

SURVIVOR

(A.K.A. The Game of Adherence)



Introduction:

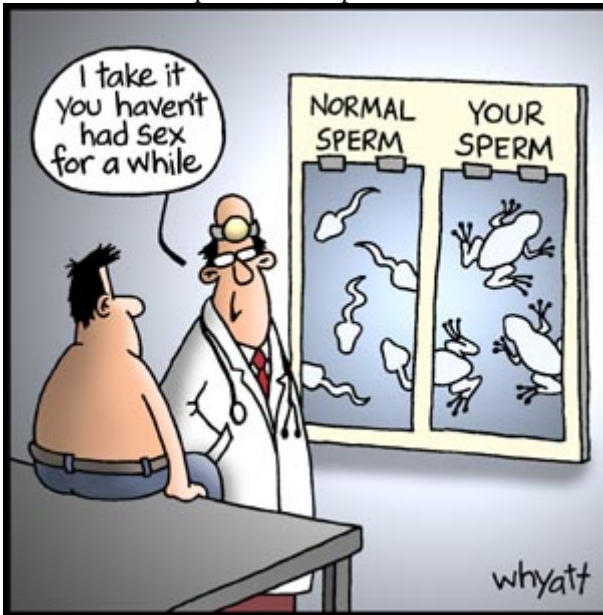
This game was developed to address a serious problem with missed treatments in a Richmond, VA unit. In 2000, in a hemodialysis population of about 120, there were as many as 63 treatments missed in a one month period. It was also not uncommon for some patients to receive *less than* 30% of their prescribed treatment. The game was called SURVIVOR after the TV program.

In the first year of playing the game attendance rates increased by more than 40%! The amount of competition that developed among the patients was surprising. In December 2003, 25% of patients celebrated their 3rd year of not missing a single treatment, 7% celebrated two years, and 12% celebrated one year. The improvement was not as dramatic over concurrent years, but the rate remained remarkably improved over the start point. Part of the decline after that first year may have been from boredom as there was no change in the game; it became old hat. A lesson learned would be to continue to freshen the challenges.

The Game Set Up*

The original game was set up on the unit walls around the treatment area utilizing nothing more than construction paper, drawings, and cutouts. It can be modified to fit one wall or a bulletin board.

- Create a pond with tadpoles in it.



- Create “Disasters” to be placed around the room/space remembering to leave some room for frogs to hop between. The original game’s disasters included “Dismemberment on Railroad Tracks”, “Lab Specimen For A Mad Scientist”, “Featured Cuisine On A Chef’s Menu”, “Snake Pit”, “Street Crossing”, “Hunter’s Target Practice”, “Typhoid Mary”, “Under the Microscope”, “Boiling in a Witch’s Brew”, “Indian without Fish to Bury in the Corn” “Christmas Tree Ornaments”. The more outrageous the “disaster” (and graphic the scene), the better it was received. Staff and patients can

* Note: The game can utilize another theme besides frogs. For example, the theme could be racecars. Disasters could include “Flat Tire”, “Spin Out”, “Fender Bender”, “Lost Keys”, “Tow Zone”, “Ran Out of Gas”, “Impounded”, “Stolen”, etc. Be creative! Work with the supplies you have access to and the uniqueness of your unit’s population.

- team up and compete to develop the ideas and/or create the images. In the original game, many of the staff were featured, which added to the fun for all.
- Create the frogs. Teacher supply stores and craft stores often carry packets of cutout figures. Patients may also enjoy making their own frog from card stock paper and embellishing it with various art supplies.
 - Obtain consent from patients to participate. (See sample Agreement for Participation form.) As silly as this game appears, few people opt out indefinitely.



The Game Rules

The object of the game is for each frog to successfully survive each of the disasters. Survival is achieved when the patient has not missed treatment for a full month.

The starting point is the tadpole pond. The first challenge the frog faces is to survive the pond to become a frog. When a patient has completed a full calendar month without missing a treatment they are assigned a frog. (If names are being posted on the frogs, be sure the consent is noted on the Agreement of Participation form.)

Every month that the patient doesn't miss a treatment his/her frog 'survives' and hops on to face the next challenge. If a treatment is missed the frog does not survive and is removed from the game. Fortunately, frogs can reincarnate! The patient can get back into the game as a tadpole again, where the patient starts over. Absences from hospitalizations should not count against a player. Other exceptions can be made given unique circumstances that may be out of the patient's control.

Winning the Game

The competition is not just about being the first one to cross the finish line. There is a remarkable sense of achievement also. One whole year without missing a treatment is a big deal! The game is a visual mechanism for recognition of the accomplishment by not just staff but the patient him/herself. Watching the frog hop from space to space reinforces it.

Additional reinforcement can be provided with recognition of milestones. In the frog's first year, recognition can be given every quarter. Recognition can be in the form of a write up in the unit newsletter, entry into a drawing for a gift card or basket, or the awarding of a certificate. (Be sure the recognition is manageable in the event that there is a great deal of success!) At the one-year mark, the frog is known as a "SURVIVOR". The frog receives a crown-- and so can the patient (found at a teaching supply store or Burger King!). A big deal should be made over these folks. The originating unit gave each patient a picture of themselves receiving a certificate, crown, and small gift bag presented by a staff member dressed in a

frog costume. In addition to the crown, their chairs can be decorated; a lobby party can be given in their honor. During picnics or special events, the Survivors can be adorned again with special nametags proclaiming their status.

Keeping the Game Going

This is the real challenge! After the first year is complete, and the first frogs become SURVIVORS, how do you keep their interest up-- particularly those who haven't gotten there yet? The following are some ideas for keeping folks engaged:

- Keep Going
 - You can delineate the junior frogs from the Survivors by maintaining a crown on the Survivors. Once crowned they shouldn't lose it if they then miss a treatment. When year 2 is completed, the crown can receive jewels.
 - Create new disasters to keep it fresh.
 - Make a new track/path for the Survivors to negotiate, while the juniors continue to hop it out on the old one.
 - Survivors can have tougher rules, such as going two whole months per turn.
 - This game focuses on missed treatments: it could be expanded to include shortened treatments.
- Change Up
 - Maintain the same game but make it new by changing the theme.
 - Change the game all together. A new and different game levels the playing field, so everyone starts in the same place again.
 - Create a new game based on TV shows or board games. Teaching stores and party supply stores are also good places to find inspiration.

Tracking Data

Data can be tracked and trended simply by recording the number of patients, the number of hours cut short, and the number of days missed. A graph can be created with use of an Excel spreadsheet.

Ideas for prizes:

Certificates

Unit newsletter print up

Bulletin board recognition

Picture receiving award

Paper crowns

Special name badge

Decorated Chair

Lobby Party in their honor

Drawing for a gift card or basket

Special privilege