

TEAM BUILDING ON A BUDGET

(with lessons learned from Bill Henderson and John Fark)

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Directions:

The major objective of each of the following exercises is to help participants develop and experience teamwork skills and abilities needed to work effectively in groups. It is very important to “set the stage” for each activity with an appropriate introduction, and also to pose a few “processing” or “reflection” questions at the end of each activity to make sure participants achieve this objective (as well as other goals that the facilitator may have for the activities).

Examples of reflection questions which might be posed for group discussion following the activities include:

- *What kinds of teamwork skills and abilities did you need in order to do this activity successfully?*
- *Were you able to do this activity perfectly from the beginning, or did you need to make some adjustments along the way? How could you tell that you needed to make adjustments?*
- *What kinds of adjustments did you personally need to make for the group to be successful with the activity? What kinds of adjustments did other people need to make?*
- *In what ways was working with other people in the group to complete this activity similar to how you work with people in other groups in which you are involved? In what ways were the teamwork abilities you needed for success in this activity similar to or different from the teamwork skills you need for success in other groups?*

Alleluia (an active mixer with plenty of smiles - urge participants to be gentle)

Chorus:

A la la la la la la le lu ia

A la la la la la la le lu ia

A la la la la la la le lu ia

A la la la la la la le lu ia

Shake another hand, shake a hand next to ya,

Shake another hand as we go along.

Shake another hand, shake a hand next to ya,

Shake another hand as we sing, sing this song

Chorus

Do actions for additional verses: (use according to the safety and comfort of the group)

Touch another nose; Touch an elbow; Nudge another knee, Tap another toe, Bump another rump

Sons of Job (Pass the Rock)

(use any item that easily fits in a hand – wrapped candy, toy, rock, shoe)

The sons of **Job** were playing pass the **rock**,

Take it or **leave** it. Take it **again**.

They went “Niddy Noddy Niddy Noddy Niddy Noddy **Nid**.”

They went “Niddy Noddy Niddy Noddy Niddy Noddy **Nid**.”

Directions:

Participants standing in a circle with shoulders less than six inches from one another.

Left hands placed palm up at a comfortable position on their left side with their “rock” in the palm. Their empty right hand poised palm down over their neighbor’s left hand.

Move the “rock” from their neighbor’s left hand and place it in their own left hand on the count underlined in the above song.

- See how many passes they can accomplish without losing a “rock.”

Group Juggling (a cooperative way to learn names)

An easy exercise to teach, group juggling enables anyone to smile, laugh and have fun while learning about communication. Begin by forming circles of eight to fifteen people (the number is not critical but the size of the circle determines what can be juggled). Use soft objects (example: sock balls, tennis balls, soft dog toys, stuffed toy animals, newspaper balls). Select a leader to start tossing the first object. The leader asks everyone to hold up their hands as if ready to receive an object thrown to them. The leader *gently* tosses the object *under-handed* across the circle (not to someone next to him/her) with their hands up. That person gently throws it under-handed across the circle from them to someone with their hands up. As each participant catches and throws the first object, they may relax their arms and put their hands down, remembering who they tossed the item to. The last person to receive the object tosses it to the leader to complete the cycle. In this way everyone touches the object only one time in a definite pattern.

Variations:

- As each person tosses the object they can call out their own name. Repeat the process with each person calling out the name of the person they're throwing to (if you don't know, ask-someone in the circle knows their name).
- Add more objects to the process to see how many items can be kept in the air at one time without dropping them. This can become pandemonium, but that's OK.
- Use one object and note the time it takes to complete the cycle. Ask the participants if they can perform the task faster. Allow them to experiment with techniques to shorten the time for the object (a tennis ball is excellent for this part) to pass in the given sequence throughout the group. Adjustments may be made to challenge the group.

Magic Ball Toss

Magic balls are wonderful things. They are low in cost and very catchable, even for the "catching impaired." They inflict no pain when thrown too hard, and they allow for creativity and "creative dramatics" and help people to shed their shells of self-consciousness.

"See the ball I am holding? It has size shape and weight. I am going to call out someone's name and toss this ball to them" (you can use the same circle and sequence used in group juggling if you like).

Imagine now that the ball becomes endowed with magical powers and will change at your command into anything you wish to toss. Tell the ball what to change into, call someone's name, and have them catch what you toss. Remember catchers, the object has imaginary size and weight. Catch it as if it has the actual characteristics! The ball can be changed by each person by simply telling the object what to change into before calling someone's name and tossing it. Ready? Go!

Game Protector

Form a circle of participants with two members in the middle. The first person is the protector and the second person in the center is the game (perhaps a bear). The game protector's job is to protect the bear from being hit by a soft (nerf or beach) ball the participants around the circle will toss at the bear. If the bear is hit, the game protector becomes the bear and the person who hit the bear becomes the protector, allowing the original bear to join the circle. For large circles, the number of protectors in the center can be increased to lengthen the line of people protecting the bear.

Tipi Shuffle

Using masking tape or a line of carpet squares, create a rectangular box (or "log") on the ground or floor. The box should be long enough for your group to stand in, shoulder-to-shoulder facing one direction. The box should also be just wide enough at its smaller dimension so that the person with the largest feet or shoes has one to two inches of clearance before he/she touches the edge of the box. Members are asked to number off (one, two, three...). Then the group is told to reverse their order from one end of the box to the other without stepping outside the box. Observers are helpful in watching the box and have the group start over if someone touches the line. The facilitator has the option of how many touches outside the box are allowed before the group has to start over.

Alternatives:

- At various times during this initiative, have each participant call out their initial number, allowing the others to know how far they have progressed.
- Have the participants stand off to one side and ask them how long it would take them to start outside the box, at one point have all the members in the box at the same time, and exit the box. Time their effort and ask if they can do it faster. Allow them to try different methods.

Pair Tag

This is a great game for large groups in a small area. It works well indoors and is alright outside if confined to a relatively small area. Divide the participants into groups of four. Divide each group of four into two teams of two. These two teams will be playing against each other.

Team members hold hands throughout the play of the game. The object is for one team to find the other team and tag them. The first team of two is given a count of twenty to "disappear" into the large group. Team 2 members should close their eyes and allow team 1 time to "hide." At the end of the count, the search begins. Once the hiding team is located and tagged, the roles reverse. It sounds easy, but with dozens of teams "hiding" or "searching" it becomes quite exciting. There should be nothing to hide behind except other people hiding and searching. Caution participants to remain in the small area and keep running speeds low. A rope may be used to mark the playing space.

Hand Cuffs

Provide a 40 inch piece of yarn, string or rope to each participant. Tie loops in each end of the string that will allow one hand to slip through. Ask the participants to pair up, with one person in each pair wearing their hand cuffs with one loop on each wrist. The other partner should place one loop on one of their wrists, dropping the other loop over their partner's string, then placing the remaining loop over their second wrist. Thus you will have everyone with one piece of yarn with two loops on their own wrists interlinked with their partner.

Instruct the participants that the objective is to separate themselves without removing their hands from their own tied loops, without placing their hands in their partner's tied loops, and without cutting, breaking, chewing, burning or ripping their string apart. It can be done.

Hint #1 - Two people in wheelchairs could perform this task (disability awareness)

Hint #2 - Use only the "tools" they were given (the string).

Hint #3 - Use the best feature of their "tools" (intrinsic value is its flexibility)

Hint #4 - Tell them they have four loops and two strings to work with – choose one loop and interact the middle of their partner's string with that chosen loop

Solution - Without twisting or placing a "throw" in the string, create a bend in the center of one person's string. Gently pass this bend through one of their partner's loops from behind their tied loop. Pull the bend over their partner's finger tips, back under the tied loop and walk away from each other.

Variations:

-Use two different colored strings for each set of partners to avoid confusion

-Once a pair of partners successfully disengages, have them try to reverse the process with the same rules

-Using one handcuff string with half of a granny knot in the middle, slip the loops over an individual's wrists and have them undo the knot. The technique is the similar to the pairs.

Paper Plate Punchboard

Using paper plates, number (or letter) each consecutively with a marker (1-25, A-Z, etc.). Place the paper plates randomly in the center of a circle on the floor (the center circle of basketball court, a rope circle, etc.). Keep the group far enough away that they cannot see the numbers/letters and locations of the plates. Tell them that you will time the group starting when the first person crosses a starting line until the last person returns and re-crosses the same line at the finish. Their task is for everyone in the group to participate in touching one or two paper plates and then returning to where they started. They may all move as a group if they wish but only one participant may be in the circle at any one time. Remember, the plates must be touched in sequential order.

Once they have been timed, ask if they can improve their speed. Let their creativity lead them to possible solutions. Be safety conscious on slippery surfaces.

FINISH LINE

OBJECTIVE –

To demonstrate that you are truly a team and that you are really committed to sharing all your successes and disappointments equally with all members of your team.

RULES-

1. You must all start behind the finish line
2. Every single person must cross the line at the exact same time
3. You have 5 chances to accomplish this task
4. Any crossing of the line from this point on uses one of your 5 chances.
(Verbalizing this rule is optional. You may want your group to “discover” you have already started to record their 5 chances)

Set Up Diagram –

_____ wall
X X X X X X X X X X X X X participants (facing away from the wall)
_____ finish line (no more than four feet away)

Set the stage prior to doing this initiative by showing how group communication can maximize members’ contributions and strengths through a wonderful circle. A wonderful circle is very effective for sharing ideas, problem solving and group decision making, allowing everyone’s ideas and feelings to be seen and heard. Group juggle works well to make this point.

Then line everyone up against a wall with the finish line about 3 to 4 feet in front of them and then pose the challenge. (A straight line distances people and cuts down on their ability to communicate effectively and takes them out of that wonderful, effective “communication” circle.)

Explain what a photo finish is in regards to a horse race, where two or more horses approaching the finish line have a flash photo taken as they break the plane of the finish line to see who wins. Tell the group they have five chances to have every member of the group break the plane of the finish line (a straight rope, piece of tape, line in the floor, etc.) at exactly the same time. Every time a member even leans over the line, waves their hand or arm over it, etc. yell “FLASH!” and they have used one of their five chances. Many times they don’t realize who did it. The facilitator may or may not choose to point out the culprit. This sometimes leads to the culprit becoming the scapegoat if you desire to go there. (Opportunity for a “fix it – don’t blame it” discussion).

If the group is large, you can split them into two or more groups. Let one group observe the other group and then observe what happens in both groups when the second group is more successful as they attempt the task (Learn from others mistakes, you don’t have time to make them all yourself). Did the first group offer suggestions or did competition become a factor? Did they still function as one TEAM working in two groups trying to accomplish the task or did it instantly become competitive when you divided the team into two groups? What did the team (groups) do to compensate (communication-wise) for the inability to “circle up”.

Make sure you have enough time to process this initiative. Don’t leave the group frustrated and always let the scapegoats off the hook by saying you planned it that way and wanted to see how the group would react to the opportunity to place the blame on someone.

Check out the following web site: www.teamworkandteamplay.com for more activities.

Paper Plate Frisbees

Using paper plates or other types of discs (the size can vary) create indoor discus throwing competitions. The plates can be decorated if desired. Participants can compete for distance, accuracy or the amount of plates that hit a target in a given amount of time.

Marble Pass

Using anything cylindrical (paper towel rolls, Pringle cans, Lays Stax containers, rolled paper, metal cans with the edges smoothed), transfer marbles (or other small items) from one tube to another to reach a target (cup, bucket, etc.). The marble may not touch the floor, a participant's skin or clothing, and must go through every tube before hitting the target. Instruct participants that when the marble is in their tube they may not move their feet (which also means if their tube is empty, they can walk around – but don't give them this clue initially).

Alternatives:

- Connect more than two participants together
- Blindfold some participants
- Place obstacles in the path to the target
- After passing several objects, allow the team to choose which object they wish to use for the fastest passing time.

Power

(also known as “Knowledge is Power”, or “The Last Object”)

Place 15 objects (coins, rocks, paper clips, lids) in a line on a flat surface (desk, table) for each group of people (from one to four, not counting the facilitator).

Tell other people in each group that you will play as a “team” against everyone on their team.

The rules are simple:

1. Each team takes turns removing one, two or three objects from the line at a time, alternating between the two teams.
2. The facilitator usually asks the other team if they wish to go first or second.
3. The object is to leave the opposing team with the last object (the 15th object in the line).
4. Continue playing until the opposing team wins each time, regardless of whether they go first or second.

Hint – there are three critical points in the play of this initiative. If the team with the knowledge uses that knowledge, then they have the “Power” to win. Once their opponent has the knowledge, then they can win.

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