

On The Spot!!

On The Spot!! activities are intended to challenge the group both physically and mentally. The students must work together so that the entire group succeeds. Groups do not compete rather they work cooperatively to achieve a common goal. The goals are team formation, communication, cooperation, problem solving, and trust.

Establish with your group that it is important to realize and accept that everyone is different. Each individual in a group has their own areas in which they excel and it is important not to make fun of their weaknesses, but to accentuate the positives in everyone.

Safety is of the utmost importance to ensure that everyone has a good time. Before beginning any activity check to be sure the area is free of debris, roots, fire ants, etc. Please stress that there should be NO "Horse Play!" For activities in which students join hands ensure students do not interlock fingers at any time for any reason.

Often the group will be hesitant to participate or they will question why they are doing these activities. Emphasize that many activities are a bit strange (and often times silly 😊), but nonetheless each has its purpose to focus on some aspect of group/team cohesion. Listed below are a few short exercises that help illustrate the aim of On the Spot!!

Warm – Ups

Run and Scream- This activity involves students running, one at a time, while screaming. Explain that they have to take a breath, run and scream, and as soon as their breath is out, they need to stop. The students will end up spread out throughout the field. After calling them back, discuss how some got further than others and some were louder than others. This activity shows how people are different and differences are not necessarily bad.

Speed Pass - Have the group form a circle. Choose one person to start by giving them a ball. Explain that this person is going to throw the ball to another person, saying the name of the receiver first. The object is to catch the ball; a dropped ball starts it over. The second person will then call someone else's name and throw them the ball. *Each person can only have the ball once.* The last person catching the ball throws it back to the person who started. After establishing a throwing order, tell the group you will time them and they need to figure out the fastest way to get the ball to everyone while keeping the same throwing order and without dropping it. Allow them to discuss and come to their own (possibly incorrect) ideas. This activity is great to show how the team will need to share (and try out) their ideas with one another. The easiest way to complete this task is to change places in the circle so that the person each throws to is next to them.

Closed and Opened Fist- Have students find partners. Tell one to make a fist. The other needs to open the fist. Emphasize they are working as a team. The simple solution is to ask the person with the closed fist to open it. Discuss with the group how a team works better with open lines of communication and a cooperative spirit as compared with struggling to pry the fist open.

Perfect Circle- Have students stand in a perfect shoulder-to-shoulder circle. Have them take 25 steps backwards and take a look at the circle. They will notice since all legs are different lengths, they will most likely not have a perfect circle. This is another good activity used to show differences.

Ground Initiatives

The following activities are simply ideas that are intended to be used as catalysts to promote positive relations between students both in the school setting and beyond. Activities can be completed with the intent to simply have a “good time” while working together or the facilitator can lead brief discussions after each activity to emphasize key points such as team formation, communication, cooperation, problem solving, and trust. A list of discussion questions follows.

- 1) What type of communication was used? Was this helpful? Could other methods work?
- 2) Was there a leader? Are leaders important to the success of a group?
- 3) Did the group take into consideration many people’s ideas or just a few? Why?
- 4) Share one word (or phrase) to describe:
 - a. How the activity made you feel
 - b. How the team succeeded
 - c. How the team could improve
- 5) Say something positive about a team member or something you appreciate her/him doing.

Alligator Pass

Skills: Cooperation, Problem Solving, Communication

Set up an area to be crossed. Give the group a toy alligator, ball or bandanna. Explain that the group needs to get to the other side, but they cannot move without the “alligator.” If the “alligator” touches the ground, the entire team starts again. The group will probably try to send one person across and have her/him throw the object back (make sure that the distance is too far to be thrown and caught every time). In order to succeed, they usually form a caterpillar line where one person walks out a little bit and passes the object back. Then, the next person walks out a little further and hands the object to the first person until a chain is formed.

Equipment: Stuffed animal, small ball, or bandana

Alphabets (Silver Bullets, p35)

Skills: Communication, Cooperation

Shout out a letter of the alphabet. The entire group uses their bodies, lying down, to create a capital version of the letter stated. Keep changing the letters until they get the hang of it. The letters A, C, E, or F may be easier while K, B, or Q might be more challenging.

Variations & Challenges

- 1) Have the students stand up (good in inclement weather)
- 2) Have the students remain silent throughout activity
- 3) Spell words

Equipment: None

Birthday Line-up (Bottomless Bag, p112)

Skills: Communication, Cooperation

Students must line up according to their birthdays (month and day) without speaking. They can use any other means of communication.

Variations & Challenges

- 1) Line-up alphabetically by middle name, pet’s name, etc.
- 2) Use month, day, and year when lining-up in birthday order

Equipment: None

Bucket Pass (Bottomless Bag, p128)*Skills: Problem Solving, Communication*

Begin with the group sitting in a circle. The object of this activity is to pass a bucket around the circle without using any part of the body from shoulders to hands. If the bucket touches the ground it goes back to the starting point.

Variations & Challenges

- 1) Same restrictions as above, plus they cannot put their heads or feet inside the bucket.
- 2) Set a goal time. Time it. Try to beat their own time.
- 3) Place a ball in the bucket. Bucket cannot touch ground and ball must remain inside bucket. If not, they must start over.
- 4) Increase difficulty gradually. Begin with a pass around, then no hands, then no shoulder to hands and so on.

*Equipment: Bucket, ball***Bull Ring***Skills: Problem Solving, Cooperation, Communication*

The bull ring consists of a circular piece of rubber with several strings attached. The object of this activity is for the group to use the bull ring to transport a bucket from one location to another without touching the bucket or the rubber portion of the bull ring. Each participant should hold at least one of the bull ring strings. If performed properly the rubber will stretch enough to fit around the can and then squeeze down tight and allow for transportation of the bucket when carefully picked up in unison. To promote safety and help us conserve our materials, please ensure students do not unnecessarily overstretch the bull ring as it could snap just like a rubberband.

Variations & Challenges

- 1) Begin with the bucket flipped upside-down and an object placed on top of the bucket. The object cannot fall off during transport.
- 2) Establish a small obstacle course with twists and turns, ups and downs, and narrow passages as the transportation route.

*Equipment: Bull ring, bucket, small object/toy/ball***Circle Within A Circle** (Bottomless Bag, p128)*Skills: Cooperation, Communication*

Begin with the group standing in a circle and joining hands with each other. They have created the first circle. Have two students disconnect hands. Take a hula hoop and have the students rejoin hands by reaching through the hula hoop. The hula hoop is now a 2nd circle interlocking with and dangling from the first. The object of this activity is to pass the 2nd circle around the 1st circle as fast as possible without the 1st circle to breaking apart at any point.

Variations & Challenges

- 1) Have the team set a goal time. Time it. Try to beat the goal.
- 2) Time the first round. Tell the team to cut their time by $\frac{1}{2}$, $\frac{1}{4}$, etc.
- 3) Add a second hoop starting across from the first. Object of hoop #1 is to catch hoop #2. Object of hoop #2 is to stay away from hoop #1.

*Equipment: Hula hoop(s)***Clocks***Skills: Problem Solving*

Ask the group to form a large hand-in-hand circle. Tell the circle that you would like it to rotate 360 degrees clockwise, and then return 360 degrees back to where they started. The goal is to see how quickly the group can complete the double rotation. The attempt is stopped if anyone breaks the circle. Place markers at six and twelve o'clock inside the circle, so that the group has reference points for starting and stopping.

Variations & Challenges

- 1) Ask the group to begin while seated on the ground and finish up in that position.
- 2) Blindfold a few participants.

Equipment: Place markers for 6 & 12 o'clock, blindfolds (optional)

Human Knot (Silver Bullets, p117)

Skills: Trust, Problem Solving, Communication

Ask members to face each other in a tight circle. Each person holds out their right hand and grasps the right hand of someone else, as if they were shaking hands. *Please do not interlock fingers for safety's sake.* Then each person extends their left hand and grasps the left hand of someone else, so that each person is holding the hands of two different people (with at least one who is not next to them). With hands held tightly, arms intertwined, and bodies tangled, tell the participants to untangle the human knot without releasing hands. A circle or interlocking circles will eventually be formed.

Variations & Challenges

- 1) Blindfold 1-2 team members.

Equipment: None, blindfolds (optional)

Jelly Roll

Skills: Cooperation, Trust, Communication

Have the group hold hands in a straight line. Have one end of the line remain stationary while the rest of the group winds up around each other (like a jelly or cinnamon roll). Caution the group against pulling too hard against each other, yet make the group as close as possible. Once the group is rolled, designate a goal (a tree, bench, etc.) to which the entire roll must slowly walk. Make sure the group walks slowly and carefully, trying not to trample anyone or fall over.

Equipment: None

Just One Word

Skills: Problem Solving, Cooperation

Distribute "J-U-S-T O-N-E W-O-R-D" cards to team members. Explain that the object is to use all the cards to spell "Just One Word." When students ask questions, be firm and consistent with the instructions as they are the key to successful completion of spelling "Just One Word."

Equipment: "J-U-S-T O-N-E W-O-R-D" cards (one for each letter)

Lap Sit

Skills: Trust

Have the group form a circle standing shoulder to shoulder. Have them turn so their right shoulders face the inside of the circle. Keeping in a circle, have the group step inward until their toes touch the heels of the person in front of them. Once this is accomplished, explain that each person will sit on the knees of the person behind them. At your signal, have the group slowly sit down. Counting to three works well...by "three" everyone should be sitting. If everyone sits at the same time this will work and no one will fall. Count to three again to have them stand up.

Equipment: None

Monster (Silver Bullets, p 133)

Skills: Problem Solving, Trust

The object is to cross a designated area as a monster. Everybody must be connected to form the monster. The monster has one less foot touching the ground than the number of participants (i.e. 10 feet touching for a group of 11 children). The most common way this is solved is by all the participants hopping except one who wheelbarrows while being held by a person hopping.

Equipment: None, boundary markers (optional)

Moon Ball (Bottomless Bag, p55)

Skills: Cooperation, Communication

Each person must “hit” the ball at least once and the whole group must achieve a total number of hits set by the instructor. If the ball touches the ground, the group starts again. They may realize that you only said that the ball had to be off the ground. Therefore, it is possible to hold the ball, pass it hand to hand, and tap the ball.

Variations & Challenges

- 1) Ball cannot stop bouncing from person to person.
- 2) Members can hit the ball more than once, but not successively in a row. No double taps.

Equipment: Beach ball or soft playground ball

Nuclear Waste

Skills: Communication, Trust, Cooperation, Problem Solving

Have 2-4 students who have been blindfolded stand as close to one another as possible. Tell the rest of the group this is nuclear waste that they must move from one location to another. They move the waste by placing a large circle of rope around the waste and walking it to the other location. Neither the rope nor the movers can touch the nuclear waste at anytime.

Variations & Challenges

- 1) Have the nuclear waste attempt to carry something (blindfolded) from one point to another while under the instruction of the movers.

Equipment: Rope or hula hoop, blindfolds (optional)

Skin the Snake

Skills: Trust, Cooperation

Have the team make a single-file line. Each member should then reach between her/his legs with their left hand and grab the right hand of the person behind them. Once the chain is formed, they may begin. The object of the game is to reverse the order and/or create a single chain of people holding hands in a normal (not awkward) way. The team cannot let go of hands or simply lift legs over the obstacle of connected arms. A common way to complete this task is to have the last person in the line lay down on the ground. Next, the rest of the group backs over that person, straddling the body. As each person reaches the end, they in turn lay down. This continues as the whole team moves backwards over the prone bodies.

Variations & Challenges

- 1) After the last person lies down, he/she gets up and starts forward again, pulling everyone else up and back over the bodies.
- 2) Split larger groups into teams and have a “friendly” relay race highlighting cooperation

Equipment: None

Speed Pass leading to Group Juggling

Skills: Cooperation

Group Juggling is simply Speed Pass that has decided to “up the ante.” Begin with the same rules as Speed Pass (*see Warm-ups*) by making a circle and establishing a throwing order. Once the order is established, everyone must remain in place. Additional balls, stuffed toys, etc. are added to the mix and must be passed around the group in order without any drops. A total of 4-6 items is sufficient. After one round it is good to assess how many drops occurred and allow time to make a plan of action that will prevent drops. To facilitate discussion upon completion of Group Juggling, allow each item to represent various stressors in the students’ lives (i.e. family, friends, schoolwork, extracurricular activities, etc.) Emphasize how the team can help each other to achieve the current goal, but they can also help each other on a daily basis to relieve the stresses of life.

Equipment: small balls, stuffed toys, and/or rolled bandanas (total=4-6)

Touch My Can (Bottomless Bag, p124)

Skills: Communication, Problem Solving

Take a clean can. Place two people so they are facing each other. Have them hold the can with their noses. The rest of the group must now touch the can at the same time without touching each other and without dropping the can.

Equipment: Bucket or can

Trolleys (aka Land Skis)

Skills: Cooperation, Communication

This activity utilizes two 4'x4' boards that have ropes tied through them. The group must walk a prescribed course with their feet on the trolleys at all times, holding on to the ropes. If someone falls off or a foot touches the ground, the group must start over. The easiest way to move together tends to be to count off having everyone move their left foot, then right foot, slowly towards their goal.

Variations & Challenges

1) Trade out the ability to speak for individuals (or the entire group) as a penalty for falling off rather than restarting (especially if they have been doing well).

1) If someone lets go of a rope, then the rope may not be used again.

2) Have the group reverse, "park" in a prescribed spot, or make a 3-point turn.

*Equipment: Trolleys (we have two sets: a 6-person regular one and a 7-person difficult trolley with ropes that are purposely uneven). **Please notify lead staff if you intend to use this activity***

Willow in the Wind (Cowtails and Cobras II, p52)

Skills: Trust

Form a small circle of 8-12 players standing shoulder-to-shoulder, facing the center of the circle. For the spotters, hands should be at chest level with palms forward and fingers next to each other. One foot should be slightly behind the other for support. A person (the willow) is placed inside the circle with feet together, arms crossed over chest, and eyes closed. Keeping knees locked, body relaxed, and feet stationary, the willow gently falls backward and proceeds to sway from side to side, forward and backward as the group members gently pass the "willow" about the circle with their palms. To ensure safety, at least two people should be supporting the "willow" at all times. Also a command sequence between the willow and the spotters, such as the one found below, is strongly recommended.

Willow: "Spotters ready?"

Spotters: "Ready!!"

Willow: "Falling."

Spotters: "Fall On!!"

As long as the group remains focused and safe, summer breeze sound effects can be added to create a "willow in the wind."

Equipment: None

Yurt Circle (Cowtails and Cobras II, p73)

Skills: Trust, Cooperation

Make sure there is an even number of participants before starting this activity. Instruct the group to hold hands in a circle and count off by twos. On a signal, have the ones lean in and the twos lean out, holding onto hands. Switch roles by having the ones lean out and the twos lean in.

Equipment: None

Cooperative Tag Games & Games Just For Fun

Blob Tag

Set defined boundaries for the game. Assign one student to be the BLOB. The BLOB desires to grow and can only do so by catching (tagging) others. If the BLOB tags someone, they must join the BLOB and stay connected while trying to grow ever larger. If the BLOB disconnects, they must rejoin before they can tag again. While evading the BLOB, students may not go over, under, or through the BLOB. If they run out of bounds they become part of the BLOB.

Elbow Tag

Have students find a partner and link elbows. Have partners stand in a circle with a large space in between each group. Ask one group of partners to be the IT and ITEE. IT tries to catch ITEE as they both run around the other partners in the circle. When ITEE tires or wishes to escape, he/she can link elbows with one of the other groups of partners. The person on the opposite end of that pair (the free end) now becomes the new ITEE. If IT tags ITEE, they immediately change roles.

Honey, If You Love Me, Smile

While seated in a circle, IT approaches someone and says, "Honey, if you love me, please smile." Without smiling, ITEE must respond, "Honey, I love you, but I just can't smile" (repeated 3 times). If ITEE smiles, they become IT. IT may make gestures but cannot touch anyone.

Inch Worm

Sit facing a partner. Inch toward your partner until you can sit on each other's feet. Grasp your partner's elbows or upper arms with each hand. Decide which direction you would like to travel and rock back and forth to inch along. Have each pair race to a set point.

People to People

Use an odd number of people. Group members find partners and form a circle around the leader. The leader chants "People to People" with the group repeating the chant. When everyone is chanting, the leader begins to call off body parts, substituting a body part for the word "people" in the chant (i.e. foot to foot, nose to nose, elbow to knee). The partners begin to follow the directions of the leader. Body parts are matched until the leader shouts, "people to people." This is the signal to find a new partner. The leader should also find a partner and anyone who cannot find a partner becomes the new leader.

Red Handed

Everyone forms a circle with IT in the center. While IT has his/her eyes closed, the other players pass a small object from person to person. IT then opens his/her eyes and tries to find the object as it is passed. Fake passes are an integral part of the game and make it more difficult for IT to find the object. Whoever IT catches with the object has been caught "red handed" and becomes IT.

Stargate

Instruct partners to sit down, back to back, with arms locked. The object is to stand from this position without releasing the partner. Next, sit face to face with feet together. Grab outstretched hands and try to stand from this position.

Triangle Tag

Separate the group into teams of four. Three of the four join hands and form a triangle. The remaining person is IT. Next, choose one of the three in the triangle to be the ITEE. The ITEE does not want to be tagged. With the help of the others in the triangle, ITEE spins left and right evading whoever is IT. Tags across the triangle are not allowed.

Vampire

Everyone is sitting with their eyes closed when the leader designates a vampire. When the leader says this is done, players can open their eyes. Everyone is to shake hands with each other. When the anonymous vampire shakes hands, she/he scratches the palms of the victims. If the vampire scratches your hand, you must shake two more people's hands, in the vampire fashion, and then die with a blood-curdling scream. If a living person can identify the vampire before being scratched, the game ends and all people return for the next round. If a living person accuses the wrong person of being a vampire, that person joins the dead partners on the sidelines.

On the Spot!! updated & revised May 2006
by Geo McCann
On_The_Spot_2006.doc