



Examples of Terrapin Adventure's team building exercises

Brain

Participants form a circle and grab the hand of the person opposite them and then the group must unwind themselves without letting go. This develops teamwork and cooperation.

Rear View Mirror

Involves three different areas.

1. Seeker - A person that can not see or talk but is looking for an object and will make something with the objects
2. Talker - has back to seeker but can talk and see
3. Directors - Cannot talk but can see the seeker.

The directors communicate to the talker non-verbally. The talker is taking that information and telling the seeker where to go. The seeker is listening to the talker and trying to find a specific item. The object is to instruct group 1 to find materials on the ground and make them into something determined beforehand by the facilitator. This could be the group's initials (CSS), a design, a word or value important to the group, etc. This game is to mimic what happens in the workplace when communication is not perfect between work groups. The focus is to emphasize how important clear communication is and how the workers are dependent on each other to execute an order and produce quality output. This exercise can help demonstrate the importance of clear communication up and down the chain of command.

Insanity/Frantic

Place 3 or 4 circles (webbing or hoola hoops) in a square and place another in the middle. In the middle put as many balls as possible. Split the group up between the outside hoops.

The object/goal is to get all the items from the center hoop into the outside hoops.

The rest of the guidelines can be varied slightly but typically they include:

Each person may only carry one item at a time

If the center is empty you may take items from other hoops, keeping the one item rule in mind.

You may/may not guard hoops (depends on your variation).

Other possible rules:

Can do it in time trials- The object is to get all items from the center hoop to the outside hoops in 30 seconds.

You can give them time to strategize or not. When it's over have everyone observe the number of objects in different hoops. Have them put everything back in the middle, restate the goal, potentially have them strategize and try again.



Usually we have them do 2-3 tries. It's rare that a group realizes that the challenge is not to get the objects into MY TEAM's outside hoop, but into all of the hoops. Sometimes they want to do it again where they'll place all their hoops in the center, or combine all their hoops (if the hoops are the sectional ones). This exercise emphasizes teamwork vs. competition between factions. It also emphasizes communicating clearly what the goal of the overall group is versus just their department. Often there are limited resources that groups try to use in a win-lose situation, but if the groups collaborated would result in a win-win situation.

Teamply Tubes

You have two or three teams and the objective is to make the tallest freestanding tower with a time limit. Some groups choose to work independently and compete but they could have collaborated to make a much taller structure. If the group is really high functioning they could realize this and do the activity that way, which also leads to a good debrief. The idea is to be ambiguous about the goal, "build the tallest tower" and see if they collaborate or compete and go over this in the debriefing. This exercise also focuses on planning and executing a plan versus just moving forward without forethought.

Leadership Tap

Have the group sit in a circle with their eyes closed. The activity goes like this with the facilitator walking around the outside of the circle. The facilitator keeps walking for the whole activity, sometimes they change directions.

"This is an activity/exercise about leadership. Listen closely to the directions. If you feel a tap on your head, you can stand up. If you feel a tap on your shoulder, you can open your eyes. If you feel a tap on your elbow, you can do whatever you want."

Wait a moment and see if anyone starts to do anything (very rare). Typically they don't so the leader repeats the directions and tap one person for each of the parts, then wait again to see what they do. Usually the head will stand, and the shoulder and elbow will open their eyes but not do much else.

Repeat the directions again. See if the tapped people start to catch on or do something. Depending on how people react, you'll wind up repeating the directions a lot more and having to tap some more people.

The idea is for the elbow person to realize that they can tap everyone else because they can do whatever they want. The activity ideally ends when everyone has been tapped on their elbow but doesn't always work out that way. Actually we have never seen the activity go the exact same way but it's really awesome to talk about who is the leader, different styles of leadership, how we interpret rules, etc. In theory, anybody could start tapping people since the facilitator said, "can" which is broad. Sometimes, but not often, people will realize this and start tapping others even if the leader didn't tap them at the beginning, which is why we now say the directions without tapping people at the beginning. One of my favorites!



Crossing Over

With a line/rope in the center, split the group up on either side. Give the same instructions to both sides but make sure that the other side can't hear what you say.

Your goal is to get that team on this side without physically contacting them is basically what you tell both teams.

Groups usually think that they win when everybody is on THEIR side, but really they could win by both teams crossing to the opposite side.

Egg Drop

Teams are given the same amount of raw materials and a time limit and they must construct a structure to protect an egg as it is dropped from a specified height. This develops creative problem solving, teamwork and execution of a plan.

Bull Ring

The group must lift an object in the center of a ring attached with string and move it to another location. This develops cooperation and emphasizes equality in the work process.

Traffic Jam

People are in a line on spaces marked with a piece of paper with one open space and the people on the left side must move to the right in order and visa versa. This is like a chess match as each person can only move in certain ways. It focuses on how your moves affect others in your team and only if you develop a plan and think as a unit will you be successful.