

PLAY FOR PERFORMANCE: April 2002

SERIOUSLY FUN ACTIVITIES FOR TRAINERS, FACILITATORS, PERFORMANCE CONSULTANTS, AND MANAGERS.

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PLAY FOR PERFORMANCE:

SERIOUSLY FUN ACTIVITIES FOR TRAINERS, FACILITATORS, PERFORMANCE CONSULTANTS, AND MANAGERS.

Mission

To increase and improve the use of interactive, experiential strategies to improve human performance in an effective, efficient, and enjoyable way.

Editorial Roster

Editor: Sivasailam (Thiagi) Thiagarajan

Assistant Editors: Raja Thiagarajan and Les Lauber

Managing Editor: Brenda Mullin

Editorial Advisory Board: Andrew Kimball, David Gouthro, Diane Dormant, Julie England, Kat Koppett, Matt Richter, Steve Sugar, and <type your name here>

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Feedback Request

Thiagi believes in practicing what he preaches. This is an interactive newsletter, so interact already! Send us your feedback, sarcastic remarks, and gratuitous advice through email to thiagi@thiagi.com . Thanks!

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Editorial

Financial Report

As of March 2002, we have published 10 issues of *Play for Performance*. Our accountant figured out that the total cost for these 10 issues is \$28,943.00. (Don't ask me how she worked it out.) She's trying to persuade me to take an objective look at the return on investment. I don't care. I am having too much fun writing the monthly newsletter. (Don't tell that to my accountant, please.)

I pointed out to my accountant that several people have sent me checks for \$30 even though they know they can get the newsletter for free. So far, I have collected a total of \$1,350. This includes a surprisingly generous check for \$300 from Grace Kwok in Hong Kong. I point out to my accountant that the checks and credit cards authorizations come from all around the world. For example, two of the recent subscribers are Christine Ledergerber from Zurich, Switzerland and Mike Sherry from Victoria, Australia. But my accountant is not impressed.

I do want to thank these nice friends who supported our newsletter venture financially:

Ann Kennedy, Ann Zaglaniczny, Bay Manning, Beth Levine, Beth Lindman, Bill Matthews, Bob Shroyer, Brenda Postels, Bruce Roemmelt, Camilla McGill, Christine Ledergerber, Christopher Saeger, Clair Rodkey, Eva Reynolds Martony, Genie Melong, Grace Kwok, Guila C. Muir, Jane Bradley, Jeff Lefton, Jerry Rushing, Les Lauber, Leslie F. Cadavid, Lori K. Emerick, Lorraine Ukens, Margie Brown, Mark Isabella, Meri Walker, Mike Lair, Mike Sherry, Royleen A. White, Samuel van den Bergh, Steve Marx, Sue Burish, Susan Otto, Steve Sugar, and Tatiana Kolovou.

Please let me know if I left out your name inadvertently from this list of subscribers.

Rest assured, we will continue publishing the newsletter.

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Commentary

Are You Serious?

When a client asks me, "How can we make our organization more playful and improve its performance?", I answer the question with a question: "Are you serious?"

When a trainer asks me, "How can I introduce more playful strategies in my instructor-led training sessions?", I repeat the same procedure. I ask, "Are you serious?"

Usually people think that I am being playful with my "Are you serious?" question. I assure them that I am being very serious. I explain to them that becoming more playful and persuading others to become more playful is not for the faint of heart. Any change toward increased playfulness is always met with resistance.

If you seriously want to be more playful, you should begin with your own unconscious resistance. Intellectually, you may know all the logical reasons for being playful: it increases creativity, it reduces stress, and improves relationships. But emotionally you will be unsure and worry about taking too big a risk. This is because true playfulness requires you to let go of your need for control. Most trainers with tightly-designed instructional packages find this to be impossible. Most managers with strategic plans and quarterly reports find this to be difficult. So ask yourself seriously, "Can I let go of my need for control?" Be sensitive to how your insides feel about this possibility.

You will face resistance from your coworkers and colleagues. They will attribute your playfulness to being lazy and irresponsible. Your employees will complain about waste of time. They will clamor for the traditional staff meetings where nothing happens and everybody has something to complain about. If you are a trainer, your participants will complain because you are removing the comfortable anonymity of passive training techniques that do not require them to actively think and—worse yet—make a fool of themselves in front of their peers.

The problem with bringing about playfulness is that we are going against cultural values. Most people have read books on creativity, listened to many presentations from management gurus and watched the *Fish* video. They want to do it—and they are scared. The first time someone complains, they will give up their efforts and say, "I like being

playful, but the others don't like it. This is because our organization is a results-oriented culture." Managers will say, "Employees won't like it. They want to finish their job quickly without any of this participation business." Employees will say "We love this stuff, but managers can't cope with it. They are so focused on hitting the numbers that they don't want to waste time with teamwork and collaboration."

When we are serious about playfulness, we are going beyond adding on a roleplay or using an interactive decisionmaking strategy. We are attempting to bring about a culture change.

Only the very stupid—or the very brave—can succeed in changing hard-wired cultural norms and create sustained playfulness.

I hate to leave you on such a depressing note, but I plan to discuss some effective change-management strategies in the next issue of *PFP*.

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Tool Kit

*Trainers and consultants can use a variety of interactive, experiential strategies and techniques to improve human performance. The **Tool Kit** section in **Play for Performance** explores a specific interactive tool and presents practical suggestions and field-tested examples.*

99 Seconds

99 Seconds is a special type of panel session that features 10 or more presenters. Each presenter makes a brisk, self-contained presentation that lasts for less than 99 seconds. Although all presentations deal with the same general topic, no attempt is made to sequence them in any logical order or to standardize the presentation format.

Sample 99-Seconds Sessions

Let's vicariously participate in a couple of 99 Seconds sessions to get a feel for what happens.

You are attending a session how to motivate your employees. You notice that the seats in the first row have a reserved sign, each with a name of a presenter.

Alien Anthropologist. At the beginning of the session a large timer is projected on a screen and it begins to count down the seconds from 99. Steve, the moderator for the session, introduces his co-presenter as an alien from a far-away planet who has transformed herself to look human. She is actually a well-known anthropologist on her planet. She is visiting Earth on a special mission to observe and record human behavior patterns in the workplace. She understands English, but prefers to speak in her native language (which Steve will translate).

The alien says, "Morba aayacharinama vishel anyana, lunna lewai resivaranlagai mepoodud godumai daputharom."

Steve translates: "One of the interesting things about humans is that they always punish their best performers. For example, if someone finishes ahead of the scheduled time, managers immediately punish her by giving her more things to do. In addition, co-workers yell at the person for not being a team player."

The alien continues: "Aalan mathapadi."

Steve explains that the alien language is so efficient that it can convey a lot of information in just a few syllables. He continues with his translation:

"These punishing consequences from managers and co-workers result in apparent alienation of the high performer. Eventually, this performer slows down her productivity until it is reduced to the lowest common denominator. This makes the manager happy because he does not have to worry about his job security. This makes the co-workers happy and they praise the high-performer's ability to appreciate the important things in life."

The interaction between Steve and the alien continues in this vein, with an interesting look at principles of performance management from an objective alien perspective.

The countdown timer on the screen is now down to 10 seconds. Something that the alien says leaves Steve looking puzzled. He says something in the alien language, apparently asking for clarification.

The alien snaps back in English: "I said we are talking too much. They already got the point. Let's shut up and leave them alone."

One Minute Survey. The timer displays zero while Steve and the alien anthropologist leave the stage. When the next presenter, Diane, enters the stage, the timer resets itself to 99. It begins counting down as Diane begins to talk.

Diane asks each participant to think of the type of reward that would motivate her to work more efficiently. She asks participants to write this type of reward on a piece of paper and pass it to the back of the room. Ten seconds later, she asks each participant to write the type of reward that she most frequently uses to improve the performance of others. Diane explains that she would analyze the data later. She then proceeds to summarize the data that she had collected from earlier groups. She identifies the top three rewards that people prefer and compares them with the three most-frequently-used rewards. During the last 10 seconds of her time, Diane invites the audience to ponder on the discrepancy between these two sets of rewards. She suggests that people should try to reward others the way they themselves would like to be rewarded.

Benefits And Limitations

Here are some advantages of the 99 Seconds strategy:

Efficiency. The tight time limit forces presenters to focus on the key learning points and to avoid dwelling on trivial "nice-to-know" points.

Interest. The unusual format and rapid change of presenters maintains high levels of audience interest, especially with the new generation of learners brought up on MTV programs.

Variety. Presenters talk about different points using different formats. This variety enables audience members to receive a well-rounded picture of what is happening.

Participation. Audience members have to actively organize different presentations into a coherent whole that makes sense to them. After the session, they may have to do some research to close any gaps. These responsibilities give additional ownership to the listeners.

Assessment. The 99 Seconds format can be used as a performance test for presentation skills.

The 99 Seconds format also has some disadvantages:

Confusion. Because the individual presentations are not synchronized with each other, audience members may find the ideas to be disconnected.

Contradictions. Another consequence of the individualized approach could be that later presenters contradict the ideas and opinions presented by earlier presenters.

Incompleteness. Because of the time limit, it is possible that presenters may ignore some critical elements of the overall topic.

Passivity. Also because of the time limit, presenters may not provide practice opportunities or feedback.

Types of 99 Seconds Presentations

There are many different types of 99 Seconds sessions. For our convenience, we have grouped 35 different formats into four categories in the discussion below.

Active Participation

This type of 99 Seconds session involves interactive strategies. A major problem with active participation is the time consumed by getting audience members organized and interacting. Here are two possible solutions: You can ask for independent participation by individuals. Alternatively, you can bring a small group of people on stage to demonstrate the interaction. If you choose the second approach, be sure to rehearse the session with your demonstration group to get the timing right.

Creative visualization. Facilitator asks participants to close their eyes and takes them through a guided visualization exercise to encourage creative problem solving or empathic understanding. *Example:* Everyday life in a refugee camp.

Introspection. Facilitator asks a series of questions that provoke participants to arrive at some truthful insights. *Example:* How would your career be affected if your sexual orientation were different?

Physical activity. Performer demonstrates a physical activity, inviting audience members to follow along. *Example:* How to relax by using yogic breathing technique.

Data collection. Presenter asks all audience members to write down one or two words in response to an open-ended question. She then shares the results from a previous group. (The new data are analyzed later and the results are posted on a web site.) *Example:* What's the most important benefit of e-learning?

Debriefing. Facilitator asks audience members to focus on a common experience and conducts a debrief by asking a series of targeted questions and sharing a typical response for each question. *Example:* Encounters with irate customers.

Each Teach. Facilitator asks one half of the audience to close their eyes and cover their ears and explains how to apply the first step of a two-step procedure. She then asks the other half to close their eyes and cover their ears while explaining the second half. Audience members are encouraged to partner with one another and practice the entire skill after the session. *Example:* How to say "hello" and "good-bye" in Malayalam.

Jolt. A brief experiential activity that provides a powerful epiphany. *Example:* An exercise in which two participants arm wrestle, ignoring the rules that actually support a cooperative approach ("Your score depends on how many times your hand touches the table")

Poll. Presenter conducts a quick poll—and reveals the data by asking audience members to raise their hands or stand up. *Examples:* How many of you had meetings with SMEs that were (a) positive, (b) neutral, or (c) negative?

Questions and answers. Prior to the session, presenter distributes questions to confederates in the audience. During the presentation she "invites" questions from the audience and responds to them. *Example:* Legal aspects of sexual harassment.

Silence. Presenter observes a minute of silence to encourage a review earlier ideas.

Sing-Along. Presenter invites audience members to sing along with her, using a well-known tune and words from a handout.

Brief Presentations

This type of 99-seconds session involves effective presentation techniques that are usually incorporated as parts of lengthier presentations.

Analogy. Presenter suggests an analogy (by holding up a prop or displaying a graphic) and describes how it is similar to a real-world object or process. *Example:* Bullying as an analogy to sexual harassment.

Cartoon. Presenter displays a cartoon (or a comic strip) on screen and explains a powerful principle illustrated by it. *Example:* Dilbert illustrating the uselessness of consultants.

Formula. Presenter displays a formula and quickly explains the variables and functions. *Example:* How to compute your daily rate for consulting services.

Joke. Presenter tells a joke with a punch line that reveals an important truth. *Example:* A small child exclaiming that the emperor has no clothes.

Magic Trick. Performer does a conjuring act and uses it as an analogy for an important principle. *Example:* Using the Linking Rings magic trick to illustrate the power of belief.

Pithy saying. Presenter displays an aphorism or a proverb and explains its application to the topic. *Example:* Discussion of the impact of the German proverb on teambuilding strategies: *Durch zussammenleben, lernt man zussammenleben.* (By living together, people learn to live together.)

Poetry reading. Presenter recites a poem that highlights critical principles. *Example:* A ballad about office romances to illustrate performance problems.

Rap song. Presenter performs a rap song that highlights important principles. *Example:* New-hire orientation.

Story telling. Presenter tells a personal anecdote or a short-short story that highlights an important principle. *Example:* Fredric Brown's "Sentry", in which the admirable soldier-hero turns out to be an alien fighting humans!

Mediated Presentations

We can incorporate different types of media productions in a 99-seconds presentation. An

important precaution is to test out the equipment ahead of time and to have a backup plan.

Audio recording. Presenter plays an audio recording in the form of a new item to highlight key principles. *Example:* "Scientists report a simple technique to prevent repetitive stress injuries in the workplace ..."

Conversation with alter ego. Performer plays dual roles by having a conversation with her "evil twin sister" presented through an audio or video tape recording. (This recording is produced ahead of time with suitable pauses to permit a simulated conversation.) *Example:* A debate about the advantages and disadvantages of teamwork.

Movie excerpt. Presenter uses an excerpt from some popular movie to highlight an important principle. *Example:* A 1-minute excerpt from the movie *Gettysburg* to show visionary leadership in action.

Music. Presenter performs or plays the recording of a piece of music and quickly highlights the critical message. *Example:* John Lennon's "Imagine" followed by an exhortation for performance technologists to work on world peace.

Puppets. Performer conducts a conversation with a puppet to highlight important principles. *Example:* Importance of environmental protection.

Puzzle. Presenter displays a puzzle on screen and asks participants to solve it to identify a critical principle. The puzzle is gradually solved to speed up the process. *Example:* A *Wheel of Fortune* puzzle with a statement about rewards and reinforcement.

Silent slide set. Presenter displays a set of slides (in an animated form) that explain a process. *Example:* Five steps in rapid instructional design.

Video recording. Presenter plays a videotape recording to highlight some important points. *Example:* Videotape recording of a typical office room to identify different safety hazards.

Co-Presentations

More than one person can present a 99-seconds session. The key to this approach is for the co-presenters to rehearse the presentation and to time it tightly.

Conversation. Two presenters discuss a common paradoxical topic, highlighting the pros and cons of the extremes. Audience members realize that the paradox has to be managed effectively to reduce the disadvantages and to utilize the advantages. *Example:* “Individuals cannot produce significant results” vs “Teamwork results in wasted effort”.

Drama. A small group of people (in suitable costume, if possible) act out a skit that highlights key elements of an effective procedure, usually by presenting a before-and-after segments. *Example:* How to conduct a rapid performance analysis.

Gibberish. In this improv-theater technique an alien or a guru is interviewed by an expert. The alien talks in gibberish and the expert translates what she says. *Example:* What a Klingon has observed about human behavior during staff meetings.

Interview. Presenter interviews one or two experts to highlight important strategies for achieving a goal. *Example:* How to handle cross-cultural clashes.

One word at a time. In this improv technique, three or more participants respond to questions from audience members or present an important message, taking turns to speak one word at a time. *Example:* The importance of equal participation.

Panel. Three or more presenters quickly present a series of strategies for achieving an objective. *Example:* How to motivate online learners.

Roleplay. Two presenters (or the presenter and a “volunteer” from the audience) conduct a roleplay that illustrates some important interpersonal skill. *Example:* How to present bad news to the client.

What Next?

Try your hand at preparing and delivering a 99-seconds presentation, using some of the ideas from this discussion. If you are scheduled to make a presentation, try organizing it as a series of 99-second units. Raja and I have been coordinating 99-seconds presentations at ISPI, Training Conferences, and Online Learning Conferences for the past several years. We invite you to join us in one of our future sessions.

In future issues of *PFP*, we will give instructions for organizing a 99-seconds session. We will also give detailed instructions for conducting each of the 99-seconds formats listed

above.

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Interactive Lecture

BEST SUMMARIES

Asking listeners to summarize your presentation from time to time is a good technique for encouraging people to listen carefully, take notes, and to review the content. BEST SUMMARIES uses this basic concept.

Purpose

- To encourage active and collaborative review of the presentation.
- To focus listeners' attention on important points in the presentation.

Participants

Any number. Participants are divided into teams from time to time during this activity.

Time

Depends on the amount of information and the number of summary interludes. Suggested time: 60 minutes (consisting of three 10-minute presentations, each followed by 10 minute team review sessions).

Supplies

- Index cards
- Timer
- Whistle

Use This Strategy When—

- the instructional content involves concepts, principles, and procedures
- participants are capable of taking notes, summarizing the content, and evaluating

other people's summaries

- you have a logical outline for your presentation

Sample Topics

- Organizational values
- Basic principles of customer service
- Doing business in Texas
- The coaching procedure
- Life cycle of a high-tech product
- Maintaining a database

Preparation

Prepare an outline. Chunk the content of your presentation into logical 10-minute units. Also prepare appropriate flip chart pages or slides.

Flow

Brief participants. Explain that you will be making a series of 10-minute presentations. At the end of each unit, you will pause for each participant to summarize what you presented in that unit. These summaries will be evaluated by other participants and the best summaries will receive special recognition. Encourage participants to take good notes during your presentation so they can produce effective summaries.

Present the first unit. Keep your eye on the clock and try to stick to your schedule.

Pause for summaries. Distribute blank index cards to each participant. Ask participants to summarize your presentation on one side of the card. Suggest a suitable time limit. At the end of this time, ask participants to stop writing. Ask them to write a four-digit identification number on the other side of the card. Participants should remember this number so they can identify their card later.

Form teams. Organize participants to teams of four to seven members each. Seat each team around a table. Ask someone at each team to collect the summaries from team

members and shuffle the packet of cards.

Exchange and evaluate. Give the packet of summary cards from the first team to second one, from the second team to the third one, and so on, giving the cards from the last team to the first one. Ask members of each team to collaboratively review the summaries and select the best one, using whatever criteria they want. Announce a suitable time limit.

Conclude the evaluation activity. At the end of the allotted time, ask each team to read the summary that was rated as the best. After all teams read the best summaries, ask each team to read the identification number on the back of the card. Ask this person to stand up, and lead a round of applause for this person. Briefly comment on the summaries, identifying the key points and correcting any misconceptions.

Repeat the process. Continue with your next unit of presentation. Follow up with individual summary writing and team evaluation to identify the next set of best summaries.

Conclude the session. After the last round of presentation and evaluation, thank all participants for their contribution. Invite participants to retrieve their summary cards from the next table.

Adjustments

Not enough time? Reduce the summary to a single sentence to be written within a minute. Also make the entire presentation and conduct a single round of summarizing and evaluating.

Too many people? Instead of asking all teams to read their best summaries, select one or two teams at random and ask them to read the summaries.

Auditorium setup prevents teamwork? Individualize the evaluation process: After writing the summaries, ask participants to exchange summary cards several times. Now ask each participant to read the summary on the card she ended up with. Invite participants with a good summary on their card to come to the front of the room and read it. Identify and congratulate the authors of these summaries.

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Book Review

How To Write Faster and Better

I have read several books on how to write short stories and applied the principles and procedures that I have picked up from these books. My favorite book in this collection is *Fast Fiction* by Roberta Allen. This book deals with writing short-short stories.

What Is a Short-Short Story?

Roberta Allen defines a short-short as "a story that gets quickly to the core and reveals the essence of a situation or moment in a very few words. It is complete in itself and may express as many moods and take as many forms as longer stories." In her comparison with longer short stories, Roberta points out that both these genres share the elements of character, setting and mood, point of view, situation and plot, and style and voice. Here are four factors that make short-short stories unique:

- They are brief, ranging from a hundred to a thousand words.
- Because of the limited number of words, every word in a short-short becomes important (as in poetry).
- Their intensity, urgency, and emotional charge is heightened by the compression.
- They contain an element of surprise or unexpectedness. Short-shorts twist into surprise endings.

You can "experience" a short-short story by reading Fredric Brown's "[Sentry](#)" published in our December 2001 issue. A good place to read more short-short stories is *Flash Fiction: 72 Very Short Stories* (not to be confused with *Fast Fiction*; *Flash Fiction* is edited by James Thomas, Denise Thomas, and Tom Hazuka, New York: W. W. Norton and Company. Copyright © 1992. 224 pages. Price: \$12.95. ISBN: 0-393-30883-9)

The Technique

The major feature of *Fast Fiction* is its practical slant. Roberta is an excellent trainer when it comes to explaining her unique technique for writing short-shorts.

The secret of the technique is the five-minute writing exercise. In this approach, you write a story for five minutes. During these five minutes, you don't edit or judge but merely keep on writing. You give up your ideas about correct writing or quality writing. You don't attempt to take charge; you merely give up. (In doing these exercises, I found it useful to set the timer for five minutes, turn the monitor off, and type away like crazy at my computer keyboard.)

The heart of *Fast Fiction* is a collection of five-minute exercises. They come in three types. The first type asks you to write a story about a specific topic.

Examples:

- Write a story about a lie.
- Write a story about an animal.
- Write a story about something that really happened.

The second type asks you to incorporate a sentence somewhere (beginning, middle, or end) in your short-short.

Examples:

- It was a big house with two rooms.
- I watched him staring at my cousin.
- She lived alone, miles away from any other human being.

The third type uses photographs with a series of questions about each picture.

Example: A photo shows a single glove on stairs. The questions include:

- Who dropped this glove?
- Where was it dropped?

- What was the person thinking about at this time?

Roberta Allen (who is an established visual artist) compares these five-minute sprints to doing quick sketches. After completing your exercise, you evaluate what you wrote not in terms of quality but in terms of emotion and energy. Once you have a story on paper, it is just a question of revising and refining it. The book provides instructions for shaping and polishing your short-short story.

Does This Technique Work?

It works for me, but I may be too biased to objectively judge my own products. So I am including two of my short-short stories (about a lie and about an animal) in the next section. These are results of two of my first five-minute exercises. I spent about 30 minutes revising each one. Read them for yourself and decide whether the technique results in effective stories.

What is more exciting to me than writing short-short stories is the increased fluency, speed, and quality of my writing. Nowadays I don't wait for inspiration to strike me. A five-minute exercise puts me in the mood. Although in my job as a training designer I focus on my factual nonfiction, my improved writing style has a direct impact on most of the things I do. When it comes to writing case materials, for example, my characters, plot, and dialogue seem to have more energy.

To answer the question about whether the technique will work for you, you'll have to buy the book and try it yourself.

Details. *Fast Fiction: Creating Fiction in Five Minutes* by Roberta Allen. Cincinnati, OH: Story Press. Copyright © 1997. ISBN: 1-884910-27-0. 198 pages. Price: \$18.99.

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Storytelling

Two Short-Short Stories

Lies

"Of course, I love you, George! And you are the only person I love," she lied, looking at him straight in his eyes.

She lied to herself also: *This thing with Mark is only temporary. I can snap out of it whenever I want to.* But she knew that she went crazy during last weekend because she did not get to talk to Mark.

George was happy with her response.

"Honey, I am worried because ever since I signed up for the night shift, I know I am neglecting you. I want you to know that you are the most important person in the world and I don't want to lose you just because I am too tired and sleepy."

Sarah smiled. "Who's going to fall for a cripple like me?"

Why did Mark fall for her? He was a physiotherapist who met her after the auto accident and the long stay in the hospital. Three weeks ago, he turned up at her apartment when George was at work. They have been meeting every night since then. They talked about Sarah's dream of writing romance novels and Mark's dream of building a physiotherapy center. There was nothing physical about their relationship even though as her physiotherapist Mark had touched every inch of her body.

Sarah banished her thoughts and smiled at George.

"The trouble with you is that you watch too many daytime soaps. Those adultery plots don't happen in the real world, you know!"

George agreed. "Yes, the real world is not like TV shows. It's weirder. Did you catch the news clip about Mark?"

"Who's Mark?" Sarah asked innocently. She thought: *Maybe Mark got a special award or something.*

"The guy who was your physiotherapist. They arrested him last night because seven of his women patients accused him of taking money from them. He seems to have conned them with his sweet talk and sexual favors. Apparently he has been arrested previously in Florida for pulling the same stunt five years ago."

George suddenly looked worried.

“When he was doing physiotherapy,” he asked with concern, “did he try any hanky panky?”

Sarah laughed. George joined her in the laughter.

“You think I am stupid, eh?” he asked.

Sarah nodded. But she was laughing at her own stupidity.

The Three-Legged Goat

The young goat had only three legs. No one knew whether it was born that way or lost its left rear leg in an accident. However it happened, the goat had learned to hobble with the rest of the herd.

The three-legged goat always stayed in the middle of the herd as the goats grazed in the meadow outside the village. The villagers left the herd alone most of the time except on the Nagore festival day. On that day, they caught the fattest goat. The village priest killed the goat with a long ceremonial sword as a sacrifice to the local deity. Later, the villagers feasted on mutton briyani.

A young boy from the village was trying to catch a goat. At first, the goats ignored him because they could easily escape from his grasp. But for some reason, they suddenly panicked and ran away helter-skelter. The boy ran chased them until the herd disappeared into the mango grove, leaving behind only the three-legged goat.

With one final spurt, the boy grabbed the goat by its lame leg. The goat fell to the ground, struggled for a few moments, and lay still, panting hard. The boy squatted near the goat, also panting hard. After a while, he changed the grip to his left hand and reached into the pocket of the shirt. He pulled out a sharp shining knife.

The boy sat on top of the goat because he needed both his hands now. The goat tried to struggle free, but the boy adjusted his weight to keep the goat pinned down to the ground.

The boy lowered his face, disfigured by an ugly scar, close to the goat's ears.

"I am not going to hurt you," he whispered. "I just want someone to talk to. The other boys don't want to talk to me because I am ugly."

The goat seemed to stare at the boy's face.

"If you don't run away, I will share this mango with you," the boy said. He reached once again into his pocket and pulled out a ripe mango. He sliced a piece with his sharp knife and fed it to the goat.

When the boy stood up, the goat also stood up. It did not run away.

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Contest Results

A New Name for an Old Strategy

The February *PFP* contest challenged readers to create a suitable replacement for the name, Read.Me Games, an interactive strategy for reviewing and reinforcing what participants learn from a reading assignment.

Stephanie Pogge sent these three entries:

- Reading Recall game
- Reading Recollection game
- RR&R - Reading Recall & Reiteration

Here's the first entry from Roger Greenaway:

- LAFRA (pronounced "laugherer") GAMES. (The acronym stands for *Learning Actively From Reading Assignments*.)

Here are five more entries from Roger:

- Text Games

- Text-Based Games
- Text-Test Games
- Textra Games
- Extract Games

These six entries are from Deb Calderon:

- Insiderinformation Games
- Retroread Games
- Thinkback Games
- Sandbag Studies
- Mind-gel Games
- Solidreads

After some serious review (that included testing the short list with a few *PFP* readers), the panel of judges chose Roger Greenaway's charming portmanteau word, Textra Games.

Congratulations, Roger! You win a \$50 gift certificate. Visit our online store at www.thiagi.com and send us your order.

And here's the official definition:

Textra Games combine the effective organization of well-written text materials with the motivational impact of interactive learning. In this type of activity, participants read a handout (or some other type of document) and play a game that incorporates strategies to encourage recall and transfer of what they read.

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Contest

Every month, we challenge our readers with an exciting contest. The winner will receive a \$50 gift certificate toward the purchase of any book or game from Workshops by Thiagi, Inc.

Write a Short-Short Story

This month's book review discusses Roberta Allen's *Fast Fiction: Creating Fiction in Five Minutes*. Read [the review](#) for details of the five-minute story writing technique.

Here's an exercise modeled after those in Roberta Allen's book:

Write a story about a change.

Your contribution should be a short-short story of not more than 300 words.

Take as much time as you want to write and revise your short-short story. But we strongly recommend Roberta Allen's five-minute technique to get your words down on paper.

Once you have a "final" version of the short-short story, send it to us. If we judge your story to be the best one, you win a \$50 gift certificate.

The Rules

- Criteria for judging the entry include creativity, emotional intensity, and an element of surprise.
- Mail your contest entry to Thiagi, 4423 East Trailridge Road, Bloomington, IN 47408-9633, or email it with "Contest 204" on the subject line to thiagi@thiagi.com, or FAX it to 812/332-5701.
- You may submit more than one idea.
- Include your name and email address with your entry.
- The decision of our judges is final.
- We reserve the right to award no prize if we receive no entries of adequate quality.

- Results will be announced in a future issue of *PFP*. All entries become the property of *Play for Performance*. (Of course, you will get full credit.)
- Deadline for the contest is 11:59 PM EST, April 30, 2002. All items must be *received* by the deadline. (Keep this in mind if you send your entry by postal mail.)

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Pithy Saying

Seriously Light

Take serious things lightly and light things seriously.

This has been my philosophy for the past 97 years. I've decided that it's time to share it with others.

If you are a serious person, lighten up. Find humor in all situations. Stop whining. Use humor to defuse current conflicts. Develop the maturity to laugh at yourself.

If you are a silly person, take a serious look at silliness. Find out what makes you—and other people—laugh, smile, and enjoy themselves. Apply the basic principles to enjoy everything you do.

Right now, right at this moment, are you having fun? Are you taking playfulness seriously?

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