



Team Building Games on a Shoestring



**How To Use Two Normal Shoestrings to Lead
7 Fun and Engaging Team Building Activities**

Tom Heck

President & Founder

International Association of Teamwork Facilitators

International Association of Teamwork Facilitators

Teachings, Tools and Community for the Evolution of Team Consciousness

www.IATFconnect.com

Introduction

With this activity guide and a pair of shoelaces, you'll be ready to lead 7 fun and effective team building games that will promote vital team skills, develop community, and enhance connection.

My name is Tom Heck and I'm the President & Founder of the International Association of Teamwork Facilitators (www.IATFconnect.com) where a worldwide community of trainers, coaches, and educators of all types gather to learn and share strategies, tactics and tools used to advance the evolution of team consciousness in organizations large and small.

Many in the IATF community use team building games (activities, exercises, simulations, etc.) like the ones found in this guide because games are so effective at engaging people emotionally (not just intellectually). It's the emotional connection with the lesson that allows people to really "get it" and remember the lessons learned at a cellular level. The average teamwork facilitator provides an *informational* learning experience that is left brained, linear and "head" centered and ultimately forgettable. At the IATF we help teamwork facilitators provide *transformational* learning experiences where participants are engaged on an emotional level that stimulates creativity and curiosity. Our goal is to engage the head AND the heart and ultimately build conscious, sustainable teams that actively seek out and create win-win opportunities.



**Tom Heck
IATF President &
Founder**

A Leadership Note

Lead all of the activities found in this activity guide in such a manner that the participants understand they have a choice as to whether they participate or not. Encourage each person to communicate their comfort level with the activity and to join in at the level they choose (full, partial, none) rather than be coerced into participation.

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These activities are wonderful and they can help create a positive shift for your group. And yet, the most important thing to remember is this: every time you get in front of a group of people the most powerful lesson you teach is WHO YOU ARE. In other words, if an un-centered person whose primary operating emotion is fear (rather than love) leads the activities in this guide, it won't make any difference how cool or unique the activity is because the primary message communicated to the group will be: "I am a fearful person".

You must develop who you are as a leader because who you are will be the first message you send to your group (and there's no way of avoiding this). To be a highly effective leader and team facilitator you must dedicate yourself to personal development. A practical place to start on your path of personal development is at the IATF **Leader As Coach Fast Track Program** www.LeaderAsCoachFTP.com

The activities in this e-book can be done just for fun without going into a discussion about what was learned. However, it's my hope that you will use the activities to create opportunities for dialogue. Suggestions for starting a conversation (a "debrief") are offered in each description. The key to learning through experiential teambuilding exercises is the combination of activity PLUS discussion. I offer convenient and easy to attend TeleSeminars (live and interactive seminars delivered by telephone conference calls) where you can learn to become a highly effective leader and facilitator of teams. Learn more at www.IATFconnect.com

Challenge and adventure activities can present elements of physical and emotional risk. The information presented in this activity guide is for your reference, and you are ultimately responsible for judging the suitability of an activity and safely supervising the activity.

The publisher of this document assumes no responsibility or liability for the use of the information presented in this guide. This includes errors due to misprinting or omission of detail.

No single source of adventure based experiential education can substitute for practical experience and education. While this activity guide serves as an introduction to the use of adventure based experiential learning, it is only an introduction. Studying the material in this activity guide is no substitute for

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professional training. At the IATF we provide professional training for both new and seasoned teamwork facilitators.

Enjoy!

Tom Heck

President & Founder

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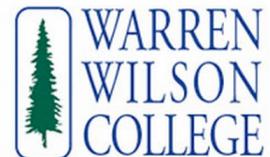
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A sincere thank you goes to the amazing students and staff of the Warren Wilson College Outdoor Leadership Program. The pictures and video of students appear throughout this e-book as a means to help you more fully understand how to play the games. This is a learning community with a long history of making a positive difference in the world.

Warren Wilson College is located near my home in Asheville, North Carolina, USA and I've had the great privilege of working with the staff and students of this great college for many years. This college consistently attracts students who are curious, thoughtful, and engaged. The caring and brilliant staff draw out and nurture the best in these students. I encourage you to learn more about Warren Wilson College and its Outdoor Leadership Program at the school's website:



www.warren-wilson.edu

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Activity # 1:

All Aboard

Teambuilding Game



**VIDEO
CLICK HERE**

Group Size 6-15

Age Range: elementary school – adult

Intensity: Mental=1, Physical=1

Time: 5-10 minutes without debrief

Space: Minimal – Medium -- Lots

Set Up Time: 60 seconds

Props: Two shoestrings

Challenge

The entire group must fit inside the circle on the ground formed by the two shoestrings.

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Skills Developed

Problem Solving, Trust, Planning, Resource Management

Set Up / Preparation

1. Tie the two shoestrings into a circle shape.
2. Lay the circle on the ground and ask the group to stand inside the circle.
3. Once the group completes this, make the loop smaller and smaller with each consecutive attempt.

Presenting The Challenge

1. Gather the group around the circle on the ground.
2. Presentation Script: "This circle on the ground made out of two shoestrings represents a platform. Your challenge is to get your entire team on this platform. Here are the rules you must follow throughout the game." [read the rules below]

Rules

1. Everyone must be touching the ground inside the circle in some way.
2. The group must stay inside the circle for the length of time it takes them to sing one round of the song "Row, Row, Row Your Boat."
3. During the song, no one can touch the the ground outside the circle. Should anyone violate this rule, the group must retry that attempt.

Safety Warning

This activity will require the group to be calm, responsible and mature. Do not allow the group to fall over in such a way as to injure a group member. If your group is not ready for this activity, don't do it.

Story Line

"Your team is on a sinking ship. The good news is that a rescue ship is coming. The bad news is that the water is infested with hungry sharks. Your team must stand on top of the last remaining part of the boat that's still sticking out of the water. If you can stay out of the water as a team (the length of the song "Row, Row, Row Your Boat") then the sharks will leave."

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Facilitator Notes

As the size of the loop gets smaller, the group usually goes through a period where they don't believe they can fit in such a small area (*"This is impossible!" you'll hear them exclaim*). It's only through creative thinking and hard work that the group is able to solve this challenge.

Debriefing Suggestions

1. I like to use this activity to lead a discussion about what's "impossible". When something is viewed as impossible, it's usually because of the limiting beliefs someone holds. An example of this might include beliefs from several centuries ago that held that the world is flat. Another might include the old belief that the earth is the center of the universe. If you were to tell someone during the early 1800's that people would be able to communicate with each other around the world instantaneously (by telephone) or that we will fly to the moon and come back, you would have been laughed at.
2. Often times, the only thing that limits us is our beliefs. If a person believes something is possible, they will take different action than if they believe it's impossible.
3. What did the group have to believe in order to be successful
4. This is a great activity to discuss the concept of *failure*. As the group solves each challenge, I will oftentimes make the circle even smaller AND I will give them a time limit in which to complete the activity successfully (ex. 5 minutes). The group will get to a point where the challenge is greater than their ability to solve it in the given amount of time. I will ask them if their inability to solve it means they're a failure. From this point, we can discuss the definition of failure.
5. You'll likely find that some people in the group have rules for themselves that make failure easy to achieve (*"In order for me to fail, all I have to know is that I didn't complete a task."*). Others in the group will have rules that make failure hard to achieve (*"In order for me to fail, I must not learn anything. As long as I learn something, I have succeeded."*). Which rules around failure serve you best?
6. Interesting point: Babe Ruth, the famous baseball home run hitter and hall of famer also held a record for having the most strike outs in a season.

Variations

1. Instead of providing the group with a large circle area in which to stand that progressively becomes smaller and smaller, provide the group with a small area from the beginning.
2. While the group is in one of the smaller spaces, provide the group with a snack to eat that requires some preparation (crackers with peanut butter and jelly works well).

History

Karl Rohnke provided a description of this activity in his book "Silver Bullets" published in 1984.
www.karlrohnke.com

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Related Quote

“A round man cannot be expected to fit in a square hole right away. He must have time to modify his shape.” ~ **Mark Twain**



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Activity # 2:

Amoeba Electric Fence

Teambuilding Game



[VIDEO
CLICK HERE](#)

Group Size 6-15

Age Range: elementary school – adult

Intensity: Mental=1, Physical=1

Time: 5-10 minutes without debrief

Space: Minimal – Medium -- Lots

Set Up Time: 60 seconds

Props: Two shoestrings

Challenge

The entire team must cross over the top of the “electric fence”.

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Skills Developed

Trust, Planning, Problem Solving, Roles and Responsibilities

Set Up / Preparation

1. Create a clear playing area. The space must be free from any obstacles that may endanger the group while playing the game.
2. Create the “electric fence” by tying two shoestrings together into a stright line. Select two chairs and attach the shoestrings to the chairs to make a horizontal line - - this is the “electric fence”. The higher the shoestring is off the ground the more challenging the game will be. I recommend placing the shoestring no higher than the average of the group’s pants inseam. For safety reasons, don’t make the line higher than 4 feet.

Presenting the Challenge

1. Gather the group on one side of the “electric fence”.
2. Presentation Script: “This shoestring represents an imaginary electric fence. Your challenge is to travel from the side of the electric fence you’re on now over to the other side of the electric fence. Here are the rules you must follow throughout the game.” [read the rules below]

Rules

1. The electric fence, as it is presented at the beginning of the activity, may not be altered.
2. The electric fence may not be touched by anything (skin, hair, clothing, etc.)
3. The group may not utilize the space directly under the electric fence. Think of this space as having an ultra-thin and impenetrable force field.
4. All members of the team must remain in contact with each other at all times throughout the game (regardless of what side of the electric fence you’re on). The group must act as ONE “amoeba”. It would be a rule violation if, for example, three people are in physical contact with each other but not in contact with the rest of the larger group.
5. Team members are allowed to reposition themselves as long as they ALWAYS stay in physical contact with the group.
6. No launching or throwing of team members over the electric fence. Travel over the fence must be done in a safe way.
7. No other supplies may be used in this activity.
8. Violation of a rule may result in a penalty (example: starting all over again).

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Safety Warning

1. Because this game involves lifting, it's important to teach proper spotting techniques prior to giving the group this challenge.
2. Do not allow participants to hit their heads or spines on the ground. This is very important. Since people will be lifted over the fence by their teammates, it's ideal to have cushions/pads placed under the horizontal bar of the fence. This will help minimize the effect of a fall should one occur.
3. If your group is not strong enough (physically), mature enough and/or calm enough, do not attempt this activity.
4. People with knee, ankle or back injuries or problems should not participate.

Story Line

"Traveling through the land of Goop, your team has mysteriously been turned into an amoeba (single cell organism). Though it's somewhat funny and entertaining to be an amoeba, it will make it impossible to return home and live a normal life. Therefore, your team must cross over a magical barrier (electric fence) to change back to your normal selves. Don't touch the magic barrier!"

Facilitator Notes

1. A high degree of trust is required to successfully accomplish this challenge. This challenge is best for a group that is fairly advanced as far as maturity and their ability to safely care for each other are concerned.
2. As the facilitator, be ready to help spot the group members during the game. If team members aren't taking the safety of teammates seriously then stop the game immediately.
3. Consider presenting this activity in stages. First set up the electric fence height low so that the group can easily travel over the electric fence. Then continue to increase the height of the electric fence with each round.

Debriefing Suggestions

Prior to starting the activity, ask the group to identify some of the obstacles (hurdles, "fences") that stand between them and their goals. Suggest to the group that the electric fence represents these obstacles.

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Variations

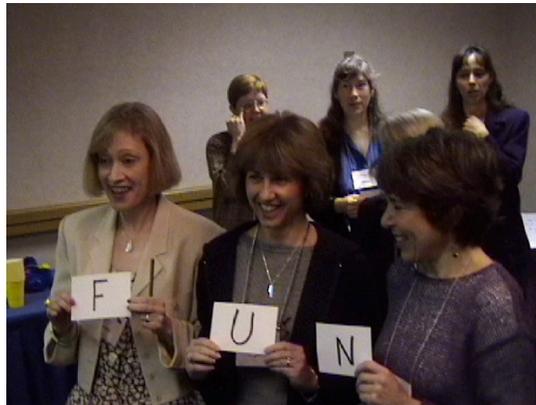
1. Supply the group with a “life line” made out of a 10 to 20 foot long section of rope or string. Instead of requiring the group to stay in contact with each other, require the group to stay in contact with the “life line” throughout the game.
2. Divide the group in half. Have the groups start on opposite sides of the electric fence. The groups must switch sides. Will the two groups cooperate? (I hope so!).

History

A variation of this activity was first documented in “Silver Bullets” by Karl Rohnke
www.karlrohnke.com

Related Quote

“Fences are made for those who cannot fly.” ~ **Elbert Hubbard**



”Team Spelling” with index cards.
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Activity # 3:

Bus Stop

Teambuilding Game



**VIDEO
CLICK HERE**

Group Size: 3 – 50 people
Age Range: elementary school – adult
Intensity: Mental=1, Physical=2-3
Time: 5-10 minutes (without debrief)
Space: Minimal – Medium -- Lots
Set Up Time: 60 seconds
Props: Two shoestrings

Challenge

Group members make choices (express their opinions) in front of other people by getting on and off an imaginary bus.

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Skills Developed

Trust, Fun, Know Others Better

Set Up / Preparation

1. Create an imaginary bus by laying the two shoestrings on the ground and in a parallel formation. The two shoestrings should be 15 – 20 feet apart.
2. Ask the group to stand inbetween the two shoestrings and face you (see top photo).

Presenting the Challenge

1. The facilitator stands at one end of the “bus” (at the end of and between the parallel lines made by the two shoestrings).
2. The group stands between the two parallel lines and faces the facilitator (aka “bus driver”).
3. The facilitator reads word pairs to the group (see suggested word pairs below). When you (the facilitator) read the first word in the word pair, you will point to your right (to the right side of the bus). When you read the second word in the word pair you’ll point to your left (to the left side of the bus). The participants (passengers) must now make a decision and walk across the line on the ground to the word / side they most relate to in this moment. Participants make their decisions independently from each other. For example, the bus driver says “TALK (pointing to the right) and LISTEN (pointing to the left) and the participants walk across the line to the side they like most at this time.
4. Ask everyone to take a quick look at who ended up on their side AND the other side and then say “Everyone back on the bus!” which means everyone is to walk back between the two parallel lines and get ready to listen for the next word pair.
5. The next word pair is given and the participants (passengers) make their selections. The process is repeated several times.
6. Presentation Script: “You are now on an imaginary bus and I’m your bus driver. In a moment I’m going to announce a word pair and then ask you to exit the bus and move toward the word that you most associate with in this moment. We’ll play a couple of rounds. Pay attention to the choices people make.” [read the rules below]

Rules

Passengers must get off the bus when a stop is made (you must make a choice).

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Potential Word Pair Choices to offer the group

Day Time	Night Time
Spend Money	Save Money
Shark	Dolphin
Chocolate Cake	Chocolate Ice Cream
Run	Walk
One Friend	Many Friends
Triangle	Square
Deep Sea Diving	Sky Diving
Something New	Something Old
Art Class	Math Class
Little Kid	Big Kid
Read	Watch

Facilitator Notes

I like to lead this activity at the beginning of a program so I can quickly and easily learn about the group.

Debriefing Suggestions

I use this activity to lead into a discussion about the power of making a real choice. I believe that great teams do not achieve success (consistently) through luck. Long-term success is achieved through the choices we make both as individuals and as a team. Sometimes we make choices consciously and sometimes we make choices without much thought at all. The choices we make on a daily basis create what is known as destiny. By becoming aware of our choices, we can decide whether they serve us or not. Each choice we make leads us either closer to or further from our life's mission or purpose.

Variations

Have participants think of word pairs that would challenge the group and then take over as the bus driver.

History

I was taught this activity by master teamwork facilitator Jeff Long.

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Related Quote

“Character is the sum and total of a person’s choices.” ~ *P.B. Fitzwater*



Hand held labyrinth on a bandana Teambuilding Game

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Activity # 4:

Crossover

Teambuilding Game



**VIDEO
CLICK HERE**

Group Size 8-30 people

Age Range: middle school – adult

Intensity: Mental=2, Physical=2

Time: 10-30 minutes

Space: Minimal – Medium -- Lots

Set Up Time: 1 minute

Props: Two shoe strings

Challenge

Team members must move from one side of a circle to the other as quickly as possible.

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Skills Developed

Communication, Planning, Goal Setting, Creativity, Process Improvement

Set Up / Preparation

1. Create an open playing area free of obstacles.
2. Tie two shoestrings into a circle and then place the circle on the ground in the center of the playing area.

Presenting the Challenge

1. Ask the group to stand in a circle around the shoelaces. Participants can't be touching anyone (includes hair and clothing).
2. Optional: Provide each person with some type of marker to identify their spot in the circle. This can be a piece of tape or an index card or a leaf.
3. Have the participants find a partner across the circle. Make sure everyone has only ONE partner. In case you have an odd number of people in the group you'll have one team of 3 - two will stand next to each other and the third member will be directly across the circle from them.
4. Presentation Script: "In a moment, but not now, I'm going to say "ON YOUR MARK GET SET GO!" and when I do, I'll start my stopwatch/timer and your job will be to trade places with your partner across the circle as fast as possible. Once everyone has traded places with their partner I'll stop the stopwatch. When you trade places with your partner you must travel through the center of the circle and touch the inside of the shoelace circle simultaneously." [read the rules below]

Rules

1. You must change places with the person directly across from you in the circle.
2. You and your crossing partner must both step into the circle at the same time as you cross to the other side.
3. You may not touch anyone at any time during this activity (includes clothing).
4. Group members may not reposition themselves once the activity has begun.
5. If you have an odd number in your group, create a team of 3 who must change with each other (following the normal rules).

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Safety Warning

Some people may want to run in this activity, which might be dangerous if they hit someone head on. If you suspect your group might create a head-on collision, don't do this activity.

Story Line

"We've all come to acknowledge how important it is for people around the world to understand other people's points of view (position / situation). The faster we can understand the more fully we'll be able to help each other. This activity gives us an opportunity to (metaphorically) see the world from the perspective of someone opposite us (holding an opposing point of view). It also gives us the opportunity to practice a sense of urgency."

Facilitator Notes

1. After the group has completed their first attempt, announce the time from your stopwatch and then ask the team to beat that record. Allow the group multiple attempts in an effort to continually lower the score (time).
2. During an attempt, you (the facilitator) must watch for "touches" and then, for each touch, add 10 seconds to the final time. If the group doesn't identify a touch to the facilitator (trying to hide it or cover it up) then a 20 second penalty is assessed for that touch. This rule makes it easier for you to run this activity.
3. A smaller group (10 people) will have a much easier time with this activity than a group of 30 or even 40. The larger groups typically have more difficulty with leadership and sharing ideas.

Debriefing Suggestions

A major theme of this activity is "continuous improvement". Therefore, consider focusing your discussion on the lessons learned and strategies practiced and how those same lessons and strategies can be applied in the "real world" (back at the office, etc.).

Variations

Experiment with the size of the circle in the center. The smaller the circle the harder the game gets. What if you made a circle with an inside area smaller than your hand?

History

I learned this activity from master teamwork facilitator Earl Davis. www.moonshadow.net

Related Quote

"A mind not to be changed by place or time, the mind is its own place, and in itself can make a Heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven." ~ **John Milton**

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Activity # 5:

Geometry *Teambuilding Game*



**VIDEO
CLICK HERE**

Group Size: 6 - 8

Age Range: elementary – adult

Intensity: Mental=2, Physical=1

Time: 5 – 10 minutes (without debrief)

Space: Minimal – Medium -- Lots

Set Up Time: 60 seconds

Props: Two shoestrings

Challenge

The group must work together to create assigned geometric shapes.

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Skills Developed

Communication, Problem Solving, Leadership.

Set Up / Preparation

1. Tie 2 shoestrings together to form a circle.
2. Gather the team of 6 to 8 people.

Presenting the Challenge

1. Ask the team to grab hold of the shoestring circle with both hands.
2. Presentation Script: "In a moment, but not now, your team will need to form the shoestring circle into a perfect square." [read the rules below]

Rules

1. No one may use verbal communication during this activity. The team is allowed to communicate, just not verbally.
2. Everyone must hold onto the shoestring with both hands for the entire activity. Feel free to point if you want to but you must hold on to the shoestring while doing so.

Safety Warning

In one variation of the game (described below) participants are asked to close their eyes. Be aware that some people can be made to feel very uncomfortable with this request. It's okay if someone needs to open their eyes during the game to feel comfortable. If you play this variation of the game make sure the playing area is free of anything that could cause someone to trip.

Story Line

In the angular land of Shoestringville there is a need for new road designs which will help connect the various regions of the country. Your design firm has been brought in to demonstrate how well you work together. The team that works best wins the contract.

Facilitator Notes

1. One variation of this activity requires the participants to close their eyes. Some people ask me if it's OK to use blindfolds. I'm not an advocate of using blindfolds. If someone feels the need to take a peek, so be it. I would rather the person feel secure in the knowledge that they can be instantly reassured by opening their eyes.
2. Younger people (under age 10) will likely have a challenging time making a triangle with no verbal communication and their eyes open.

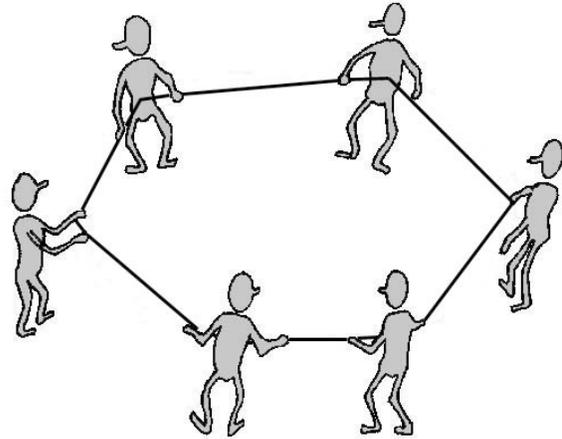
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Debriefing Suggestions

I few years back I suggested this activity to a friend who was leading a teambuilding event for a group of 20 college students who were preparing to travel to South America to do a large and challenging service project. My friend said the group was working well together and needed a challenge that would bring out leadership issues when things didn't go as planned. My friend presented the group with this interesting twist - - she had the group stand behind a "start" line and then placed a loop (made out of 100 feet of small diameter rope) fifty feet beyond the start line. The 100 feet of loop was piled up. The group was then asked to travel out as a group to form a perfect square out of the rope with this stipulation... once the group crossed the start line, they must keep their eyes closed. The group worked well to make a plan and they all agreed on it and then stepped out toward the rope together, with eyes closed. While they were headed toward the rope, the facilitator moved it to an entirely different location. The group reached the point where they thought the rope should be, and yet it wasn't there. The group became frustrated. After much effort, they made a second plan to find the rope (all with eyes closed). They eventually found the rope and then had to make the geometric shape. During the debrief, the group discussed how the activity was a good lesson for them in preparation for their trip. They knew they would encounter challenges that would test the group regardless of how much planning they would do ahead of time. They discussed a plan of action for how they would react to such situations during the trip.



Variations

1. For the second shape, ask the group to form an equilateral triangle (a three sided shape where all sides are equal in length). They can talk, but eyes must remain closed. They must hold on to the shoestring with both hands throughout. The group can open their eyes once they are in agreement as to whether they have made the shape successfully.
2. If you have a large group, divide into teams of 8 people each then give each group their own shoestring. circle.
3. Use a 100-foot section of rope with LOTS of people holding on trying to form a geometric shape. This variation is best done *after* the small groups have had success forming shapes. Make sure you tie a very secure knot.

History

I learned this activity from master teamwork facilitator Betsy Hipple.

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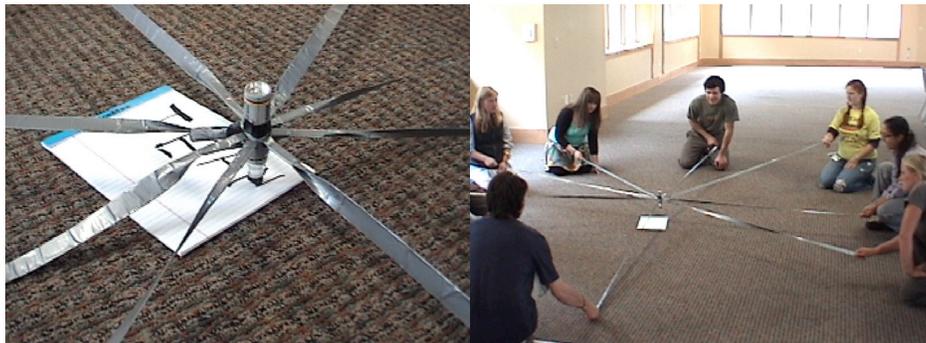
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Related Quote

“We are shaped and fashioned by what we love.” ~ *Johann Wolfgang von Goethe*

Other shapes to try:



**This is the “Robot Writer” Teambuilding Game
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Activity # 6:

Infinite Loops

Teambuilding Game



VIDEO
CLICK HERE

Group Size: Any size group - - people work in pairs

Age Range: Elementary – adult

Intensity: Mental=3, Physical=1

Time: 15 – 60 minutes

Space: Minimal

Set Up Time: 60 seconds

Props: One shoestring for each person

Challenge

Become disconnected from your partner.

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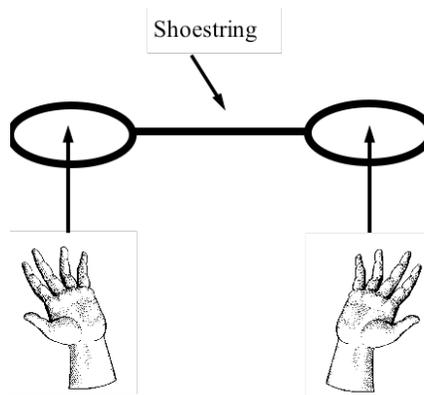
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Skills Developed

Fun, Communication, Problem Solving, Creativity.

Set Up / Preparation

1. Gather enough shoestrings for each participant.
2. Tie a loop in the end of each shoestring. The loop needs to be just large enough for someone to stick their hand through. You've just created one "Infinite Loop". Make enough for each person.



Presenting the Challenge

1. Supply each person with one pair of Infinite Loops and have everyone insert their own hands into their own wrist loops.
2. Ask group members to pair up and then face their partner. All partners are now to become connected.
3. To connect, one person in the pair removes one hand from his wrist loop and then places the end of his Infinite Loop on the other side of his partner's and then reinserts his hand in his wrist loop. Refer to the photo below.
4. Presentation Script: "Your challenge is to separate yourself from your partner (become disconnected)." [read the rules below]

Rules

1. Your wrist loops must stay on your wrists throughout the entire activity.
2. The Infinite Loops (shoestring) may not be cut, ripped, broken, untied or otherwise altered in any manner.

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3. If you become entangled during the activity you are permitted to take your wrist loops off and start over.



Solved!

Safety Warning

Some people may get carried away during this game and, in an effort to find a solution, end up contorting their bodies which may be dangerous. If you see people getting into a potentially harmful position stop the game.

Story Line

“You’ve been captured by aliens from outer space who’ve attached a strange restraining device to your wrists. If you can find a way to disconnect from your partner you’ll be able to escape. Good luck!”

Facilitator Notes

1. During this game I like to walk among the participants to observe how they are working out a solution. Be prepared to answer questions like “Are you sure there is a solution to this?”
2. This activity can take anywhere from a couple of minutes to an hour (or even longer) depending on how long it takes for people to solve the problem. When I was a high school teacher I would present this challenge and it might take a couple of days to solve because I would only allow students to work on it during the last 5 minutes of class.
3. You may want to offer people hints if the group is really struggling. I’ve found it’s best to offer small hints first and only to the people who want hints.
4. This is a great activity to lead with small groups (2 to 4 people) or large groups (400 people). This will get people working closely together and you’ll usually hear lots of laughter as people contort themselves into all kinds of positions as they try to solve this human size puzzle.

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5. This is a great activity to travel with because it's so small. This could even be done by two people sitting next to each other in a van or bus (they must stay seated and wear a seat belt for safety!).
6. This can be a great activity to lead after doing a series of icebreakers. I've also found it useful to use after a lunch break in a workshop - - as people return I hand out the shoestring loops and have the directions projected on a screen. It's an effective way to get everyone's head and body back into the workshop.

Debriefing Suggestions

I like to use this game to help people explore "dead ends" and the world of possibility because so many people who play this game can't see a solution to the problem.

Suggested questions include:

- At what point is it appropriate to give up when you can't find a solution?
- What can keep you going when a problem seems impossible to solve?
- Can you share a story of a time when you were faced with a seemingly unsolvable problem but you were able to find a solution?

I used this activity with a group of gang-involved kids in San Francisco. They were involved in a program designed to help get them out of the gang. For many of the kids they didn't see a way out of their problems. To them, it was an unsolvable problem. I used the Infinite Loops activity to demonstrate that just because a problem appears unsolvable doesn't necessarily mean that is the case. After the kids solved the Infinite Loops activity we talked about how the solution to the activity might hold some truths for them in regards to their desire to exit the gang life. This proved a very effective metaphor for the kids.

Variations

1. If you have an odd number of people in the group you can create a group of three who work together to solve the problem. Have two people connect their Infinite Loops just like everyone else and then have the third person connect to either one of the people in the group of three. The same solution will be used.
2. Instead of placing the Infinite Loops on your wrists, place them on your feet.
3. Supply each person with two sets of Infinite Loops - placing one set on their hands and the other set on their feet.
4. I've led this game with several hundred people with the following variation: I make an announcement at the beginning of the game in which I ask the first two people who solve this Infinite Loops puzzle to find me and then show me the solution. Once I'm convinced they can repeat the solution I ring a bell and ask everyone to stop. This is when I tell the large group that the game has changed. I announce that two people in the group know how

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to solve the problem - now the goal is to get everyone in the large group (all partners) to quickly learn the solution AND be able to demonstrate it when called upon. I let the group know I've started a timer and they must pick a representative to tell me when EVERYONE knows how to solve the problem. The goal here is for the group to practice teaching and learning quickly. Teams that are skillful at teaching and learning have a significant competitive edge in the marketplace.

5. Variation for a TV Audience: In the spring of 2002 a non-profit youth serving agency called Project Steam asked me to lead a teambuilding exercise with 1500 people who would be sitting in 14 different United Artist Movie Theaters located across the country. Project Steam, an award winning program for youth, would be unveiling plans for a national expansion through a 90 minute program delivered live via satellite. Steam teaches life skills through teambuilding exercises and my job was to give the people sitting in the theaters a hands-on experience of what the kids do weekly. Before the event we made hundreds of Infinite Loops and shipped them out to the theaters where they were packed in with the Steam promotional material. On the day of the live broadcast (it took place at a TV station) I was given 5 minutes to lead the activity with hundreds of people I couldn't even see. It went off without a hitch!

History

I learned this activity from master teamwork facilitator Betsy Hipple.

Related Quote

“Finite to fail, but infinite to venture.” ~ **Emily Dickinson**



This is the “Caterpillar Traverse” Teambuilding Game
Get more teambuilding games at
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Solution to Infinite Loops

Figure #1



Figure #2

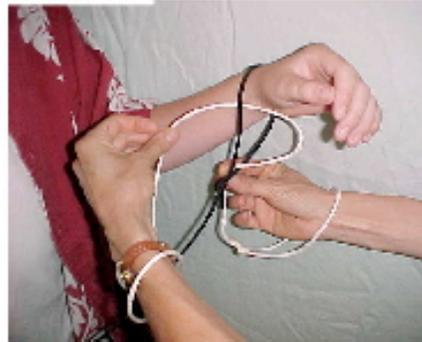


Figure #3

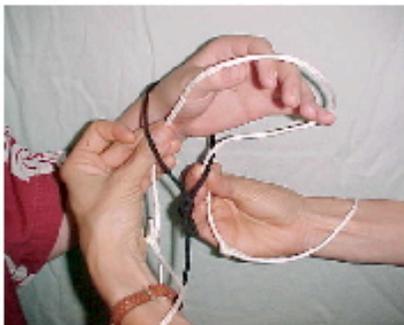


Figure #4

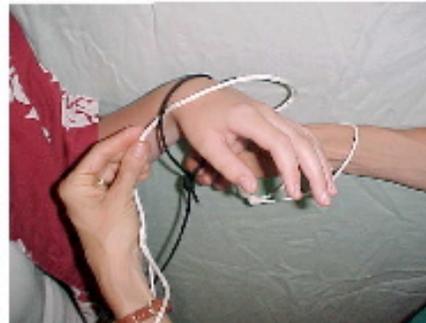


Figure #5



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Activity # 7:

Pass The Circle

Teambuilding Game



**VIDEO
CLICK HERE**

Group Size: 6 - 15

Age Range: elementary – adult

Intensity: Mental=2, Physical=1

Time: 5 – 10 minutes (without debrief)

Space: Minimal – Medium -- Lots

Set Up Time: 60 seconds

Props: Two shoestrings

Challenge

Pass the shoestring circle around the circle of people as quickly as possible.

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Skills Developed

Goal Setting, Process Improvement, Creativity, Fun

Set Up / Preparation

Tie two shoestrings together to form a circle.

Presenting the Challenge

1. Ask the group to stand in a circle and hold hands. Then have one pair of people disconnect hands and then reach through the center of the shoestring circle (loop) and rejoin hands. The shoestring circle should now be resting on the joined hands of one pair of people - this is the start/stop "line" for the game.
2. Presentation Script: "Your challenge is to move the shoestring circle (loop) around the circle of people as fast as you can." [read the rules below]

Rules

1. The shoestring circle must travel in a clockwise direction and return to the initial starting position.
2. No letting go of hands.
3. Team members must remain in their respective location (i.e. team members may not walk around).

Safety Warning

1. People with shoulder or neck injuries should not participate.
2. Remove glasses and jewelry prior to playing (they might fall off and break).
3. Participants must wear flat shoes (no heels).

Story Line

"While traveling through time, your team encounters a rare time loop (shoestring circle). To continue moving through time and get to your final destination, your team must travel through the time loop as quickly as possible. Remember, don't let go of your hands or someone could go floating off into space."

Facilitator Notes

1. Initially a younger group may find this challenge impossible or at least confusing. They might say "How do you pass the shoestring circle around the circle without letting go of hands?"

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2. This activity will invariably get a group laughing as they watch each person pass through the loop.
3. This is not a good activity for people who are obese or who have difficulty balancing.

Debriefing Suggestions

The shoestring circle in this activity could metaphorically represent the hoops (in life) people jump through on a regular basis (for one reason or another). What are actual hoops in your life that you have jumped through? Are hoops good or bad? Do some people have more to deal with than others? If so, why? What hoops would you add/remove to your life if you could?

Variations

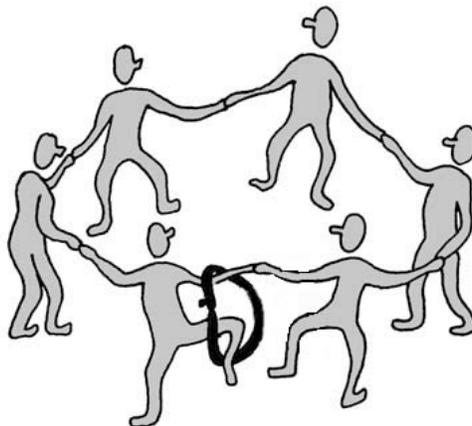
1. Time the group as they pass the shoestring circle to see how long it takes them to get it all the way around. Allow another attempt to see if they can go faster and break that record.
2. Make two shoestring circles and require the group to pass both around the circle simultaneously - one in a clockwise direction and the other in a counterclockwise direction.

History

I first learned this game from master teamwork facilitator Viva Pizer.

Related Quote

“The next best thing to being wise oneself is to live in a circle of those who are. ~ **C.S. Lewis**”



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