

Team Building Activities

Sunni Richardson

Director of Discipleship - First Lutheran Church

sunni@flclincoln.org - 402.488.0919

Goals

- Help the group build a sense of community through activities aimed at getting acquainted as well as strengthening communication, trust and cooperation.
- Increase mutual support within a group by providing hands-on (experiential) activities that encourages the recognition and use of individual gifts, skills and talents for the good of all.
- Strengthen a sense of vision and the development of strategic thinking/problem solving skills within the context of community.
- Provide an opportunity to work toward a common goal.
- Provide participants at the AmeriCorps Conference a variety of activities they can use in their service.

We Remember

10% of what we read

12% of what we hear

30% of what we see

50% of what we see and hear

70% of what we say

And 90% of what we say and do.

Cooperative games, initiative activities, emphasize participation, challenge and fun rather than focusing on competition, winning or defeating someone. While engaging in cooperative games, participants are able to learn how to do an activity (doing) and are then encouraged to apply these new insights (sayings) to real life situations.

Cooperative games can be used to build community, teach leadership skills, promote the growth of trust and problem solving skills. The activities can stretch participants' comfort zone by offering challenges that make people feel a little uncomfortable, causing them to view what may be considered "normal" in a new way. The key is process and progress, which may result in the group not actually being able to accomplish the task in the allotted time or with the given set of players.

Rules and Procedures

1. Supervision is a must. A ratio of 1 staff/adult for every 8 participants for elementary age and 1 staff/adult for every 10 participants for middle school and high school youth.
2. Safety first! Always! Check the space before you play - look for hazards.
3. Any activity that involves lifting, falling or catching requires trained spotters. If you have not been trained as a spotter --- you are not qualified to train others.
4. Encourage but do not force participation. Force will result in resentment and the activity will not accomplish its purpose. Although participants are encouraged to be stretched, participants should know all activities presented will be "their challenge, their choice".
5. Learn as much about the group as you can before playing. Are there members of the group that may be limited in their ability to do a certain activity? Do you need to adapt activities based on skill level or on the goals of the group? Is there an existing conflict within the group that may require intervention? Are there activities the group has already completed?
6. As a leader, your role is not to tell the group how to solve the challenge.
Your role is to:
 - encourage and enthusiastically support
 - explain each activity and the safety procedures
 - monitor the group's progress.

7. Be patient. Let the group work through problems. Debrief immediately and let the group point out the snags and tell you what they learned. Don't cheat by giving out clues that allow the group to side step the process or take a short-cut just for the sake of accomplishing the task.
8. Watch for the person that takes control and leads all the time. You may need to alter the "rules" in order to allow others to lead and fully participate. Examples: no talking; only girls can talk or only boys can talk or blindfold a player.
9. Review safety rules for each activity before you begin "playing". Check with the group to be sure all are capable of participating. Check for physical limitations and look for ways to adapt the activity. Example: sitting instead of standing to play, restricting the boundaries for a running game, walk like a duck instead of running.
10. Keep the group together and the attention focused on the activity.
11. Never assume the participants are in full control. Always be their eyes and ears when doing an activity.
12. Have fun while learning.

Debriefing

There are 4 distinct phases in the learning cycle:

1. The experience (The activity)
2. Reflection (What?)
3. Processing (So what?)
4. Transference (Now what?)

Debriefing, or reflecting, is what moves the activity from a game to a learning experience. Always allow time to debrief.

Tips:

- Use *open ended questions* - "What did you learn?" "What do you think was the purpose of the game?"
- Encourage participants to reflect on *how they feel* about the activity - "How did it feel when you were stuck in the middle?" "How did it feel when you were able to turn things around?"
- Push participants to *make decisions* - "What was the best part?" "What would you do next time?"
- Ask *guiding questions* to steer the group toward the purpose of the game - "What got you moving in the right direction?"
- *Closing questions* will help participants draw conclusions and bring the activity to a close - "What did you learn?"

Other Processing Questions:

- Communicating effectively - how many different ways of communicating were used, what worked and why, what did not work and why, what would have perhaps been a more effective way to communicate
- Expressing appropriate feelings - what feelings were expressed, do you feel comfortable expressing your feelings, do you usually suppress your feelings, how can expressing your feelings help you in daily life
- Listening - who made suggestions, were all the suggestions heard, which suggestions were acted upon, how can we become better listeners
- Leading others - who assumed the leadership role, did the leadership change during the activity, what do you expect from a leader, what behaviors do you assign to a leader, who followed the leader even though you were not sure the idea would work
- Following others - what are the traits of a good follower, how does refusal to follow affect the leadership role, how can you be a better follower
- Making group decisions - how were decisions made, were you satisfied with the decisions made, how did the group arrive at decisions
- Cooperation - can you think of specific examples of when the group cooperated, what are the rewards of cooperation, how did cooperation lead to success with this activity
- Trust - define trust, how comfortable were you with the trust level exhibited by the group

Don't make assumptions. It is important to watch the group. Even the same group doing the same activity a few months down the road may come out in a different place. The games have a life of their own - let the games work for you and don't get in the way of the learning that is bound to happen.

Activities

Bean Bag Toss

Goal:

To learn names and see the important role each person in the group plays. Using a variety of balls and objects will open the door for a conversation related to diversity.

Location:

An open area that allows tosses in the air without breaking anything

Leader's notes:

Players should be instructed to throw underhand. The goal is for the person to catch the object thrown to them.

Equipment:

3 easy to throw items/group -- such as bean bags of different colors

Divide into smaller groups if you have more than 30 participants

Group size of 20-25 work, any bigger slows down the activity.

Directions:

- Stand in a circle - sit if you need to adapt the game for the group or a player
- Leader has a bean bag and says "Hi, Jill (the person's name that they are looking at), as he/she proceeds to toss the bean bag across the circle to Jill. Jill catches the beanbag and responds "Thanks, Mark (the tosser's name). Jill tosses the beanbag to someone else in the same manner, always tossing to a new player so that everyone in the circle is included. Beanbag returns to the started once everyone has had a turn. To help the tosser know who has or has not had the beanbag, have the players cross their arms in front of their chest. Once they have had the beanbag they drop their arms.
- Practice the same routine, in the same order, a couple more times.
- Add other/additional objects to the circle as the activity proceeds so that multiple items are being tossed at the same time. Consider having one item go backwards.

To make a point about the importance of each player - have one player step back out of the circle. The beanbags will pile up where they were standing. See how the group responds and discuss in debriefing.

Debriefing:

- How did you deal with trying to learn names? Did you struggle with any names? What part did tossing the beanbag and saying a person's name have in this activity?
- What happened when XXX stepped back out of the circle? What's that tell us about community?
- Were all the items the same when it came to throwing and catching them? (A variety of items are needed to make this point.) How does this relate to diversity? Can we all be handled the same way?
- Go around the circle once more to learn names.
- Disperse by having the players shake the hand of the person they tossed to and the player they received the beanbag from.

Bop Bippity Bop

Goal:

Teamwork is the goal with new teams forming at a moment's notice.

Location:

Open area with room for a big circle.

Equipment:

No equipment needed

Leader's Notes:

Keep your eyes and ears open. This is a fast-paced game and action packed. Sometimes however, folks get lost in the midst of it and you may need to step in and adjust so the game can keep moving. Fun and laughter will abound. Watch for who gets frustrated and who can just laugh it off and continue with the game.

Directions:

- Group stands in a circle - you can play with the whole group sitting or participants may choose to sit if standing is difficult. One way to get a group in a circle is to tell them to make a circle and touch elbows. This works better than holding hands at some age and is less threatening for those who do not know each other and who's cultural background may make them uncomfortable touching.
- Select one person to be "IT" and have them stand in the middle. After player sees how it works you may want to add another IT or two to keep things moving.
- The middle person moves around the circle attempting to get someone else to take their place in the middle. To do this the person in the middle (IT) walks up to a person standing in the circle and any of the following may occur:

<u>IT Says</u>	<u>Responder Says</u>	<u>Outcome</u>
Bop Bippity Bop	Bop	IT stays in middle
Bop Bippity Bop	Nothing	Responder now in the middle
Bop	Bop	Responder now in the middle
Bop	Nothing	IT stays in middle

- Have some fun by adding additional components to the game one at a time. IT again proceeds around the circle walking up to someone and addressing them. This time IT can say Bop Bippity Bop, Bop or any of the items listed below (as introduced to the game one at a time). IT should count to ten, aloud, as fast as they can. The goal is to reach 10 before the group can do the appropriate action.
 - Elephant - the people on each side make one of the elephant's big flop ears and the center person makes the trunk of the elephant
 - Jell-O - the outside people form a bowl and the center person shakes like a bowl of Jell-O
 - Firecracker - center person shoots up like a firecracker and the outside people imitate the squiggly shooters out to the side
 - Cow - the center person puts hands out and fingers intertwined and thumbs point down, while the outside people grab a thumb and "milk" the cow
 - Disco Dancing - the center person holds their hands over their head like a disco light, with the people on each side disco dancing

Debriefing:

Really not much debriefing needed with this game. The key is to see we can have fun and to notice how we worked together (or not) when IT "called" on you.

Playing together is one of the key elements of coming together as a team and becoming community.

The morale of the story for this activity might be "don't sweat the small stuff".

Ah-So-You

Goal:

To pass on commands in a fast paces and hectic game with some interference added to make it real

Location:

Anywhere big enough for the group to be in a circle

Equipment:

No equipment is needed

Directions:

- Have the group form a circle
- Choose someone to start the game. They start by saying “AH” while saluting with either their right hand or left hand. If they salute with their right hand the game is passed to the person on the starter’s left. If the starter salutes with their left hand, the game is passed to the player on the right.
- The next person has the command “SO”. While saluting their chin with a right or left hand. Again if it is done with the right hand, the game continues with the person to the left. If it is done with the left hand the game continues to the right.
- The next person has the command “YOU”. While pointing both hands to the person across the circle, where the command starts back again with “AH”.
- Anyone who misses a command or action is out of the circle and is now a “heckler”. Hecklers can say anything to interrupt other players, but cannot touch anyone in the circle.

Debriefing:

- What happened?
- How did you feel?
- Hecklers - How did you feel when you messed up and were pushed out of the game to be a heckler?
- Those still in the Circle - How did you feel when someone was pushed out of the game? What do you think of the hecklers? Did they hinder the game?
- The lesson learned ...

Captain Is Coming

Goal:

To form into teams and follow commands at a moment’s notice

Location:

An open area with room for movement

Equipment:

No equipment is needed

Directions:

The facilitator plays the role of the Captain and is the person who calls out the orders. There are several orders the group must do during the game depending on what the Captain calls out. (This is similar in some ways to Simon Says.) For people that cannot get into a group or do not correctly follow directions, they sit out for the remainder of the game. The game is over when only a few players remain.

Practice each of the commands before starting the game. Point out the commands can be given in any order.

Designate a front (bow) and back (stern) of the boat and identify the Port (left) and Starboard (right) side of the boat.

Commands

- *Captain Is Coming* - everyone stands at attention and salutes the Captain and MUST remain that way until the order "At Ease" is given
- *Swab the Deck* - everyone acts like they are mopping the floor
- *Lighthouse* - everyone gets into pairs. They face each other, then turn in a circle while saying, "boop, boop, boop"
- *Man Overboard* - 2 people hold hands to form a circle around a 3rd person who stands looking for the man overboard
- *Row Ashore* - get into groups of 4. Line up single file, facing the same direction and act as if they are rowing a boat together
- *Grub Time* - get into groups of 5. Gather in a tight circle and act as if they are spooning food into their mouths, while quickly saying "grub, grub, grub"
- *Disco On Deck* - everyone dances
- *Bow* - head to the front of the boat
- *Stern* - head to the back of the boat
- *Port* - everyone moves to the left side of the boat
- *Starboard* - everyone moves to the right side of the boat

Debriefing:

- Look at the communication systems used in this activity. How did you know what to do? How were you able to form groups? Were there methods that did not work?
- How did you feel playing this game? Anxious? Excited? Frustrated? Loved the fast action? Too fast?
- What happened when you could not find a group to join?
- Think about the competitive side of things. How did your competitive instincts come alive in this game or did you see it as a competition?
- Bottom line - What did you learn?
- Where would you play this game? What groups would benefit from playing this game?

Resources:

- 1) *Guide To Cooperative Games for Social Change*
Adam Fletcher and Kari Kunst - produced by CommonAction 2006
- 2) *Co-Op Manual*
Nebraska Lutheran Outdoor Ministries - Ashland, NE
- 3) *The New Games Book* and *More New Games*
The New Games Foundation 1976 & 1981
- 4) *Cowstails and Cobras: A Guide to Rope Courses, Initiative Games and Other Adventure Activities*
Karl Rohnke 1977