

Therapy Activities by Goal

A quick-reference cheat sheet for therapists. Pick by the client's goal, name the rationale, run it, then debrief. Each activity is tagged with its modality.

Client goal	Activity	What to do	Modality
Reframe unhelpful thinking	Thought journaling	Log triggers, thoughts, and feelings; review for patterns.	CBT
	Gradual exposure	Step toward a feared situation in small, paced increments.	CBT
Calm the body & regulate	Five senses grounding	Name one thing per sense to anchor in the present.	Mindfulness
	Progressive muscle relaxation	Tense and release muscle groups in sequence.	Relaxation training
Express what words can't	Emotion masks	Make a mask of the inside vs. the outside self.	Art therapy
	Music / playlist	Use songs or songwriting to reach unnamed emotions.	Music therapy
Rehearse new behavior	Conflict-resolution role-play	Practice assertive communication in a mock conflict.	Behavioral rehearsal
	Inner-dialogue / chair work	Voice the inner critic vs. the compassionate self.	Gestalt / IFS
Improve relationships	"I"-statement check-in	Take turns expressing needs without blame.	IPT / couples
	Interpersonal inventory	Map key relationships, disputes, and supports.	IPT
See & shift patterns	Identify your schemas	Name recurring core beliefs and where they show up.	Schema therapy
	Map modes & coping styles	Spot surrender, avoidance, or overcompensation.	Schema therapy
Use the body to heal	Grounding walk	Mindful walk attending to feet, sights, and sounds.	Somatic
	Aerobic movement	Brisk walking or cycling as between-session practice.	Exercise therapy
Engage children	Puppet shows	Children act out feelings through puppets.	Play therapy
	Interactive storytelling	Child is the hero overcoming challenges.	Narrative / play
Build group cohesion	Shared affirmations	Members name a strength they see in each other.	Group therapy
	Team challenge	A collaborative task that reveals group dynamics.	Group therapy

Four steps that make any activity land

1. Match the activity to the client's goal and readiness. **2. Explain** why this activity before you begin. **3. Debrief** afterward: what did they notice, how does it apply? **4. Adapt** if it doesn't resonate.

By Nuria Higuero Flores, Psychologist. Activities are starting points; tailor to each client's culture, goals, and readiness. Not a substitute for clinical judgment.

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