

The Triad Format

The Triad Format is a peer-learning activity where three students work together to improve hands-on techniques, or client communication. The activity aims to give students three perspectives on their knowledge and skills. Students develop their critical thinking and ability to give and receive constructive feedback. Additionally, they practice techniques, communication skills, and professional behavior in a structured manner with peer support and feedback.

Directions for the Triad Format

1. The teacher breaks students into groups of three and explains the activity.
2. Each student in a group plays a specific role for a round of the activity.
 - a. **Therapist:** One student acts in the therapist role. Depending on the activity, they might practice interviewing the client, locating structures in kinesiology practice, providing a massage, or responding in a client-therapist scenario.
 - b. **Client:** One student acts in the client role. Depending on the activity, they might communicate as the client, receive a massage, give feedback, or respond as a client in a scenario.
 - c. **Coach:** One student acts in a coaching role. Depending on the activity, they might direct the therapist to ask the client a different question, prompt the therapist to try a technique they haven't attempted or provide feedback to the therapist based on observable performance criteria. For example, the coach might say to the therapist, "I love the fluidity of that technique, but it looks like you could be two notches deeper to engage the client's tissue better. Client, what do you think? When the therapist drops in a bit more, how does that change your experience?" The coach can also encourage the therapist to experiment. They can say things like, "Show me that technique one notch slower, now one notch faster, now one notch deeper, now one notch lighter," and so on.
3. The teacher sets a timer for a "round of play" and circulates through the groups as an observer and feedback giver. When the timer goes off, students switch roles, and a second round ensues. They switch roles for a final round when the timer goes off the second time.
4. The teacher gathers students in a large group and asks them to reflect on their experience and learning. Each student shares something they learned from the activity and playing different roles.

Message Triads

For a message triad, demonstrate three to five techniques you want students to practice. Write the names of these techniques on the whiteboard and refer students to technique rubrics or practice guides as appropriate. Allocate time equally between three rounds of play (20–30-minute rounds work well). Remind students that they must participate in their roles for the full allotted time.

- a. Round 01: Student A (therapist), Student B (client), Student C (coach)
- b. Round 02: Student B (therapist), Student C (client), Student A (coach)
- c. Round 03: Student C (therapist), Student A (client), Student B (coach)

Round 01: The teacher sets a timer and directs the groups to get started. The teacher circulates, observes, and assists until the timer goes off.

Round 02: Students switch message lines and roles when the timer goes off. The teacher sets the timer for another round. The teacher circulates, observes, and assists until the timer goes off.

Round 03: Students switch message lines and roles when the timer goes off. The teacher sets the timer for another round. The teacher circulates, observes, and assists until the timer goes off.

At the end of the activity, gather students in a circle and ask them to reflect on their experiences and learning. What did they learn about the techniques as clients? What did they learn through directions from a coach? What did they learn by observing other therapists?

Practice for a Practical Evaluation

Message triads help students prepare for practical evaluations. For example, if they have an upcoming kinesiology or massage practical, coaches can use the grading form (the same form used for the actual test) to evaluate the student acting as the therapist and give them a mock grade. Coaches can prompt students to address areas where their skills are weak.

Communication Triads

Use communication triads to practice client-therapist interactions related to health intake processes, client interviews, and planning sessions that clients want and need. The coach in communication triads directs the practice session, describes what is working and not working, offers suggestions, gives feedback on what they hear, and prompts the others as needed.

Provide students with scenarios or prompts you want them to practice. Example prompts include:

- Therapists and clients role-play different massage sessions. Determine the client's goals for the session, the body areas where they want a massage, the body areas where they don't want a massage, the sequence of body regions, the amount of time you'll spend on each area, and the amount of pressure the client prefers.
- Therapists, can you share the language you use to explain to a client how to position themselves supine on the massage table at the beginning of sessions?
- Therapists, can you share the language you use to move a client from supine to prone?
- Therapists and clients role-play an exchange where you discuss the pressure of techniques. Client, you want deeper techniques but want to avoid saying this directly to the therapist.
- Therapists and clients role-play a situation in which a client asks the therapist how a technique is beneficial. The therapist responds with language that is technically accurate but understandable to the client.
- Therapists and clients role-play an exchange in which the client arrives 15 minutes late for their second session in a row.

Allocate time equally between three rounds of play (20-minute rounds work well).

- a. Round 01: Student A (therapist), Student B (client), Student C (coach)
- b. Round 02: Student B (therapist), Student C (client), Student A (coach)
- c. Round 03: Student C (therapist), Student A (client), Student B (coach)

At the end of the activity, gather students in a circle and ask them to reflect on their experiences and learning.

The triad format gives students three perspectives on knowledge and skills while requiring them to think critically from different roles. The triad format offers a meaningful way to make learning more active and engaging while ensuring students practice important skills.