

TEAMBUILDERS AND ICE BREAKERS
Using games as resources for group process
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“Human beings possess the unique capability of working together to produce a result that is greater than the sum of the individual talents which enter into the task.”

Joe Paul, 1980

There are increased possibilities for productive output for a group through the use of teambuilding. Teambuilding is a 2-step process by which groups or teams first focus on barriers to effective group work and purpose, and then enact changes to remove those barriers and improve group effectiveness.

- Through team building group members are given the chance to examine the way they interact with and relate to one another
- Members can observe the group process in both how they work together as a team and how they work as individuals with in the team
- Members can observe the way decisions are made and implemented.
- There is an increase in the confidence and trust that they have for one another
- Teambuilders can help members realize the amounts of power and influence individual members hold, and the ways power is used.
- Teambuilders can get people acquainted with one another and develop a sense of trust and belonging to the group.

In summary: Teambuilders can make group members feel more comfortable with one another, make individuals feel as though they are a part of the group, help members gain trust for one another and detach members how to work together as a group.

Groups may have a tendency to suppress open expression of feelings. Teambuilders create a sense of community and build a cohesive supportive trusting group where members feel free to express feelings and ideas.

As members develop the trust and feeling of belonging to the group they make a commitment to the group and take responsibility in group participation. As group members get involved, things begin to happen and the group begins to accomplish and produce.

The main idea is to produce a product greater than the sum of the individual talents in the group.

Planning Teambuilders and Ice Breakers

- Assess where your group is and what level of risk they are willing to take
- Begin with low risk activities and build progressively to more challenging experiences
- Consider that timing is critical to the successful use of teambuilding
- Ensure that people are dressed appropriate to the exercises. Make sure that jewelry and glasses are removed for very physical activities, loose clothing is worn, shoes fit the activity and shorts are not worn if the participant will be climbing on rough terrain
- Give people an out if they are afraid or unable to do certain activities
- Make sure that safety precautions are always taken such as utilizing spotters, checking the equipment to be used to make sure it is in good shape, etc.
- Three 'cardinal rules' of Teambuilders:
 1. The group must work together and work toward both individual and group goals
 2. Safety of the individual and of the group is to be the primary concern of the group
 3. Feedback and debriefing, both positive and negative are to be given to each other

“Debriefing”

Throughout the teambuilder, the facilitator should step back and allow the group to attempt to solve the problem, while closely observing the group. Listen closely to comments that are made, actions, see who are the leaders, the followers, and make sure that everything done is within the boundaries of safety. Sometimes the facilitator will add a new twist to the task to make it more difficult, and then step back to observe.

After the exercise is solved, (or tried) the group discusses what just occurred. This is called the problem debriefing. It is at this point that the facilitator comments on what he or she observed while the group was trying to solve the initiative. The group may analyze how it arrived at (or did not arrive at) its ultimate objective. The group can look at the decisions that were made and by whom. The group can also look at who had ideas that were not expressed or were not listened to.

Afterwards, the facilitator can translate the feedback into the actions of the group- ex. Program planning and implementation- how can we use what we just discussed.

At the end, try to leave the group with a feeling of optimism. The group may feel content that they worked together, even if the solution was not achieved. Or, they may feel a sense of failure because they did not achieve their goals. Discussion and debriefing should leave the group with a sense that their attempt was good and that in their next venture they will learn from this and next time they will be successful.

Sources from Pirke Avot about Leadership and Teambuilding
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- 1) Ch. 1:3 Be not like servants who serve their master because of the expected reward, but be like those who serve a master without expecting a reward.
- 2) Ch. 1:6 Get yourself a teacher; and acquire yourself a companion; and judge all people favorably.
- 3) Ch. 1:14 If I am not for myself, who will be? but if I am for myself alone what am I? and if not now, when?
- 4) Ch. 1:15 Say little and do much.
- 5) Ch. 1:15 Greet everyone with a cheerful countenance.
- 6) Ch. 2:5 Do not separate yourself from the community.
- 7) Ch. 2:6 In a place where there are no men, strive to be a man.
- 8) Ch. 2:21 It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you free to desist from it.
- 9) Ch. 3:12 He whose deeds exceed his wisdom, his wisdom will endure; he whose wisdom exceeds his deeds, his wisdom will not endure.
- 10) Ch. 4:1 Who is wise? He who learns from all men.
- 11) Ch. 4:1 Who is mighty? He who subdues his passions.
- 12) Ch. 4:4 Let a person be exceedingly humble, for the end of mortal man is but worms.
- 13) Ch. 4:6 He who learns, so that he may also teach, it will be given to him to learn and also to teach.
- 14) Ch. 4:20 Be the first to extend greetings to every man; and choose to be a tail to lions rather than a head to foxes.
- 15) Ch. 6:5 Do not aspire after grandeur and do not be covetous for honor.

The great thing in the world is not so much where we stand, as in what direction we are moving.

—Oliver Wendell Holmes

* Choose two people of approximately equal strength. Have them stand on opposite sides of an imaginary line and clasp hands. The challenge is to pull the other person across the line. A successful tug wins a point or M&M. Give the two a minute in order to score points.

Hint: Avoid terms that indicate an adversarial role, but do not express any concept of cooperation. If the two recognize the benefit of cooperation, give them the entire bag of M&M's to share.

Debrief: Recognize that we are asking them to participate in a new program. They are required to think in different terms, to express themselves, try their best, and have fun.

* relate the following Midrash

Now Moses, tending the flock of his father-in-law Jethro, the priest of Midian, drove the flock into the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire out of a bush. He gazed, and there was a bush all aflame, yet the bush was not consumed. Moses said, 'I must turn aside to look at this marvelous sight; why doesn't the bush burn up?' (shmoet 3:1 -3)

This is a great time to talk about leadership. For you see, it was the fact that Moses turned aside that allowed him to actually "see" the burning bush. The bush has always been there for us all although most haven't made the effort to take notice of it. The issues and concerns of our world are accessible to everyone, but it is only those who take the initiative to turn aside that take on the role of a leader.

Everybody Up -

debrief: This is mostly a warm-up exercise. It requires cooperation and the participation of everyone in the group. Something that began as a simple cooperative stunt becomes an initiative problem that includes the entire group.

Ask two people of approximately the same size to sit on the ground (gym floor) facing one another so that the bottoms of their feet are opposed, knees are bent, and hands are tightly grasped. From this stylized sitting position, ask the duo to try and pull themselves into an upright standing position. If the pair is successful (most are), ask them to seek another partner and try standing up with three people, then four, etc, until the entire group eventually makes an attempt. Criteria for a successful attempt are: 1) Hands grasped so that an electrical current could pass through the group, 2) Foot contact with the same electrical set up, 3) All derrieres off the ground at the same time.

An expanding group will soon find that the seemingly logical circular configuration of bodies cannot be continued beyond 8 or so. A change of thinking (initiative) must be employed to come up with a solution that allows large numbers (50 people or more) to complete the problem.

If an adrenalin pumped group of 8 or 10 jogs over to you, after having stumbled and jerked to a tenuous standing position, and breathlessly asks, "Did we do it right?"—need I say what your answer should be? Are they high? Yes. Do they feel good about their effort and themselves? Yes. Did they do it right?

An alternate or additional way to present this problem is to ask the participants to sit back to back and try to stand as a pair, a trio etc. Do not allow interlocked arms for safety reasons (shoulder dislocation possibilities.)

ALL ABOARD

(The 1980's answer to the 1950's stunt of how many people can fit into a telephone booth.)

Object: to see how many people can get on the 2' x 2' platform at one time.

Rules:

- 1.) In order to be counted as on the platform, each person must have both feet off the ground.
- 2.) The group must be able to hold a balanced pose for at least five seconds ie: no one touches the ground for 5 measured seconds.

Note: An average group can get 12-15 bodies on the platform, although theoretically a much larger number is possible. The exercise lends itself to useful discussion about team effort, group and individual commitment, leadership, compassion and group problem solving dynamics.

The All Aboard is a solidly build 2' x 2' platform. The 2' x 2' measurement is not carved in stone (in fact, each platform I build seems to vary a few inches from side to side), but does provide a general pattern size to work from. In addition, if you don't build a standard sized platform, how can you sponsor a NCAA-sanctioned All Aboard Championship?

Construction of a portable platform is simplicity itself. Cut two 2 ft. sections of 4" x 4" lumber and, placing them parallel to one another 2 ft. apart, (outside edges), nail or screw three 2" x 8" x 2' boards to the top of the 4" x 4" 's. Finish the job by rasping off the edges to minimize the chance of injury if someone were to fall onto the platform.

By fabricating a portable platform (rather than the old, sunk-in-the-ground model), you have the flexibility to present this activity where it best suits the weather or your needs. For variety, give a larger group (20-25) a 3' x 3' platform to serve as a landing area for the swinging All Aboard problem, also called Prouty's Landing.

Remember that one of your responsibilities as group leader is to encourage safety procedures. It may be necessary to occasionally nix an idea if someone's safety is jeopardized. The "Big Pile" technique of stacking people on the platform is dangerous and should not be allowed. This seemingly logical ploy of stacking horizontal participants perpendicular to one another (like tic tac toe) results in tremendous pressure being put on the bottom two people. Perform some quick addition and you will see what a poor solution this becomes--theoretically sound, actually, painful.

Traffic Jam

Introduce the idea of the situational leader. A leader must deal with the needs of a particular situation using the various techniques of leadership.

Set up markings on the floor which indicate the positions that the group must stand:

ex. →→→→ _____ ←←←←

- People may only move in the direction that they begin.
- No backwards moves
- Can't move around someone facing the same direction
- Two people can't move at once.

After the group has solved the problem, have them try it a second time without talking. How does communication help in problem solving? How does brainstorming play a role? Let one outside person guide the group. How does a designated leader help?

Magic Shoes

Designate an area of poisonous jelly, or a deep cavern, that must be crossed. The only one who can stand upon the jelly is the person who is wearing the magic shoes. These can be an imaginary set or some other tangible item that can be passed between participants. Only one person is capable of wearing the magic shoes at a single time. Their objective is to cross the group over the traverse. By adding a wild dangerous herd of tribbles closing in on the group, you have given them incentive to complete the task quickly.

Debrief: Pay special attention to the roles that members accepted. Were they constructive, ones they normally act out, the role they wish to assume? This discussion requires careful observation by the facilitator. Be honest with what you perceived, but be careful of making judgements for the group.

It is inherently easier to develop a negative argument than to advance a constructive one.

-John Steinbeck

discuss: This is an appropriate time to introduce the skill of brainstorming. It is true cooperation that can lead to consensus. It is essential that members of a group recognize the aims of the organization, as well as, honestly admitting their own needs. It is a balance of the individual with the group that builds leadership roles. It is unacceptable and eventually destructive to ignore either.

TWO PERSON TRUST FALL

This activity adds verbal communication which provides the initial one-on-one contracting for spotting (low ropes) and belaying (high ropes and rock climbing). The calls are initiated by the faller and completed by the catcher. A typical sequence might look like this:

Faller: "Spotters Ready?"

Catcher: "Ready"

Faller: "Falling"

Catcher: "Fall away."

The faller should be reminded to secure his arms across his chest to ensure not throwing out arms and elbows. The falling person should also keep knees and body straight, falling directly backwards. Following the Two Person Trust Fall you can attempt these more advanced trust sequences.

An effective and dramatic group trust exercise can be accomplished by asking a student to stand upon a stump, platform, ladder rung and fall backward into the arms of a group of spotters. There should be at least 10 individuals standing on level ground to act as catchers. The platform should be 6 feet high or less.

The person falling should keep his/her arms held closely to the side of their body and fall with the body hard ie: not bending in the waist. If the falling person does bend (pike) it concentrates the forces of the fall to a small area (the posterior) and makes catching the bent faller more difficult.

The two lines of catchers stand side by side shoulder facing one another. Hands are extended palms up so that the hands are alternated and juxtaposed to form a secure landing area. Do not allow catchers, facing one another, to grasp hands or wrists in order to provide a firm, solid landing, knocked heads will result.

Assign one person in the group to stand on the platform with the volunteer about to fall. It's that person's responsibility to make sure the faller is 1) spatially aligned with the catchers 2) holding onto his/her pant seams tightly or with hands in pockets to prevent spontaneous flying elbows 3) tilting his or her head back as a means of remaining hard.

The platform proctor also should rearrange the spotters if it appears there is an appreciable strength or size discrepancy in opposing catchers. The proctor asks the catchers if they are ready and directs them to look up at the person about to fall. The fall follows immediately.

As an instructor, do not succumb to the temptation of being the first person to fall. The smiling, apparently confident group below you has probably never caught anyone before and the sight of a falling instructor, coupled with a novice's prerogative of doing everything wrong, might be enough to result in a very hard landing, not speculation, fact!

Place yourself in the catching line so that if everything goes wrong, you can either catch the falling volunteer by yourself or do a good job of slowing him down. After the students have caught a few fallers, remove yourself from the spotting line, keeping a close eye on what is happening.

If eventually the students say, "How come you haven't tried this yet, you don't trust

OTHER TEAMBUILDERS THAT TEACH

Communication between Group Members:

Don't Make Me Laugh- without touching, one partner makes the other laugh

Gibberish- without using real words, converse (look for intensity of expression)

Partner Conversation- Partners each say 1 word until sentence is completed. Try in teams.

The Word Wizard- pencil and paper are needed for each person. Give the following

instructions one at a time, and slowly, leaving time for each exercise: I am a wizard, I am taking away all your words. But as I am generous, you may have four of them back. Write down the four words you want to keep out of all the words in the world. Find a partner, communicate using only your four words, plus gestures....Now you may share words with your partner- write down his words. Now you have up to eight words. Change partners and communicate with these words on your list only. Share words. Repeat changing partners 4-6 times. Now take your list and try to write a poem using just those words.

Guillotine- pencil and paper are needed for each person. Partners write down 6 lines of dialogue- 3 each. Use as script and change situation each time. How do they change the way the lines are recited- as if crossing the Judean Desert, as if you were two newlyweds at breakfast, as if taking a man to the guillotine, any situation

Listening not judging- form small groups, discuss a topic of interest. Before you respond to another's comments, put the ideas in your own words. Try again until you get it right. Discussion is slow but understanding is great.

Dissolving Group Tension (great for bunk problems)

Resent and appreciate- Have group sit in circle. Each person makes a statement beginning with "I resent". Repeat round with "I appreciate". No one is allowed to comment. Anyone can say "I pass" or "I resent/appreciate nothing."

Gripes Auction- Either prepare in advance or brainstorm cards with gripes on them.

Pencils are distributed. The leader holds a series of cards, each with a gripe. Each person has 100 points to bid and no more. When the auction is over, the people who have cards explain why their particular gripe is important and how it affects their lives. Keep track of their points.

Unfolding Before Group- (group connection)

I am a shoe- think of an object and introduce yourself as that object.

Partner Introductions

Group Interview