

CUP OF VISIONS

AN OUTDOOR GROUP PROCESS EXERCISE TO IMPROVE COMMUNICATION SKILLS

NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

A minimum of 16 people

This exercise can be expanded by adding sets of materials. Each small group needs a minimum of 8 participants, half of whom have a pull rope attached to the central bungee cord ring. Additional pull ropes can be added, up to 12 (which would be a small group of 24, since half of the small group participants lead the blindfolded half.) At least 2 small groups are needed. We have used as many as four small groups.

MATERIALS

For each small group:

- A bungee cord ring with attached pull ropes
- A hard-sided open container, such as a lidless plastic storage container or bucket, with a rim that allows the container to be lifted by the bungee cord ring
- A 50' length of rope or cord
- A blindfold for half the small group members

For the whole group

- A small piece of paper for each group member
- A 6' length of rope or cord to make a small circle about 2' in diameter, or a hula hoop, or other method of making a small circle on the ground



SET UP

The exercise should be set up out of sight of the group, so the members who will be blindfolded never see the site set up or the equipment.

Ahead of time

Make a bungee cord ring for each small group by fitting the ring tightly around the plastic container, under its rim. The ring will be expanded by the group members pulling on the ring with the attached pull ropes, making the ring large enough to lower over the bucket's rim and then catching up the container, enabling it to be carried.

Securely knot pull ropes to the bungee cord ring, leaving at least an 8 foot length. Each ring should have at least four pull ropes. Additional pull ropes may be attached; it is not necessary to have the same number of pull ropes as blindfolded participants as long as each blindfolded participant has at least one pull rope. Quite a bit of tension will be held on the pull ropes, so be sure that the knots are secure. (We ask for a Boy Scout or a sailor to step forward when we need good knots tied.)

On Site

Use the 50' lengths of rope to make rough circles roughly 16' in diameter. The circles should be separated from each other by at least 20', and can be much farther apart if space permits. The circles do not have to be perfectly round; in fact, making an amoeba-like shape can add interest. You can also enclose obstacles, such as a tree, within a circle.



Drop a bungee cord ring outside each large circle. This is the tool the group will use to move its bucket. Do not arrange the ring neatly with its pull ropes handily stretched out; instead, drop the ring so that it lands in a tangled mess. Before commencing the exercise, ask each group member to write a strength or asset he or she brings to a team effort on a small piece of paper. Collect those papers and place them in the buckets. It is not necessary for the papers to match up with the group members. They are mostly used so there is something to spill if the bucket is tipped, and to

complete the metaphor of the exercise.

Place the buckets in the center of the large circles.

INSTRUCTIONS

This task corresponds fairly well to real-life work. Think of this whole group as a company. Each individual in the company brings strengths and assets to the work of the company, symbolized by the strengths and assets you have written on the paper we collected earlier. You have a project to complete which can only be completed if each individual works well, each partnership work well together, and each team works well together.

Groups

Break into [the number of large circles you set up] number of groups.

Each group must have an even number of members.

Each group must have at least 8 members, and no more than [twice the number of pull ropes you attached to the rings].

Partners

Once the groups are formed, break yourselves up to pairs. One person in the pair must be willing to be blindfolded for the entire exercise, so sort yourselves out accordingly, a sighted partner and a blind partner.

Sighted partners have complete responsibility for the safety of their blind partners. Once the exercise



begins, the blind members will need a partner to walk them wherever they go and to give them instructions for whatever they need to do.

The Task

Each group will be assigned a large circle which holds the resources that group will apply to the task. Those resources, your strengths and assets, are piled in a bucket in the center of your circle. Each group must move its bucket, full of those strengths, and apply them to the company project. The company project can only be successfully implemented if the strengths and assets of everyone in the group are applied to the project. For our purposes, the company project will be represented by a single small circle into which all the buckets full of strengths and assets must be placed.

The time frame for completing the project by placing all the buckets in the small circle is two minutes, and the two minutes starts when the first bucket is placed on the ground in the small circle.

As is so often the case, your work group is composed of some people who can see what needs to be done but cannot do the work themselves, the sighted partners, and of some people who don't have the big picture, the vision, but who through the guidance of others, can be led to perform the work. Those are the blindfolded partners. Communication, of course, is key to your success.

RULES



The following rules apply:

- Only the tool you will find by your large circle can be used to transport the cup into the circle of success.
- Only the blindfolded group members may handle the tools. Sighted members cannot touch the tool at any time.
- No one may step into any of the circles.
- No one may be closer to the bucket than 8 feet, at **any** time.
- All cups must be in the small circle of success within a 2 minute time frame.
- The tool must be removed from the bucket once the bucket is in the small circle.

BEGINNING

At this time, blindfolds should be donned and sighted partners should take responsibility for their blind partners.

We will walk out to the exercise ground.

Each group will be taken to their large circle. Once there, remember that no one can step into the circle and sighted members cannot touch the tool.

Facilitators' Notes

Monitor your group's work, making certain that:

- No one steps into the circle.
- Only blind people touch the tool.
- The group does not choke up on the ropes. A distance of approximately 8 feet, the length of the pull ropes, is to be maintained at all times.
- If the bucket spills its contents, the facilitator (wearing "magic shoes") can step into the circle and replace the bucket in the center, and the group starts over.
- Do not give your group any hints. It is important for them to figure it out themselves. They will.
- Do not remind your group of the two minute window for putting all the buckets in the circle.
- If a group member asks if he or she can confer with another group, allow it, but do not suggest it.
- When the first bucket is placed in the small circle and the bungee ring is removed, that facilitator should start counting loudly back from 120. This is the rough two-minute count. Don not explain what you are doing; just continue to count loudly back from 120. Other facilitators may join the count when their group's bucket is placed in the small circle.



DEBRIEFING

Let me remind you of the metaphor of this exercise. The whole group is a company, made up of individuals who each have unique strengths and assets they bring to the work. Within the company, there are teams that have responsibility for part of the company's success. Only if all teams are successful in a timely manner is the entire project completed successfully. Within the teams, there are partners, and one partner has knowledge and vision which he or she must impart to the other partner. The blind partner has the skills to apply to the tool but doesn't see the results of applying those skills. If the partners don't communicate well, the team fails. If the teams are not aware of how each team must organize its work to enable the other teams to complete their part of the work within the time frame, the company fails.



First, let's talk about individuals.

- Blind people, who among you had a really good experience with your sighted partner, and what make it good?
- Sighted people, what were you trying to keep in mind to make your partnership successful?
- Who had communication

problems between partners? What was the problem? How could it have been ameliorated?

Now let's talk about teams.

- Did you team work as a team in any way, or simply as a collection of individuals? What made the difference?
- Did a single leader emerge, or was leadership scattered?
- Did the sighted people form a team within the team to discuss how to use their sight best?
- Did the blind people form a team to discuss how they might best work with their sighted partners?

Finally, what occurs to you more generally?

- What happened when you heard the count begin?
- What could you have done better?
- How can you apply this to things that happen in real life?