

**Georgia Teen Institute
2011
Team Building Activities**

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Team Meeting Activities

Alphabet Search (10 minutes)

For this activity, pair up partners using the **Find Your Partner** activity.

In the **Find Your Partner** activity, everyone will be given a slip of paper with an object, word, or phrase. Each object, word, or phrase will have the other half of the pair"; for example, if my card says "peanut butter", someone else should have a card that says "jelly". People should not let anyone see their card. At the signal, each person should walk around and introduce themselves with what is written on their card. The goal is to try to find their partner.

Once partners have found each other, give everyone one of the Alphabet Search pages. Then, in the time allotted (give them 5-6 minutes), ask them to think about and share one thing per letter about themselves. Their partners should write down what they tell them. For instance, I might tell my partner that for "A" they can write "apples" because I love apples, for "B" they can write brown because my eyes are brown and "C" they can write cat because I have a pet cat. Halfway through the time let the pairs know they should switch partners if needed so that they both have at least something on their paper when time is up. Afterwards, allow people to share their most creative or funny answers.

Means of Transportation (20 minutes)

You will need a large piece of paper and markers for each team. Explain to them that they must draw a car, SUV/truck, bus, airplane, or any other mode of transportation that they feel represents their team. Each person in the group must be represented in the drawing of the vehicle by having his or her name written on a part of the vehicle that reflects his/her role within the group. Someone who is a good leader may be the steering wheel of the vehicle while someone who welcomes newcomers may be one of the doors of the vehicle. People may also be items inside the vehicle, such as a GPS or radio.

Give your team about 15 minutes to draw the vehicle. Make sure that everyone in the team is represented somewhere in the vehicle. Once it is drawn, you will bring it to the Dining Hall to put on display so all can see. To debrief, have a discussion with your team and ask the following questions:

- How did you decide what type of transportation you were going to draw?
- Why did you pick the role that you did? Does it ever change?
- Why is it important that everyone be involved/ represented in the vehicle? How does this relate to your team?

Right hand/Left hand: The Wright Family Story (5 minutes)

Have your entire group form a circle. The students may be standing or sitting on the floor-whichever way works best for your group. Tell the group that you are going to read them a story and every time they hear any word that sounds like right or left, they are to raise that hand. For example, when they hear the word right, they raise their right hand, and when they hear the word left, they raise their left hand.

Start reading The Wright Family story slowly so that they have a chance to catch on to what you want them to do. After a few passes, stop the story and ask them how they are doing. If your group is typical, you will have different hands raised at different times.

Continue to read the story, getting faster as you go. Stop the story a couple more times to check on how they are doing. After the activity, facilitate a brief discussion using the following questions:

- What was happening during this activity?
- How did you feel during this activity?
- How much of the story do you remember?
- How seriously did everyone take the activity?
- What impact did the level of seriousness have on the activity?

The Wright Family Story

One day the Wright family decided to take a vacation. The first thing they had to decide was who would be left at home since there was not enough room in the Wright family car for all of them. Mr. Wright decided that Aunt Linda Wright would be the one left at home. Of course this made Aunt Linda Wright so mad that she left the house immediately yelling, "It will be a cold day before I return."

The Wright family now bundled up the children, Tommy Wright, Susan Wright, Timmy Wright, and Shelly Wright, got in the car and left. Unfortunately, as they turned out of the driveway, someone had left a trash can in the street so they had to run right around and stop the car. They told Tommy Wright to get out of the car and move the trash can so they could get going. Tommy took so long that they almost left him in the street. Once the Wright family got on the road, Mother Wright wondered if she had left the stove on. Father Wright told her not to worry, he had checked the stove and she had not left it on. As they turned right at the corner, everyone started to think about the other things that they might have left undone.

No need to worry now, they were off on a right fine vacation. When they arrived at the gas station, Father Wright put gas in the car and then discovered that he had left his wallet at home. So Timmy Wright ran home to get the money that was left behind. After Timmy had left, Susan Wright started to feel sick. She left the car saying that she had to throw up. This of course got Mother Wright's attention and she left the car in a hurry. Shelly Wright wanted to watch Susan get sick, so she left the car, too. Father Wright was left with Tommy Wright who was playing a game in the backseat.

With all this going on, Father Wright decided that this was not the right time to take a vacation, so he gathered up all the family and left the gas station as quickly as he could. When he arrived home, he turned left into the driveway and said, "I wish the Wright family had never left the house today."

Alliteration Anticipation (15 minutes)

Write the Alphabet from A to Z on the board or flipchart. The facilitator begins by saying, “I went to Teen Institute and with me I took.....” the group answers the question in alphabetical order- so the first person says something with an “A”, the second, something that starts with a “B”, and so on. The participants can reference the board or flipchart to remember which letter they should use!

Stack Attack (20 minutes)

Separate your team into two separate Teams. The two teams need to be an even number, so if there is an odd numbered group, the adult leader should not participate. Place each team in a straight line facing forward. Each team should have 21 plastic cups (42 cups for the activity) in front of them. This is a race. The object of the game is for the first team member to build a pyramid using the cups, the first player then moves out of the way and the next team member takes the pyramid down by sliding the cups down into a single stack. This pattern continues until the last player on the team goes. If the pyramid gets knocked down while putting it up or trying to take it down, the last builder must come back, and rebuild the pyramid. Once a players’ turn has been completed, they are to stand to the side and cheer on their teammates. The first team that has all of their players complete the activity wins the race.

After the race – or when time is running short – debrief with your team using the following questions:

- What worked for us? What didn’t? How did we know?
- How did we deal with challenges? For example, our tower falling?
- How is this activity like working with our team on projects back home? (Make sure to hit these discussion points: Cheering your team on, looking out for each other, if one person isn’t successful, the whole group isn’t successful, etc.)

If you have time, you may play again. You could make the game more difficult by only allow teams to stack and take down the pyramid using only **one** hand or playing blindfolded.

Our House (15 minutes)

For this activity, you will need an index card for each person in your team, tape, scissors, and markers. Distribute the index cards; making sure that every person in your team has one. Explain to them that they must create a house out of the cards by taping, folding, cutting or anything else they can think of to do with the cards in order to form a small model of a house.

Each person in the group must be represented in the construction of the house by having his or her name written on a part of the house that reflects his/her role within the group. Someone who is a good leader may be the foundation of the house, while someone who welcomes newcomers may be the door of the house. People may also be items in the house, such as comfy chairs or lamps.

Give your team about 10 minutes to build the house. Make sure that everyone in the team is represented somewhere in the house. Once it is built, display so all can see and ask the following questions:

- How did you decide what the house was going to look like?
- Why did you pick the role that you did? Does it ever change?
- Why is it important that everyone be involved/represented in the house? How does this relate to your team?

Explain that it is important that everyone be included in the decision making and planning because everyone plays in vital role for their team.

Team Architect (15 minutes)

Depending on the size of your group, break the team into two or more groups of 4. Each group will get a packet of index cards, a paper plate and a bag of marbles, and 10 minutes to build a structure that will support the bag of marbles for 10 seconds. Tell them that they already had a chance to build a home—this is their test, to make sure that the structures and ideas that they create as a team are strong enough to withstand pressure and challenges. Give the groups several time checks throughout the activity.

After the allocated building time is up, all the groups come together and the structures or inventions are tested. Debrief with the groups by asking the following questions:

- What was your assessment of the activity?
- Did you have a plan for building the structure? If yes, what was it? Any additional thoughts about the activity?

Countdown (10 minutes)

Ask the participants to spread out around the room, facing various directions. Instruct them all to close their eyes and keep them shut. The group goal is to count out loud to 20, one person at a time, without anyone reciting two numbers in a row or counting at the same time as another player. If either of these things happens, the group must start over. No talking (except for the counting!), no planning time, and no peeking.

Keeping an eye on the time, use the following questions to debrief with the team:

- Did this activity frustrate you? Why or why not?
- What could you have done differently that would have made this activity easier?
- How does this activity relate to your team and the tasks you are faced with here in Team Meetings?

Where am I From? (15 minutes)

As your group walks in place a sticky note, or sticky name tag, with the name of a state on it. Do not allow them to see their state name. Let them know that they are not to share with each other what is on each others' backs, and to wait for instructions.

Welcome your team back by asking questions about their experience so far, their feelings about today, etc. Give the Team Action Plan to the Team Recorder, reminding him/her to document everything that is discussed today.

Explain that the Team Building icebreaker today is called "Where am I from?" Remembering not to share the name of the state on everyone else's back, they must mingle around the room asking questions that can be answered "yes" or "no". The object of the activity is to try to figure out what state is on their back. The rules are:

- You can only ask one question of a person at a time; for example, "Am I near an ocean?", "Am I in the South?", "Do I have beaches?", "Do I have mountains?"
- You can only take one guess each time.

Once the state has been guessed correctly, the person may take the state off their back, and put on their front.

Play for the allotted time or until your team isn't doing it well together – if they are getting frustrated or too rowdy, move on and come back to it later.

Family Group Activities

Toss A Name (10 minutes)

Materials: Tossables (Stuffed Animals)

Description: Have everyone stand in a circle. The circle cannot be rearranged once the activity has begun.

Introduce your stuffed animal. Beforehand, you and your co-facilitator should have decided on a name for your tossable. Give it a creative name. Use his or her name as often as possible when referring to him or her in the instructions or during the activity. Tell a little about your tossable, where they are from, what their favorite color is, etc...

Tell the group that your tossable (use his or her name) is excited to be a part of the group and explain that he or she wants to meet the group but is shy and can only meet one person at a time. Explain that each member of the group needs to introduce himself or herself to your animal friend. Everyone must be introduced once and only once. The tossable cannot be passed to either person on directly on your right or left.

You will first introduce yourself to the tossable first, and then toss him/her to the next person who will then introduce him/herself to the tossable and continue the game by tossing the animal to the next person and so on.

As an introduction, have each person tell your tossable (and the whole group) **his or her name, where they are from, how many years they've been to our programs, and one place they would love to visit.** After each person has introduced themselves, the tossable should end back up with you. If anyone has to be introduced twice or is left out, then the group must start over with the tossable back at you. If the group has to start over, have participants who have already introduced themselves only repeat their first names as they continue passing the tossable in the same pattern until it reaches someone who has not introduced themselves.

After the introduction round, play a few rounds of Toss A Name with the pattern that you have just established with participants just saying the name of the person they are throwing the tossable animal to. To challenge the group, add in another tossable or two, or try the pattern backwards with one tossable (and then add more!).

All About Me (10 minutes)

Materials: Paper, markers or writing Utensils

Description: Have everyone turn to pg. 2 in the FG section of the manual. Provide everyone with writing utensils. Have them write their first and last name vertically, in two columns on this page. Then, spend 3-4 minutes writing one word or phrase for each letter of your name that describes themselves. **Show participants the *All About Me* worksheet that you created for yourself as a model.**

Then have each person quickly introduce themselves and provide one adjective to the Family Group. Tell the group that they can decorate their *All About Me* and save it to post it on their wall at home as a way of remembering all the positive traits they possess.

Rock, Paper, Scissors EXTREME (10 minutes)

Materials: None

Let your group know that you are going to play rock, paper, scissors (RPS). Make sure everyone knows how to play, and set up the group for success by indicating that they are going to say, “rock, paper, scissors, shoot” and throw out their choice on “shoot”.

Tell them that this will be a little bit different than the usual RPS. As usual, each person will find a partner and play RPS until someone wins. Then, in our EXTREME game, the loser will move to stand behind the winner and begin chanting his or her name. This pairing will find another pair, with the name chanting happening on both sides, and play RPS. Again, the losing pair will move to stand behind the winner, chanting his or her name, and this group will find another group, name chanting and all and the game continues until there are two players left, chanting names as their players play the final round of RPS.

This game is lots of quick fun and allows everyone to feel supported and excited as their name gets chanted over and over again!

Identity Theft (20 minutes)

Materials: 1 sheet of flip chart paper with 4 statements and nametag

Directions: Each person will meet and greet as many people as possible, sharing information about themselves.

Each person will find a partner and state 4 facts about themselves:

- 1) My name is _____.
- 2) My favorite color is _____.
- 3) I was born in _____.
- 4) The best place I've visited was _____.

After sharing their information, the partners will switch nametags and give a thumbs-up to show that they are finished.

Now, each person will assume the identity of their partner and share their 4 facts to a new partner, switch nametags, give a thumbs-up and continue switching partners/identities.

Let this continue for 15 minutes. Spend the last 5 minutes having everyone stand in a circle and introduce themselves as the person whose nametag they are currently wearing to determine if any facts were misinterpreted.

Be sure to demonstrate this activity once with your co-facilitator or a group member so that everyone in the group understands. Have everyone return the nametags to its owner before starting the next activity.

Create a Country (20 minutes)

Materials: Paper, pens or pencils, colored markers or crayons

Description: Divide the group into smaller groups of 4 to 5 members each. Provide each group with the following information and all of the materials listed above.

“You and a group of people have claimed an uninhabited island as a new county. You have been selected to be the new government. Your first assignment is to make the following decisions and accomplish the following tasks...

1. Name the country
2. Design a flag
3. Choose a national bird and flower
4. Create 3 laws that you feel are necessary
5. Each person must pick a job serving the needs of the country.”

The group must work together to complete the task within 10-12 minutes. Then, present their country to the rest of the group. Walk around to encourage the groups. This activity can be long and members may get off track, so **be sure to provide the group with updates on how much time is left!**

Discussion Questions:

1. How were decisions made in your group? Did everyone work together on each task or did you divide the tasks amongst group members?
2. Is everyone happy with what was decided? Why or why not?
3. What things are important to remember when making group decisions?
4. What role do you usually take when making decisions with others?
5. How can you tell if a group has been successful when making a decision?
6. Why is it important to be able to make decisions as a member of a group?

Circle the Circle (10 minutes)

Materials: Hula Hoops, Rope

Description: Have everyone stand in a circle holding hands. Then introduce a hula hoop into the circle by releasing one of your partner's hand. Put your arm through the hula hoop and re-clasp your partner's hand. Tell the group that the object of the activity is to work together to move a hula hoop around the circle while never breaking the circle (letting go of anyone's hand).

Once the hula hoop has successfully traveled around the circle once, try introducing a second hula hoop.

If your group is so advanced or would like a challenge, consider introducing a rope tied into a circle. Remind them that they can help each other as long as they are always holding hands.

Let your FG know that cooperation and encouraging words can take a group very far and boost someone's self-confidence when they need it most.

Captains Coming (15 minutes)

You as the facilitator are the "Captain." The role of the Captain is call out the actions and dismiss the players who don't do the actions quick enough, who get in groups with the incorrect number of people, or who break from character. Once you call an action, each participant has 3-4 seconds to start performing the action. If they don't find a group fast enough or perform the right action, they are out of the game. The game continues until there is one person left – the winner!

The Commands

The commands need to be explained to all participants before the game can begin. A game of Captain's Coming can have any number of various commands; the more commands, the more that needs to be memorized, and the harder it is to play. For any game, remind participants that once "Captain's Coming" has been called, they cannot perform another command until "At Ease" has been called. If they move out of the salute position before "At Ease" is called, then they are out. Below are some simple commands that you can do with almost any group. Remember, you can use as few or as many commands as you would like!

Captain's Coming – Stand with feet together, one hand on hip, one hand saluting the captain

At Ease – Stand with feet apart, arms at side

Swim to Shore – Make freestyle arm motions toward whatever direction you designate as "Shore"

Swim to Sea – Make freestyle arm motions toward whatever direction you designate as "Sea"

Swab the Deck – Make a mopping motion with your hands around the stick end of the mop

Sea Sick – Hold your tummy, bend over forward, and make a vomit sound

Mermaid – Stand on one foot and say "Hi Sailor" in a girly voice

Climb the Rigging – Pretend to climb a rope ladder

Last One for Grub – Everyone lines up single file in one line

Group Commands

For these commands, participants need to find groups with the correct number. If they don't have a group with the correct number, do the wrong motions for the command, or are left out of a group, then they are out of the game.

2: Man Overboard – One person gets on their hands and knees, while partner gently puts their knee on their partner's back, and looks out like they are searching for someone

3: Porthole – Two people join hands to create a sideways diamond shape, and one person puts their head through the middle, looking out

4: Captain's Table – Four people squat in a circle like they're sitting at a table and pretend to eat like they haven't eaten in days; must make really loud eating sounds like "YUM YUM YUM YUM YUM!"

5: Walk the Plank - Five people stand in a single file row, hands on the shoulders of person in front of them

6: Raise the Anchor – Six people walk around in a circle pretending to push forward to raise the anchor

8: Octopus – Eight people stand with their backs to each other, moving their hands to look like octopus tentacles

Celebration (15 minutes)

Begin with a quick discussion of how important it is to celebrate both big and small successes. What kind of things count as big successes? What small successes also need to be celebrated, so that they are not overlooked?

Next, invite everyone to find a partner and to create a **unique handshake**. Let them know that this handshake has to include at least three “elements.” Encourage creativity and invite a few partners to demonstrate their handshakes.

Have them find a new partner and create their own **high-five movement**. Again, it must have at least three “elements”. If time allows, ask for a few volunteers to demonstrate their technique.

And finally, ask participants to find a new partner and to create a **celebration dance** with at least three elements.

Designate one member of the group, such as the group leader, to initiate celebrations. Whenever someone shouts, “Handshake!” everybody finds their “handshake” partner and does their handshake. Whenever someone shouts “high five!” everybody finds their “high five” partner and does their high five and whenever someone shouts “Celebrate!” everybody finds their “celebration” partner and does their own unique dance movement.

Throughout the rest of the training session, a well-timed celebration can quickly transform uninspired individuals back into a laughing, energized team.

Find Everybody Who (10-15 minutes)

In a large group, explain to participants that they will be mingling around the room and then you are going to call out categories one at a time. When a category is called out, each person must try to find everybody who is the same as them (for example: Find everybody who uses the same kind as toothpaste as you) and form a group based on that similarity. You may choose to have the groups share if you would like. Find everybody who....

King Frog (15 minutes)

Have group get in a circle. Ask each participant to think of an animal and come up with a sign that represents that animal. (Give an example, if necessary.) Encourage everyone to come up with expressive signs. Once this is finished, have everyone introduce his or her sign. Include yourself. You will start out at King Frog. Your challenge is to come up with as wacky a sign as possible to represent the King Frog. When everyone in the group practiced them. Tell the group that they must be able to remember and repeat everyone's sign.

When you feel that everyone is comfortable with the signs, announce that the group will begin to talk to each other using only the signs.

Communication goes as follows: begin by making your King Frog sign, then the sign of someone else in the group. That person responds by making his or her own sign, then the sign of someone else, and so on. After everyone is comfortable with this, announce that play will now begin. The object of the game is to climb the ladder to the King Frog seat. The lowest seat is to the Frog's left, and so on around the circle. From now on, the signs the group created will remain with the seat where the activity begins. (So the King Frog sign stays with the seat where you started, and so on.)

Once play begins, if someone makes a mistake while communicating, that person must move to the lowest seat, with everyone else shifting one seat to the left and getting a new sign. **Once play begins there should be no talking.**

There are a few ways to make a mistake. Make the wrong sign, the wrong sequence, or don't respond quickly enough, and you must move to the bottom seat.

This game will start off slow but once everyone catches on, it can move quite quickly. Play until it isn't fun anymore, or until you run out of time, and end by crowning the person in the lowest seat as the King Frog for the next time.

Twenty-One (10 minutes)

Materials: NONE!

Description: Divide the group into two or three teams of 4 to 5 members.

Prior to giving the directions of the game, instruct the group that there is no talking allowed for the remainder of this activity, with the exception of the counter. Now, each team should choose someone to be the “counter.”

Have each team stand in a circle, facing each other, with their hands behind their backs. Tell the group that you will count “1, 2, 3!” and on “3” each person, except the counter, should hold out zero to ten fingers. The counter then adds them up, and if all the fingers together equal exactly twenty-one the team has one the round. If no team reaches twenty one, everyone immediately puts their hands back behind their backs and continues to play until one team comes up with twenty-one. Remember, no talking and no cheating! Keep the game light and fun!

Discussion Questions:

1. Was it hard not to talk?
2. How did you communicate since you couldn’t talk? Or did your team just hope to win through luck?
3. What happens when you’re on a team and there is a lack of communication?
4. How do you deal with a group of people who have trouble communicating?

Disaster Control (20 minutes)

Materials: Paper and pens

Description: Divide group members into groups of 3 to 4 members. Explain that each group should imagine they live near a river and heavy rains have suddenly come, flooding the area. Each group must work together to choose only three items that would help them get through the situation. They can choose any three items they would like. Give the groups 10-12 minutes to hash things out before they report their three items and why they chose them to the larger group.

Discussion Questions:

1. How did having the opportunity to choose any three items help you in this difficult situation? Why?
2. How would you have felt if I told you that you could do nothing and let the flood damage your homes and community?
3. When bad things happen, do you usually feel you have some choice and power to deal with the situation? Why or why not?
4. How do bad events affect how you feel about the future?
5. Is it important to have **personal power**? Why or why not?

Knots: A Progression (30 minutes)

Materials: 1 sheet of flipchart paper and 1 coin

Description: This activity consists of 3 separate activities that lead into one another.

- 1) Electricity (10 minutes)- Divide the group into 2 equal teams and have each team line up as shown in the following diagram. If you have an unequal number ask for one volunteer to help you judge and position them behind the object.



The people in each line hold hands and the only people who are allowed to have their eyes open are the first person in each line (next to the leader). The leader flips a coin and shows the first two people. If heads comes up, they squeeze the person's hand next to them and the squeeze is passed down the line. When the squeeze (message) reaches the last person, that person opens their eyes and tries to grab the object before the other team grabs it. There may be no talking during the activity.

Score one point for each successful message. If they send a wrong message (if they squeeze when a tails is flipped), one point is subtracted. Rotate the lines so that all players get to position 1. The first team to reach 6 wins. Keep score on a sheet of flipchart paper.

Debrief with any or all of the following questions:

1. When did you feel the most involved or under pressure?
2. What did it take for your team to be successful?
3. What was the most frustrating aspect of the activity?

- 2) Impulse (5 minutes)- Tell everyone that they will now be working together in one big group. This activity involves timing the group multiple times to see how quickly "the squeeze" can go around the circle.

Standing in a circle facing in, grab hands with the group members next to you. Starting with one person, have them send a pulse around the circle by gently squeezing the hand of one of the group members next to them. When that group member feels their hand being squeezed, s/he gently squeezes the hand of the next person, and so on until it gets back to the starting squeezer. This system is needed to check for a circle later on.

Perform this activity multiple times until time runs out. Have the group keep trying to beat their record. Now move on to ...

- 3) Knots (15 minutes)- Gather the group into a circle. Each person crosses his/her arms and holds out their hands into the center. Then, each person should grab the hands of other group members (**but not two hands from the same person**). Now that the group is in a large "knot," the challenge is to become untangled without anyone letting go of the hands that they are holding onto. The group should end up

in a large circle facing in, but on occasion it may work out that two circles form instead of just one because of the way people grabbed hands. Now, do a Squeeze Check to see if the untangled group will make a circle. If they don't all receive and give a squeeze, let go and re-grab. (You may end up with two small circles...and if you're ok with that, and they are ok with that...go for it!)

Allow people to readjust handgrips to make it a little easier and more comfortable. Make sure they know, though, that now that they are tangled they can't let go, other than to slightly readjust.

When they are ready, they need to try to untangle the group back into a circle without letting go of hands.

Discussion Questions:

1. How do you feel about the close proximity that you were in with the other group members?
2. Did anyone lead the group at any time or did everyone work on his/her own?
3. Do some groups work better when there is a leader? Why?
4. Are you more likely to be a leader or a follower? Do you like this about yourself?

**Reassure those who don't like that they are the "leader" or the "follower." This activity is showing us to recognize these traits about ourselves and provide us with skills on how to develop into stronger, successful individuals.

40 Goals before Age 40 (15 minutes)

Materials: Paper and writing utensils

Description: Have each person turn to pg. 6 of the FG section of the manual. Tell each person to create two columns of their sheet of paper, numbering the first from 1 to 20 and the second from 21 to 40. Explain that everyone has hopes and dreams but people tend to put off what they really want to do until they're older. Tell each person to write one goal next to each line in 10 minutes (40 goals total). If possible tell the group some of your hopes and dreams. Make sure you tell them some that you've accomplished and some that you still want to do.

Encourage them to think of goals they have for the near future as within the next year, the next three years, the next five years, and then out from there.

Discussion Questions:

1. How difficult was it to come up with 40 goals?
2. Which two goals can you focus on first? (Encourage them to star those two items.)
3. Where can you keep your list to remind you of your goals? (Explain that it's okay if the lists change because people often discover new things they want to do.)
4. Why is it important to set goals and dreams?
5. What one thing can you do to make one dream come true soon?

We're All Connected (15 minutes)

Materials: A ball of yarn or string

Description: First, gather everyone in a circle and explain that **you** will be asking a series of questions to each person. State that more than one person will be asked the same question. Tell the group that when someone receives the yarn ball, they should hold onto the end of the yarn and wait for a question to be asked. When the person answers a question, he or she will toss the ball of yarn to someone else, while still holding on to their end of the yarn. A trail of yarn should be created, making a “web” of yarn between everyone.

Facilitators, ask the first question and while holding onto the end of the yarn, toss the ball to a member (preferably across from you) and ask them to answer the question. After the 1st member has answered the question, have them throw the ball of yarn to another member, who should wait for you to ask the next question. Continue in this manner until each member has had the chance to answer a question. You can change the question after each person or allow multiple members to answer each question.

Once the “web” is complete, ask the group to pull the yarn tight, then pick up one section of the web and “pluck” it. Ask the group if they could all feel that. Most likely, everyone will feel the vibration. Use this example to illustrate how we are all interconnected and our actions can positively or negatively affect many other people.

Ask one person to drop their part of the yarn. This illustrates that if even one person was not involved in GTI, the results would have been different. Each person’s contributions make a big difference!

Use a pair of sharp scissors to eventually cut a piece of the “web” (yarn), symbolizing that we must all return to our own lives, but that all participants remain a part of the group and must keep working together to stay connected.

Here are some questions that can be used:

1. What did you like best about GTI?
2. What did you like least about GTI?
3. What did you learn by participating in GTI?
4. What are 2 to 3 words you can use to describe how you feel about GTI?
5. What are some things you would like to do if you come back to GTI next year?
6. What, if anything will you do differently at home, school, or with your team because of the experiences you had while at GTI?
7. Would you come back to GTI again? Why or why not?
8. What could we do to make GTI better?

General Team Building Activities

Find Everybody Who (5 minutes)

In a large group, explain to participants that they will be mingling around the room and then you are going to call out categories one at a time. When a category is called out, each person must try to find everybody who is the same as them (for example: Find everybody who uses the same kind as toothpaste as you) and form a group based on that similarity.

Group members must introduce themselves to each other, then give the “Hands Up, Mouth Shut” sign (or give you a thumbs up—any signal will do!) to indicate that they’re ready to move on. You may choose to have the groups share if you would like.

Find everybody who....

- Has the same number of siblings as you do.
- Listens to the same kind of music as you do.
- Was born in the same state as you.
- Enjoys playing the same sport as you do.
- Has broken the same amount of bones as you have.
- Uses the same kind of toothpaste as you do.
- Has the same favorite kind of food as you do.
- Has the same favorite holiday as you.

Zip Zap (10 minutes)

Get your group in a circle. Explain that one person will be in the middle of the circle when the game begins. Play begins with the person in the middle of the circle pointing to someone on the outside of the circle with their elbow and saying, loudly, “ZIP!” The pointed at person needs to duck down as quickly as possible, because the two people on either side of the pointed at person are going to quickly point to each other with their elbows and say, “ZAP!” If the pointed at person doesn’t duck or if one of the other two are too slow, that person is in the middle for the next round. Please play several rounds, having fun and laughing, making sure no one is getting picked on to be out, etc.

Reflection:

- What did it feel like when someone pointed to you and yelled “ZIP”?
- What kinds of changes did you notice in your body and thinking while playing?
- How do these changes relate to deciding when to take risks? How is that similar to when you’re challenged to try new things?
- Based on our reactions, what should we remember this week at Teen Institute—for ourselves and for people we work with and meet?

Birthday Rope (10 minutes)

Set the rope out on the ground in a large circle shape. Ask all of your participants to stand with at least one foot on the rope. Now, without talking, line up in birthday order – by month & day only. During the moving process, players must have at least one foot on the rope at all times. Ask the players to look at you when they believe they are finished. Check out the order. If there are any errors, give the group time to fix them – without talking.

Processing Questions:

- How many of you believed you followed directions?
- What makes it hard to follow directions?
- What was difficult about this activity?
- What kind of helping went on?
- How did you communicate with your group members?
- What part did the rope play in the activity?
- Why are boundaries important at school? In life?
- What Leader Actions or Leader Lingo did you notice?

You Can't Take It Back (15 minutes)

For this activity, you'll split your group into their actual teams, or, if you have a large team, into smaller groups of 5-7.

Give each group a piece of cardstock and a marker. Tell them they will have two minutes to think of one word that describes something they all have in common and to write that word on their piece of cardboard. When time is up, give each group a tube of toothpaste. Tell them they have two more minutes to outline the word they have just written as creatively and neatly as possible using the toothpaste.

When time is up, make a few quick comments about how well the groups have followed directions; how creative they are, etc. Explain that the best part of this activity is about to begin because now the groups will have two minutes to figure out how to get the toothpaste back into the toothpaste tube. The team that can do it neatly with the least amount of toothpaste left on the outside will be the winner.

After two minutes, interrupt the groups and ask them if they have completed the task. If they ask for more time, tell them you can give them one more minute. If they ask for still more time, allow yourself to be persuaded, but let them know that's absolutely the most you can give them.

When time is up, interrupt and ask participants for some feedback about what happened in their groups using the debriefing questions below. Ask the groups if they know what this activity was all about. They may say things like teamwork, creativity, communication, cooperation, etc. are all acceptable answers, but the real answer is something else.

THIS PART IS CRITICAL TO THIS ACTIVITY:

Tell everyone that the real reason for doing this activity was to demonstrate that toothpaste can't be forced back into the toothpaste tube. And the same thing is true of the words we use when speaking. Once something is said, we can't get those words back again. That's why it is so important to think about what we're about to say before we say it. Have a discussion with your teams about why this is an important concept.