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Ball Pass/Group Juggle

Team Building Activity

Goals:

- To learn the names of other meeting attendees
- To have fun and be actively engaged
- To build a stronger sense of community
- To accomplish a shared goal

Summary:

Ball Pass/Group Juggle is intended to be used as an Icebreaker to help participants learn each others names (Name Game Activity). This quick and easy activity is a great method to use to introduce a group to one another and challenge them to work as a team. If desired, a time challenge can be added to the activity (Team Building/Problem Solving Activity) and will give participants an opportunity to work as a team.

Supplies:

- Tennis balls or other soft objects (Koosh balls, stuffed animals, etc.)

Instructions:

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Part 1: Ball Pass

(Function: Name Game Activity)

1. The facilitator should have all participants get up from their seats and stand in a large circle. If the group size exceeds 12, divide the participants into two separate circles. After the group(s) has been formed, the facilitator should explain that the goal of the activity is for the group to learn each other's names.
2. Next, one person in each of the circle should be given a tennis ball. The person who is given the ball is then told to select someone across the circle from them to throw the ball to. As they throw the ball, they must say the name of the person receiving the ball. Once the ball is caught, that person must repeat the process; making sure not to throw the ball to anyone who has already touched it. This process must be repeated until every person in the circle has caught and passed the ball. The ball must end up back in the hands of the person who threw it first.
3. After the group has completed the activity once, the facilitator should challenge the group to repeat the process in less time. To increase the difficulty, the facilitator may opt to give the group an additional tennis ball. Upon successful completion, the facilitator can choose to give the group a third ball.
4. Once two balls are in rotation, the facilitator should encourage the group to pass them as quickly as possible through the circle in the "pattern that they have already established." If the group is dropping the balls regularly, the facilitator should instruct them stop and take 15 seconds to devise a new strategy.
5. Following the successful completion of passing the balls through the circle without dropping them, the facilitator should congratulate the group for their efforts and have them return to their seats!

Part II: Ball Pass/Group Juggle

(Function: Team Building/Problem Solving Activity)

To expand the Name Game Activity, the facilitator should announce that since the group has successfully passed the balls through the circle without dropping them a time challenge is going to be added. The group should be reminded that there are two rules-they must maintain the established pattern and cannot drop the balls. and the person who starts with the ball must say "done" when the balls are returned to them. Before starting the timer, the group should be given 15 seconds to create a strategy. They must toss the ball as soon as the facilitator says "go"and announce they are "done" when the balls are where they began. Finally, the group should be told that a five second penalty will be added each time a ball is dropped.

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Until this point, the facilitator should not use the actual word “rules” when giving the instructions. Whenever asked clarifying questions about the rules, the facilitator should repeat that there are only two rules- maintain the pattern that has already been established and do not drop the balls.

After the first round the facilitator should announce the time (being sure to add on any penalties for dropped balls) and congratulate the group.

The facilitator should then challenge the group to complete the process more quickly. Again, the group should be given 15 seconds to create a strategy.

Note: Most groups that do not drop the balls will be able to complete the round of passes in under 30 seconds.

Again, the facilitator should congratulate the group on a job well done and then announce that the game can be completed in half the time that they have posted. The facilitator should challenge the group to do so and remind them that the ONLY RULES are that the group must maintain the same pattern that you have already established and not drop the tennis balls. The group should then be given 30 seconds to develop a strategy.

Note: At this point in the activity, most groups figure out that under these rules they don't have to stay in the circle the way they originally were standing and can rearrange themselves so that each person is standing next to the person that they were throwing the ball to. The successful groups also notice that in order to reduce the completion time the ball does not need to be passed separately. Approaches can include swiping all the balls like a credit card across each person's hands or having one person hold the balls while each person touches them in order. Once they have determined they can do that they will pretty quickly get the time down to 5 seconds or less. It's actually possible to do this in 1 second or less but not necessary to keep them going until that point.**

The facilitator should continue to challenge the group to cut their time in half until they are able to complete the process in under 5 seconds. It is important that the facilitator concludes this activity while the participants are feeling good about their efforts and congratulates them for their performance.

To conclude the icebreaker, the facilitator should debrief the activity using The Experiential Learning Cycle (Describe, Interpret, Generalize, Apply or

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What? So What? Now What?).

Themes:

- Thinking “outside of the box”
- Power of collaboration
- Leadership
- Healthy competition (against the clock, their own success and the other group)
- Rules (how rules are made and interpreted and the barriers rules create)

Reflection:

- What worked for the group?
- What were the barriers to accomplishing your goals?
- Did your group succeed?
- How did you define success as a group?
- What response did the group have when balls were added?
- What happened when the amount of time was decreased?
- What challenges did the group face when barriers were added?
- Did the group create rules that were not stated?