job is that it is very enjoyable. Some people select occupations that they don't enjoy because the salary is high. Which reward is more important, the enjoyment or the money? Explain.
- 4. Researchers believe that reinforcement is more effective than punishment in shaping behavior. Do you feel student behavior would

improve if we increased rewards and eliminated punishments? Explain.

- 5. Some authorities claim physical punishment with children can be harmful. Do you feel spanking young children is an appropriate punishment? Explain.
- 6. Our society gives much admiration to people who are rich and famous. Athletes, movie stars, and business tycoons receive many rewards in life that the average American never experiences. List 5 possible rewards that the rich and famous experience that the average person does not. With all the benefits associated with being rich and famous why do you suppose more people do not strive for these goals?

Psychology	Name
Self-Actualization Or Lack Of	Date
Self-Esteem	Period

The great psychologist, Abraham Maslow, believed all of us strive to be the best we can be. The term he used to describe this concept was self-actualization. Maslow believed this constant striving for self-improvement included every part of our development. Today many Americans put much of their efforts at self-improvement in the area of their appearance. Many procedures and products can be used in order to improve or change our appearance. Some of these include nose jobs, hair transplants and hair-pieces, breast implants, tummy tucks, colored contact lenses, and tattoos. Does this desire to look good reflect a lack of self-esteem or our desire to be our best? We will investigate this topic in the questions below.

Directions:

Discuss the following questions within a group and be prepared to share your answers with the rest of the class.

- 1. Americans spend countless dollars on products, surgeries, exercise machines, and fitness club memberships to improve their appearance. List 3 products, procedures, or other practices to improve appearance that you feel are acceptable.
- 2. List 3 products, procedures, or other practices to improve appearance that you feel are unacceptable.

	o improve appearance. Rank these in st acceptable.(Categories on next page)
Nose jobTummy tuckLiposuctionCollagen injections to enlarge lipsBreast enlargement/reductionsWeight lifting/running	Face liftBuying trendy clothesDietingColored contact lensesHair transplantOther
4. Most people's happiness and selearned to accept any of their plants strengths. Do you agree? Expl	hysical limitations and focused on their
	pinted out that it is becoming more of receive breast augmentation for a high at would you say to a close friend who
to change their appearance. W	options that some teenagers have used 'hy do you feel some teenagers choose will be happy with these changes in 20

Psychology	Name	
Pass The Paper and Pen	Date	
	Period	

Our society has traditionally put a premium on self-reliance. Schools and businesses alike have practiced a Social Darwinian survival of the fittest mentality in theory. Today our life styles have brought about more and more service industries. Our ability to work with others and communicate effectively has become essential. Skills such as being a good listener, being polite, sharing responsibility, and having a good sense of humor are just as important as your competence. This class will incorporate activities in which you will work in groups. The success of your group and your own grade will be determined by your ability to cooperate. As in all businesses and athletic teams, your success can be impaired by just one weak link. With this in mind, it is in your best interest to be dependable. There are a few important considerations for you to remember when working in your group. First of all, there will be no putdowns. Do not belittle your team members' ideas. All of us work best with encouragement. When individuals in your group make good suggestions, tell them so. Second, you need to be a good listener. Let your colleagues finish their explanations before commenting. Often times, the people who are considered the best conversationalists are those that do little more than listen.

Directions:

Before a group or team can work efficiently, camaraderie or good feelings must be built up amongst the group. In order to promote this, we are going to periodically play extra credit games called "Pass The Paper And Pen." Each group will have one of these papers and a pen. I will ask you, for example, to list all the different name brands of clothing your group can think of in one minute. (It could be 2 or 3 minutes.) The two groups with the most on their list will get extra credit. The rules are that you must pass the paper and pen to another group member after you

have written an entry on your list. If your team member cannot think of anything, the other group members can help. However, you should be relatively quiet so other groups do not hear your answers. This type of activity will be done several times before your group works on an official cooperative learning lesson. In addition, we will periodically play "Pass The Paper An Pen" to keep your group working cohesively.

List:

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