

TEAM BUILDING ACTIVITY: EXPRESS YOURSELF



Time Required: 45 minutes



Goal

- To encourage quiet team members to speak up more, and vocal team members to encourage others to share their opinions.



Overview

In this activity, the class is divided into two teams: speakers and challengers. The speakers (the more vocal team members) make a statement or take a position on a team issue. The challengers (the quieter team members) must express an opinion opposite or counter to the speaker's statement. In the debrief, both sides discuss the difficulties they had and the changes that should be made for more open communication on the team.



Instructions

Brainstorm with the team a list of issues or decisions the team has recently or is currently debating. Post this list on a flip chart.

Ask the team to divide into two groups based on their willingness to challenge each other's positions and ideas. One side of the room should be for those who are vocal, and the other for those who tend to hold back their opinions. If there are people who can't decide which side to choose, either move them to the side with the smallest group or to the "quiet" side. Once sides are chosen, ask the group if they think anyone is in the wrong place. Discuss who and why, and if the group agrees, move the person to the appropriate side. Every team member must be on one side or the other.

Arrange two rows of chairs in the room facing each other (one chair per person). Chairs should be close enough to allow conversation between the facing chairs, and a few feet between each chair in a given row. Instruct all Vocal people to sit on one side (they will be called the "Speakers") and all Quiet people on the other (they will be called the "Challengers"). If you have an odd number of people, you or another co-trainer can participate in the activity.

Instructions (continued)

Tell the group that they will be playing the roles of Speakers and Challengers. The goal of the exercise is to get the Challengers to express their opinions more, and the Speakers to hear more of the opinions of their less vocal team members. Ask each Speaker to choose an issue from the flip chart. They will have 1 minute to quickly explain their position to their partner (the Challenger). Then the Challenger must disagree, giving at least two opposing points on the issue. The Challenger should be as convincing as possible when opposing the speaker. They will continue discussing the issue, with the Challenger continuing to disagree for 5 minutes. It's okay if the Challenger doesn't actually disagree with the Speaker in real life. They must pretend to disagree with them during the exercise. Both parties should refrain from interrupting. Each side should be given the opportunity to complete their thoughts before the other person speaks.

Begin round 1. Stop after 5 minutes have them switch partners (one side of the room will shift down one chair while the other stays put). Continue for several rounds or as time permits. The more rounds, the better.



Handouts

- None



Debrief

Debrief by asking questions like these:

Challengers:

- How difficult was it to critique the ideas of others?
- What is the risk in challenging others?
- Was it easier to challenge here than in team meetings? Why?
- What do you want from your more vocal team members?

Speakers:

- What did you learn about your quieter team members?
- What did you learn about the other side of the argument?
- What do you want from the quieter team members?