

# Team Builders

Team builders are a great way to introduce change, encourage critical thinking skills, and build different aspects of your team. We have compiled different Team Builders to help you assist your teams in the growing process. Remember, one of the most important aspects to a team builder is the discussion that is held afterward. Don't forget to refer to our Debriefing Techniques to help out in this department! Feel free to make changes to accommodate your group.

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*Debriefing Techniques & other things to remember!*

## **The Human Machine**

**Process:** The group is divided into small groups of approximately 5 members each. Each group then draws a random appliance name from a hat (i.e. dishwasher, toaster, microwave, washing machine, blender, coffee maker, stapler, three –hole punch). Without talking, the group acts out their appliance while the other groups attempt to guess what appliance they are pretending to be.

**Additional Information:** This activity would need to be done with a least 6 students (making two groups of three).

## **Human Knot**

**Theme:** Communication, teamwork, listening skills, innovative thinking

**Process:** The group forms a circle and is instructed to grasp each hand with another person in the group (right hand to left hand and left hand to right hand). This leaves the group tangled in a huge knot, and they must find a way to untangle themselves and get back into a circle without letting go of hands.

**Additional Information:** This activity works best with a group of less than 20 people.

## **Blind Cup Walk**

**Theme:** Communication, listening skills, trust

**Materials:** Before the game begins, make a small obstacle course/maze out of plastic cups.

**Process:** Pair off the group into partners, and one partner of each group is given a blindfold to wear. The partner without a blindfold must direct his/her partner through the maze giving only verbal instructions. The partners may walk together but they must not touch each other. At the end of the course, the leader becomes the follower by putting the blindfold on, and the partners switch roles.

## **Lily Pads**

**Theme:** Communication, trust, listening

**Materials:** Making a starting line and a finish line on the floor with masking tape; construction paper

**Process:** The group is given several sheets of construction paper, which will serve as “Lily Pads”. The purpose of this activity is for everyone in the group to get across the “pond” (which is the

starting line to the finishing line) using only the “lily pads”. The trick to this activity is that there should not be any talking within the group! Once every member has gotten across, make the game more challenging by taking away half of their lily pads, but allowing them to talk. Once they have completed the task, blindfold 2-3 members of the group, and instruct them to get across the pond once again. When the game has finished, discuss which aspects of the game were most challenging.

**Additional Information:** This activity works well with any size group, but if you would like, you can split into smaller groups.

### **The Class Race**

**Process:** This exercise allows a team to recognize the differences among themselves and to learn the advantages and disadvantages each person endures and faces. Instruct each member of the group to line up in a straight line shoulder to shoulder and to close their eyes. Tell the group to take a step forward or backward depending on each instruction and if the instruction applies to them. Some examples include:

“Take a step forward if you have ever attended a private school.”

“Take a step backward if you or a family member has ever been arrested.”

“Take a step forward if your parents are still married to one another.”

“Take a step backward if you or anyone in your family is gay.”

“Take a step forward if you grew up with a set of encyclopedias in your home.”

“Take a step forward if you ever received private music lessons.”

“Take a step forward if you own your own car.”

“Take a step backward if your family immigrated to the US.”

“Take a step backward if English is your second language.”

After all of the statements have been read, be sure to debrief the group by asking questions like “Were you surprised where you ended up in the Class Race?”, “What did you feel during this activity?”

**Additional Information:** This is a high-risk activity. Therefore, it is *very* important to do an adequate debriefing session. Additionally, it has been our experience that a group must have a certain level of cohesiveness in order to perform this activity.

## **Team Getaway**

**Theme:** Communications, teamwork, listening skills

**Materials:** Index cards (at least 2 different sizes)

**Process:** Separate the group into at least three teams. Provide each team with a stack of index cards. Challenge each team to be effective as a group by constructing a three-dimensional model of a “getaway retreat” solely from the index cards. Folding and tearing the cards are permitted, but no other supplies can be used for the construction. Allow at least 15 minutes for the construction. When the constructions are finished, invite the group to take a tour of the getaway retreats. Visit each construction and request that team members show off their work and explain the intricacies of their house.

**Additional Information:** When debriefing this activity, you can ask each team what process they took to build the retreat (i.e. did they think it out first, jump right in, etc). This can segue into a conversation about teamwork and communication.

## **Pru**

**Theme:** Trust, integration of group members

**Materials:** Blindfolds

**Process:** Have each participant take a blindfold and spread out on the floor. Ask those who feel comfortable to put their blindfolds on. Explain that you will tap someone on the shoulder. That person will be the “Pru” and will take off his/her blindfold (none of the other players will know who the Pru is). Everyone will mingle around slowly (with hands and arms in a “I dream of Genie” fashion to act as a bumper). Every time a participant bumps into someone, they should shake his/her hand and ask, “Pru?” If the person says, “Pru”, then they are NOT the Pru. If the person does not answer you back, they ARE the Pru. Once a player finds the Pru, he/she should join hands with him/her and take off his/her blindfold. That person is now part of the Pru, so if someone bumps into him/her, they should NOT respond so that person knows to join the Pru as well. Everyone will continue mingling around until they find the Pru chain. When everyone is part of the chain, the game is over.

## **Lifelines**

**Theme:** Integration of group members

**Materials:** Paper, markers/pens

**Process:** Each participant draws a line on paper to represent the highs, lows, significant events, turning points, etc. of his/her life t date (or can project into the future). Members share their lifelines with other members. Members can then ask questions about each other’s lifelines.

**Additional Information:** This activity also can be done with pipe cleaners and verbal explanations.

## **Values Discussion**

**Theme:** Trust, listening skills

**Process:** Have participants find two people who are wearing the same color as them, and have them find a spot where they can talk together. Instruct them that they will be talking about some issues and you will give them topics every few minutes. Here are some examples:

What are the easiest and hardest emotions for you to express? Why?

What is something that few people know about you?

What do you value in a friend?

What do you want to be doing in five years?

What is one goal you have for next year?

What is a motto you try to live by?

What is the greatest challenge you are facing?

What do you most like about yourself?

What do you value in a loving relationship?

What do you value most in life?

**Additional Information:** This could be considered a high-risk activity, depending on what questions you choose to present to the group.

## **Back to Back**

**Theme:** Integration of group members, teamwork

**Process:** Every group member must find a partner of approximately equal height and weight, if possible. The partners will lock arms with their backs to one another. With arms remaining locked at all times, the partners will sit on the ground, kick their legs out, and try to stand back up. Once all of the partners have completed the task, instruct the teams to find one other team of two (making a team of four), and ask them to complete the task again. Once everyone has finished, have the entire group come back together and try it again.

## **Web Game**

**Theme:** Positive reinforcement, integration of members

**Materials:** Ball of yarn

**Process:** Instruct the group to sit in a circle. Take the ball of yarn and have the person who begins the activity hold one end and wrap it around their wrist. They will then throw the yarn to someone else sitting in the circle and say something positive or something the person did to inspire them. Then, that person will hold on to their end of the yarn, and pass it to someone else and say something positive about the person they throw it to. This activity continues until everyone is holding a piece of yarn.

### **Paper Bag Skits**

**Theme:** Teamwork, creativity, integration of members

**Materials:** Paper bags, assorted objects

**Process:** Split your group into teams consisting of three to six members. Give each team a paper bag filled with assorted objects (i.e. wooden spoon, pen, letter opener, paper clips, etc). The object of the activity is to present a skit using all of the props provided. The props may be used as they would be in normal life, or they may be imaginatively employed. Give each group a topic to base their skits on. When all the skits have been planned and rehearsed, perform them for the other group members.

### **Communication is Key!**

**Theme:** Communication

**Materials:** Pieces of paper with numbers on it (not necessarily in numerical order)

**Process:** the participants will be given a piece of paper with a number on it. They are instructed that they can no longer speak and no longer see. The group is to get into numerical order but they will have to figure out a way to communicate since they cannot see or speak to one another.

### **Blind Partner Tag**

**Theme:** Trust

**Materials:** Blindfolds

**Process:** Ask the participants to find a partner. Hand out the blindfolds and ask one of the partners to put it on. One pair is “it”, but only the blindfolded partner may tag someone who also has the blindfold on. Sighted partners may only guide their blind partner by speaking (no holding onto arm/elbow). When someone is tagged, that pair becomes “it”. After a while, switch so everyone experiences being both blind and sighted.

### **Paper Bag Notes (aka Toodles)**

**Theme:** Positive reinforcement, integration of group members

**Materials:** Paper bags, pens/markers, scrap pieces of paper

**Process:** Each group member will be instructed to put their name on a paper bag. Each participant will then write notes to any or all of the participants expressing appreciation for something done or complimenting something. Once finished, the notes will go in the person's bag.

**Additional Information:** This activity works very well when a group of people is on a retreat or as a motivation throughout a period of time.

### **Concentration**

**Theme:** Observation

**Process:** Instruct the participants to form two lines of equal numbers facing one another. The two lines get thirty seconds to study the person directly across from them. After thirty seconds, the participants are to turn around and change five things about them (switch jewelry, untie shoelaces, switch watch over to other arm, etc) as long as all are things in sight. The two lines turn back around and must identify the five changes.

### **Penny for Your Thoughts**

**Theme:** Positive reinforcement

**Materials:** Paper bags, pennies

**Process:** All participants are given a bag with pennies (each participant should have one penny for each member in the group – if there are 20 players each should have 20 pennies). Participants go around the room to each other and trade “a penny for a thought”. Participants trade pennies – and positive thoughts about what they think of one another. Activity continues until all participants have shared with every member of the group and has a new bag of “pennies for thoughts”.

### **Piece of the Puzzle**

**Theme:** Communication, creativity, group cohesiveness

**Materials:** The facilitator should cut a puzzle out of poster board, and there should be one piece for each member of the group.

**Process:** Pass a piece of the puzzle out to each participant. Instruct the group to decorate their piece to represent who they are and what they feel they can contribute to the group. Once the participants are done, have them share what they have on their piece. Once everyone has shared, the participants should put the puzzle back together. Once this has happened, the facilitator should initiate a discussion on the power of everyone coming together, teamwork, and how a final product could not be reached without a contribution from every piece of the puzzle.

### **Keep it Up**



**Theme:** Communication, teamwork

**Materials:** 1 ball for each group

**Process:** Instruct the participants to form two or more teams with 10-12 players on a team. Each team gets into a circle. Each team is given a volleyball (or similar type ball of any size). The players attempt to keep their ball in the air the longest. When a team wins, they get a point. The team with the most points wins. Do not allow the players to catch the ball during play.

**Additional Information:** To vary, change the way of scoring.

### **Progressive Story**

**Theme:** Listening skills, creativity, trust

**Process:** For this activity, a group of people must know one another and feel comfortable discussing personal issues. Everyone must be able to hear the other members in the group, but people do not have to see one another. The facilitator begins the story by setting the initial scene and mood. (The mood will alter as a result of the addition of more content to the story.) The start can begin with the following examples (or others): "On my way to class the other day..." or "A good friend called last night..." or "I had the most amazing weekend! I..." In no particular order, members of the group then take over the story by adding another element to the plot. The main point is making sure everyone adds something. The progression of the story indicates where the group members are emotionally and is representative of what is high on their lists of priorities, concerns, and thoughts. This exercise spurs on creativity and can reveal a lot about a staff's collective state of mind. The facilitator plays a big role in interpreting what is said by each person.

### **Pile Up**

**Theme:** Communication, teamwork

**Materials:** Two bed sheets (any size)

**Process:** Instruct the participants to split into two even teams. Take the two bed sheets and give one to each group. Have the group lay their sheet flat on the ground, and tell them that the entire team must stand on the sheet together at the same time, with no one touching any part of the ground that is not covered by the sheet. Next, have the group get off the sheet and fold it in half. Again, have them get their team back on the sheet, again all of them standing on it together with no one touching any part of the ground other than what is covered by the sheet. Once they have accomplished this, have them get off of the sheet, fold it in half again, and repeat the process. The goal of the game is to see which team can have their entire team on the smallest area of the sheet. Tell them to do whatever it takes to fit their group on the sheet, even if it means they must carry each other or pile on each other.

### **Balloon Castles**

**Theme:** Communication, teamwork, group cohesiveness

**Materials:** Balloon, scotch tape

**Process:** Depending on the size of your group divide them into equal teams (usually 5 to a team works best). All teams are challenged to build the tallest, free-standing structure using only balloons and scotch tape. Provide different colored balloons for each team, although the color has not meaning. Additionally, each team should have the same amount of balloons and scotch tape. The objective is to give the group very little instruction other than that their goal is to build the tallest, free-standing structure only using the materials provided. The human nature aspect is that they will think that their team is supposed to beat the other teams although that is never given as an instruction, nor is that the point. Give the teams two to three minutes to plan their blue prints and then five minutes to build (this provides a little bit of pressure to act quickly without dwelling too much on the relationship factor). Once time is up, you can facilitate the activity by asking who actually won the event. You can ask questions like what the real objective was, and why everyone assumed that there was only one winner.

**Additional Information:** Usually, there is at least one group who figures out that they can work with another group, which is the point of the activity. Do not give any hints!

### **Electric Fence**

**Theme:** Communication, teamwork

**Materials:** Tie a rope approximately 5-10 feet long between two poles and trees. The rope should be about shoulder height and should be tied very tightly.

**Process:** Instruct the participants to stand to one side of the rope. The facilitator will then tell the group that they are chased by a group of crazed maniacs and their only means of escape is to climb over the electric fence. Each member of the team must climb the fence without touching the rope. If any member of the team does touch the rope during the exercise, the entire team must return to the starting point and begin the climb all over again.

### **Board of Directors**

**Theme:** Integration of group members

**Materials:** Paper, pens/markers

**Process:** Instruct the participants to draw a table and 6-8 chairs on their piece of paper. Participants will then write the names of the people who they would like to have as their “board of directors” (mentors such as family members, teachers, coaches, etc). Participants will then share their list of mentors and why those people are important to them.

### **Lap Sit**

**Theme:** Communication, teamwork

**Process:** The group will start in a circle. Every group member will turn placing their left leg towards the inside of the circle. Everyone will take one giant step into the middle of the circle. With hands on the person's shoulders in front of you, the group will sit on each other. The group will need to work together and communicate. Once this has been completed, the group may wish to try to walk in this formation. This is a dynamic activity – and one that will make the group feel a great sense of accomplishment when successfully completed!

### **Group Juggle**

**Materials:** 4-7 balls

**Process:** The group will need to get into a circle with approximately half a foot clearance on either side of each person. Explain to the group that you, the facilitator, will be tossing the ball to someone in the circle; while tossing, the facilitator will say the person's name. The next person would do the same thing and toss it to someone new. When they receive the ball, each person will pass it to someone new while saying the person's name. When the ball has reached everyone without touching the ground, try to do the same thing again with the ball beginning with the facilitator, and going in the same order as the first time (remember to say the person's name). After completing the second round, it is time to challenge the group to do it faster. During the third round, the facilitator will slowly introduce new balls into the circle (remember, all balls should go in the same order as the first round).

**Additional Information:** If you don't have balls, you can use other fun objects like soft kids' toys. This activity works best with 8-15 people.

### **Puzzles**

**Process:** Make a giant jigsaw puzzle and give everyone a piece. Have them work together to put it together. To make it more challenging, you can have several puzzles, pictures on both sides, or pieces that fit in more than one place.

### **Orange Pass/Relay**

**Materials:** Oranges

**Process:** Break into groups of 6 to 10 people and have each group form rows standing one behind the other. The leader begins with an orange under their neck. The object of the game is to pass the orange down the row as quickly as possible without using any hands. If the orange is dropped, the team must start over.

### **Balloon Races**

**Materials:** Balloons

**Process:** Divide groups into teams of at least 6 people on each team. Each team lines up in a single line and each team member is given a balloon. Each team member puts the balloon between their knees and their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. The

teams race to the finish line, but if anyone on the team drops their arms down or loses their balloon, the whole team must stop, that person goes to the end of the line, and then the team keeps going.

### **Toilet Paper Relay**

**Materials:** Rolls of toilet paper, whistle

**Process:** Split the participants into as many teams as you want. There should probably be at least 4 on each team. Give each team a roll of toilet paper. When the whistle sounds, the first member of the relay team places the roll of toilet paper on the ground and begins rolling it out along the floor. If the paper rips, they have to discard the ripped piece and go back to where they started from. When that person gets to his/her teammates on the other side, the teammate must begin to roll the toilet paper back up again. This goes on and on, back and forth until one team finishes.

### **Hula-Hoop Pass**

**Materials:** Hula-hoops

**Process:** Have everyone stand in a circle and join hands. Pick one person to start and on each of their arms place a hula hoop, one slightly smaller than the other if possible. Have the group pass the hula hoops completely around the circle so that the hula hoops end up on opposite arms of the person you began with. No one can unlink their hands throughout the process.

### **Paper Plates**

**Materials:** 20 paper plates

**Process:** Write the numbers 1 through 20 on paper plates and place them on the ground together, but not in order. Tell the group that they are to step on the numbers in numerical order (1,2,3...20) as quickly as possible. Time them trying several times and have them try to beat their best scores. The plates cannot be moved from where they are.

### **Islands (aka Carpet Squares)**

**Materials:** Carpet squares, paper, or paper plates

**Process:** Lay squares of carpet in a line, putting down 1 more square than the number of people playing (if you don't have carpet squares, use paper or a plate). Have half the people line up on the squares on one side and have the other half line up on the other side, with the empty square in the middle of the line. Have everyone face toward the empty square. Tell the group that they have to transfer all the people to the opposite side of the empty square from where they now stand. People can only move if they are stepping past 1 person in front of them and on to an empty square (they can't move if there is not a person in front of them, or if there is more than one person in front of them). Only one person can be on a square. A lot of people

find this game pretty tough. At the end of the activity, everyone should be on the square exactly opposite from where they began.

**Additional Information:** This activity works best with 6 or more people.

### **Creative Contraptions**

**Process:** Divide into groups of about 3-6 people and give each group a “contraption” that they need to act out so that the other groups can guess. They must use ALL members of the group and cannot speak, but they may make noises and sounds. Possible contraptions include:

A fax machine

Riding lawn mower

Washing machine

Toaster

Copy machine

Button maker

Coffee maker

Food processor

### **Rope Square**

**Materials:** About 40 feet of rope

**Process:** Tie the ends of the rope together so that it is a circle. Blindfold all the participants. Have everyone hold on to the rope and tell them that they need to work together to make the rope into a square. If the group is having difficulty, one or two people may remove their blindfolds to assist, but they are not permitted to talk. To make it more challenging, the rope can be criss-crossed between them rather than having them start in a circle.

### **Feather in a Can**

**Materials:** Scissors, can, feather

**Process:** Divide participants into groups of 5-10 people, sitting in a circle. Arrange the groups into a ring. In the center of all the groups is a leader with a pair of scissors. In the center of each team circle is a can with a feather sticking out of it. Each player must remove the feather, using only their mouth while standing on one leg. Teammates may assist each other. When the player has taken the feather out of the container, they must go to the common center of the ring and cut off the portion of the feather that was touched by the mouth. Each time the feather gets shorter and shorter, making it more difficult to retrieve from the container. The first group to have everyone get the feather out would be victorious.

## **Egg Drop**

**Materials:** Raw eggs, small miscellaneous objects (string, paper clips, tape, pencils, etc)

**Process:** Participants are given small, miscellaneous objects and several raw eggs per group. The task is to drop an egg from as high as possible without having the egg break. The objects can be used to help protect the egg from the fall.

## **Paper Bag Fashion Show**

**Materials:** Paper bags, rolls of toilet paper, construction paper, markers, scissors, miscellaneous stuff, index cards

**Process:** Divide participants into groups of 4-5 people. Each group will need a paper bag filled with the materials collected. The task is to create a garment on someone in the group using all the materials except the card in 10-15 minutes. Then the group will write a description of the garment on the card which will be given to the fashion show commentator. Everyone but the models will become the audience and the fashion show begins. The commentator reads the descriptions as the fashions are modeled.

**Additional Information:** This can be adapted to fit a topic, such as making a garment that a great leader might wear, and so forth.

## **Trolley**

**Materials:** Long boards with ropes attached

**Process:** Participants are given two long boards with ropes attached. Each person stands with one foot on each board and holds on to the adjacent ropes working together, they must walk with the boards, when this is done successfully, the group can be asked to turn themselves around so that they face the opposite direction, do it in silence or do it with some members blindfolded.

## **Spider Web**

**Materials:** String

**Process:** A spider's web is constructed of string approximately 2-4 feet off the ground. Participants must pass each other through the web to the other side. If anyone touches part of the rope, the group must start over or be penalized (a group member becomes blind or mute). Only one person can use each opening in the web to get to the other side.

## **Affirmative Foldups**

**Materials:** Sheets of paper, markers/pens

**Process:** Have the group sit comfortably in a circle. Give each participant a sheet of paper and ask them to write their name on the top of the paper. Place all of the papers in the center of

the circle. Have each participant draw a sheet from the center (not his/her own) and ask them to write one positive word (or a sentence) about that person at the bottom of the sheet. They then fold the paper up to cover up the word. Have them place the sheet back in the center and repeat on another sheet. Participants will continue to select sheets from the circle to write affirming words on them, until the name is the only thing showing on the paper. The leader can then distribute the papers to their owners.

**Additional Information:** This is a great activity to do at the end of a retreat, the end of a year for an organization, at a staff meeting, etc.

### **Chalkboard Sentences**

**Materials:** Blackboards or newsprints, chalk or markers

**Process:** This exercise asks the participants, working in teams, to race against one another to formulate a sentence to which each team member has added a word. The facilitator begins by explaining that the participants will be competing to see which team is the first to complete a group sentence. Next, the participants are asked to divide into two teams. If the group contains an uneven number, one participant may compete twice. The group leader sets up blackboards or newsprint for each team. The teams then are to line up 10 feet from their board. After giving the first person in each team's line a piece of chalk or marker, the leader explains the rules of the game. The rules are as follows: Each team member is responsible for adding one word to the sentence. The players take turns. After they go to the board and write one word, they run back to give the next player the chalk or the marker, and then go to the end of the line. The sentence must contain the same number of words as there are members on the team. A player may not add a word between words that have already been written. The group leader may wish to process the activity with a discussion on the most serious aspects of the exercise (i.e. the value of anticipatory thinking, the individual cooperating in a group task, etc.).

### **Floor Puzzle Challenge**

**Materials:** Poster board or construction paper

**Process:** Make a giant puzzle out of the poster board or the construction paper with enough pieces for each person. Each person makes a collage that describes them on their piece, then as a team builder, put the puzzle together. The puzzle is displayed in the hall.

**Additional Information:** It is important to remember to mark which side is the front of the puzzle piece, and which is the top/bottom, so that when the collages are all made, they fit together the right way.

### **Levitation**

**Process:** One person will lie on the ground on his/her back, with eyes closed (if they feel comfortable). The rest of the group will place their hands underneath the person lying down. One person will be designated to be the captain, and therefore should place him/herself at the

person's head. Once everyone is ready, the captain will softly count to three. At this time, the group will pick the person up to their waist. The captain will again softly count to three, and the group will bring the person to shoulder height. The captain will softly count to three, and the group will bring the person overhead. Finally, the captain will count to three, and the group will gently rock the person forward and backward down to the ground. It is the volunteer's responsibility to stay stiff as a board. It is the rest of the group's responsibility to take this activity very seriously, not to talk, and to keep the head higher than the feet at all times.

### **Getting Close**

**Materials:** One hula hoop, one round balloon, one oblong balloon

**Process:** Participants stand in a circle shoulder to shoulder, holding hands. The facilitator starts with the round balloon under his neck, the oblong balloon between his knees, and the hula hoop around his waist. Without breaking the chain or letting go of each other's hands, the round balloon gets passed from chin to chin, the oblong balloon from knees to knees, and the hula hoop from waist to waist. The trick here is to shrug it over your head and around the next person's.

### **Silent Sorting**

**Process:** Arrange the group in order by birthday (year, month, day). This must be done silently. You can eliminate other established forms of communication as they are introduced. For example, no sign language if a large portion of your group knows it, no paper and pencils for writing, no pointing to a calendar, etc. When the group believes they have finished, you can break the silence and go down the row having the participants say their birth dates aloud. If you discover someone out of order, you can allow them to make adjustments.

**Additional Information:** You can make variations on this activity. For example, you may ask them to line themselves up in alphabetical order by middle names instead.

### **Sightless Touring**

**Materials:** Blindfolds, obstacles

**Process:** Hand out the blindfolds. Ask the group to put them on and plan some strategy. You can give them a great deal of help by simply asking them to come up with a strategy for keeping the group together and communicating what they learn to the others. This step isn't necessary but will greatly reduce the time necessary for the challenge. While this is going on, choose one or two group members to be the foreign tour guides. Tell them that they have to get the group from where they are, through the route you describe, and to a designated end point. They cannot speak any known language. Give them as much or as little help as you like. If time is short, give them suggestions about using different sounds, the pitch of their voices, or making up a nonsense word for a direction. They have a difficult task so choose a member with imagination, or a person who considers himself a leader and whom you want to stretch.



## **Transport Troubles**

**Materials:** Bandanas, cups filled ¼ of the way with either water or uncooked beans

**Process:** Give each group a bandana. Have them hold onto its edges with both hands. The bandana should remain flat throughout the challenge. When the bandana is stretched tight, place the cup on it. Have the group follow you through a series of obstacles. They should, of course, not spill. If they spill, they must start over. When they reach the end of your route, have them place the bandana with the cup on the floor. The following are some suggestions for obstacles:

Through a narrow doorway

Over a couch

Up some stairs

Under a table

Going around a chair

Begin with easy obstacles such as going around a chair and over a box. This allows them to establish their teamwork strategy. You can have all groups begin at once, or have them observe the groups one at a time and learn from the mistakes of others.

## **Directions in the Dark**

**Materials:** Blindfolds, 150 foot rappelling rope

**Process:** Hand out the blindfolds and ask the group to put on their blindfolds. After they have their blindfolds on, place a section of rope in each person's hand. The difficulty can be increased by handing the rope out to the group in a very random fashion. Leave the rope with two ends not secured together. Leave a large portion of the rope in a pile on the ground and hand an end to one person no one may let go of the rope at any time.

## **Bite the Bag**

**Materials:** Brown grocery bag

**Process:** The team is instructed to form a large circle. The facilitator then places a brown grocery bag in the center of the circle. Each member must pick up the bag with his/her teeth while standing on one foot with both hands held behind his/her back. After the entire group has successfully completed this task, the facilitator cuts one to two inches off the top of the bag. If a team member touches the floor with his/her foot, or with any other part of the body, the member is disqualified. After each round, more of the bag is cut. The last team member, who successfully picks up the bag, without falling, wins.

**Additional Information:** This exercise, similar to a reversed limbo contest, can be a lot of fun and a great icebreaker for new team members.

### **All Aboard**

**Materials:** Poster board or wooden board

**Process:** The object of the game is to get all of the people in the group onto the board. Everyone must have at least one foot on the board. HINT: Try not to give solutions, but tell them to listen to others' ideas. You may enlarge or decrease the size of the board, depending on the degree of challenge you would like.

### **Blind Polygon**

**Materials:** Rope, blindfolds

**Process:** The object of the game is for the group to form a perfect square and a triangle (and other shapes if desired) using the given length of rope. Ask participants to put on blindfolds. All participants must have at least one hand on the rope at all times. All participants must remain blindfolded until the task is completed. When the group believes the task is finished, ask them to remain their blindfolds, without moving from their current places. Using the same procedure, ask them to form any geometric shape you think is possible for the group.

### **Listening Skills Drawing**

**Materials:** Paper, markers/pens, diagrams

**Process:** You will need a piece of paper and a writing utensil for each participant. You also need two different diagrams for each pair. Have partners sit back to back and decide who will be the listener and who will be the talker first. Each will eventually have a chance to play both roles. Give each talker a copy of a diagram. The listener must sketch what they hear described, and in this round 1, is not allowed to speak or ask questions. This pair is using one-way communication. There will be 1-2 minutes allotted for this round, or longer if time permits. Partners compare drawings when finished to see how close they came to the original. The second round can begin and partners switch roles, still sitting back to back. The dyad together must try to improve results. In this round 2, the talker gets a different diagram, and the listener can speak and ask questions. After the allotted time has passed partners should compare results again. Then bring the two groups together to talk about the benefits of both types of communication.

### **Traffic Jam**

**Materials:** Marked squares

**Process:** Divide the group depending on how many people there are. The groups need to be of even numbers of six, eight, etc. If there is an odd number of people have them help facilitate the activity and then switch off. To set up the game, place marked squares (one more than the

number of people in the group) on the floor. The boxes need to be placed in a straight line. Have each person stand on a marked box to completely change to the other side, by moving one at a time, like in a game of Checkers. Players may move into the vacant spot next to them or they may jump another player on the opposite side, but they CANNOT jump a player from their own side. Players may not move backwards, and two people cannot move at once. After the group has figured out a solution to the traffic jam, have them show the leader.

## Debriefing Techniques

...and other things to remember!

When conducting team builders with your groups, there are some things to remember:

1. Be sure to know the meaning of your team builder. When planning a team builder it may be best to make some adjustments to the process to fit your demographic.
2. Some team builders are meant for beginning groups (those in the 'forming' phase), intermediate groups, or advanced groups (those in the 'norming' or 'storming' phases). Be sure the team builder you are facilitating fits your group dynamic.
3. Beware of "high risk" activities. These types of team builders, often times laced with conversations about opinions, hot topics, or deep feelings can either make or break a group. When used correctly, "high right" activities have the capability of bringing the group to a phase of deep trust, loyalty, and commitment. If "high risk" activities are not debriefed correctly, or if they are conducted on a young group who is still 'forming', it could break the cohesiveness of the group.
4. When selecting your team builder, be sure to keep in mind your objective/goal of doing the activity. Although the activities are fun, there should be a deeper meaning.
5. Remember, there is not anyone saying that you cannot mix a couple of the team builders together. Be creative-create your own team builder!

### Debriefing Questions:

When conducting team builders, it is important to begin a conversation that will encourage critical thinking among your group members. Although each team builder has a different premise, here are some questions that will assist you in starting conversation:

1. How did this activity make you feel?
2. What was the best thing about this activity?
3. What was the worst thing about this activity?
4. What was the easiest thing about this activity?
5. What was the hardest thing about this activity?
6. If you could change one thing about your actions in this activity, what would it be?

Remember, it is important to add questions pertaining to the particular team builder you are conducting!