

## Communication and trust-building exercises

These activities aim to build up trust between the participants and ask them to co-operate on various problem-solving activities. They aim to demonstrate the importance of good communication and to develop the young people's verbal and non-verbal communication skills.

### 1. The human knot

Time: 10 minutes

Equipment: none

Method:

- Divide participants into small groups of six to eight people.
- Each group stands in a tight circle. Ask participants to place their hands into the centre and close their eyes. Each hand must link with another hand. Once everyone is holding two other hands they can open their eyes.
- Now tell the group they have to untie the knot and make a circle without letting go of each other.

### 2. 4 UP

Time: 10 minutes (dependent on how long the group takes to find a system to solve the problem)

Equipment: a chair for each participant

Method:

- The participants all sit in a circle.
- Explain that you are taking them to a strange planet with a very strange atmosphere. In this atmosphere they cannot speak, as sound does not travel. The planet also has a very weird gravity system. Only four people can stand up at once. It is also impossible to stand for more than ten seconds.
- The challenge for survival on this planet is for the group to keep four people standing up all of the time, for not more than ten seconds each. The group will need to co-operate using non-verbal communication.
- Explain that this activity has shown that they are able to co-operate with others without even talking...They have the skills, they just need to put things into action...

### 3. Make a team with...

Time: 10 minutes

Equipment: none

Method:

- Explain to the group that when you shout out an instruction, the participants must build a team as quickly as possible according to the instructions.
- For example, 'Get into a team of three', 'Get into a team of people with the same shoe size', or 'Get into a team of people who have the same number of brothers and sisters'.
- They could emphasise that they have built their team by holding hands and shouting, or if more appropriate by sitting down.

#### PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:

## 4. Listen to me!

Time: 30 minutes

Equipment: flipchart paper and pens

Method:

- Ask the participants to think about what it means to be a good listener. Take notes on a flipchart. They might come up with a list like this:

Good listener	Bad listener
<p>Eye contact</p> <p>Person looks interested</p> <p>Person makes comments or asks questions</p> <p>They nod and react to what's being said</p> <p>They try to stay on the topic</p>	<p>No eye contact</p> <p>The person looks bored</p> <p>They look at their watch, or at other people</p> <p>They don't say anything... or just say 'yes', 'no', 'yes', 'no'</p> <p>They change the subject to talk about themselves</p> <p>They don't ask questions or they are dismissive</p>

- Divide the participants into pairs. One participant should try talking for one minute on a subject, for example, 'my favourite music', 'the issues in the world that I think are most important', or 'my religion'.
- Their partner should try to look uninterested.
- Repeat the exercise, this time the partner should try to be really interested and to listen properly.
- Repeat the exercise, swapping roles.
- Bring the group back together and ask these questions:
  - How did it feel to listen actively to your partner?
  - How did it feel when you were being really listened to?
  - How did it feel when you weren't being listened to, was it harder to talk?
- This exercise demonstrates the importance of being a good listener.

## 5. What are we talking about?

Time: 10 minutes

Equipment: a ball

Method:

- This activity introduces the idea that a word can mean many different things to different people.
- Participants should throw the ball around the group and when you catch the ball you have to explain what you think about when you hear the word.
- For example, if the word chosen is 'religion', definitions might include 'how I decide right from wrong', 'people praying' or even 'a cause of arguments'.
- Other words could include: 'paradise', 'conflict', 'the name of your town' etc.

### PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:

## 6. Blindfolded assault course

Time: 20 minutes

Equipment: enough blindfolds for one between two, and a room with furniture to negotiate

Method:

- Set up the room so that furniture is scattered around.
- Divide participants into pairs and ask them to stand on one side of the room.
- One member of the pair should be blindfolded. The other should give instructions to the blindfolded person to help them cross the room without bumping into anything.
- Participants swap roles.
- Bring the group back together, discuss how it felt to have to really listen to your partner. Ask participants whether they had to speak differently to how they would normally speak to make sure that they were understood.

## 7. Something fishy's going on

Time: 10 minutes

Equipment: rolled-up newspaper batons and fish cut out of newspaper, enough for one each

Method:

- Give each participant a baton and a fish. All line up on one side of the room.
- Explain to participants that they must race each other to the side of the room, to do this they must hit the ground behind the fish to move it along.
- The winner is the first fish to reach the other side of the room.
- Explain that the fish got the power to move forward through positive pressure. Direct hits achieved nothing. Ask participants what they can learn from this simple exercise.
- This exercise should demonstrate to the participants that violence and aggression are not the best ways to convince someone of your point of view.

### PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:



## 8. Drawing twins

Time: 15 minutes

Equipment: pen, paper, simple line-drawn pictures, eg, a kite, a house, a face

Method:

- Divide participants into pairs.
- Give one member of the pair a picture which **must not be shown to their partner**.
- The person with the picture must give instructions to their partner so that they can draw it, but must not say what it is, eg, 'draw a circle, draw two more circles inside the circle about half way up'.
- Compare the drawing with the original.
- Hand out more pictures and ask participants to swap roles.
- This should illustrate how hard it is to give clear instructions as well as how hard it is to listen, and can also show how things are easily misunderstood and misinterpreted.

## 9. Bat and moth

Original source Cornell, J (1998) *Sharing Nature with Children*, Dawn Publications, Nevada City

Time: 20 minutes (or until the participants get bored!)

Equipment: one blindfold

Method:

- Explain to participants that bats have to rely on sound waves to locate their food. By pretending to be bats we can practise our listening skills.
- Ask the participants to get into a large circle.
- Choose a player to be the bat, and have him/her come to the centre of the circle. The bat will wear a blindfold.
- Choose another to be the moth.
- The bat tries to catch the moth by calling out 'bat'. Whenever the moth hears the bat's call, he has to respond by saying 'moth'.
- The bat tracks down and tags the moth by listening to their responses.
- Let everyone have a turn at being either the bat or the moth.

### PARTNER ORGANISATIONS:

