

Activity: Chris-Cross

Overview

Working under pressure can lead individuals and groups to react in ways that can lead to conflict. In Chris-Cross, your group transforms into a team of scientists working to avert a potential nuclear disaster. Time is against your team as they feel the pressures of coordinating movements and planning strategies for success.

Set Up

Props

- One 20-foot rope (to create a circle in the middle of the play area)
- One 20-foot rope for each team of four in play
- One 12" X 12" mat or one sheet of 8 1/2" X 11" paper for each player
- Tape (if playing on a slick surface)
- Pens or markers

Set Up

1. Use one of the 20-foot lengths of rope to create a large circle and place it in the center of your space.
2. Position the other circles around the center circle.
3. For best results, there should be a minimum of 20 feet between each circle and the center circle.
4. The farther the outside circles are from the center, the harder the activity becomes. Keep in mind that you will need one outer circle for every four participants.

Instructions

1. To begin, create teams of four. Ask each team to step into one of the outside circles. Distribute a marker and one sheet of paper to each participant. Instruct participants to write their name on their sheet of paper.
2. The goal is for each foursome to travel from one circle of rope (work area) to another circle of rope by passing through the center circle. The rules of the game are as follows:

- A. Participants move by using their sheets of paper as stepping stones between circles.
- B. If any part of a participant's body touches the ground outside of a circle, that person must begin again from his or her original circle.
- C. If a stepping stone ever completely loses contact with a player, the stepping stone is lost from play.
- D. In order to move into a different circle, participants must pass completely through the center circle first.

NOTE: No running or jumping from circle to circle or mat to mat is allowed. The facilitator should not give the participants the clue that they can use each other's mats. The goal is for them to come up with the idea of sharing on their own.

Story Line

Each group (team of four) is skilled and technically trained to perform one task in a nuclear power emergency. They each have to get from where they are to another location where they need to perform their duties. The problem is, they must pass through the area in the center of the plant in order to collect their tools and instruments, but the area surrounding the center room has been contaminated. Each team member's personalized mat will allow them to step safely into the area.

NOTE: Be sure to offer the rest of the instructions after reading this story-line.

Safety

Safety is always the number one concern. Make sure participants are moving carefully from paper to paper and circle to circle. Be mindful that the paper might slip/slide when stepped on (putting masking tape on the bottom of each paper may help to avoid slippage if done on a slick surface). Remind participants that no jumping, running, or leaping is allowed, and encourage everyone to move safely about the play area.

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Variations

You may use the Mobile Team Challenge 12" x 12" mats instead of paper. You may also wish to add a time limit. The added stress may impact the group's ability to think and function well. Set a realistic timeline that will provide your group with a fair opportunity for success.

Reflection

The paradigm we hold often leads us into conflict. If four-person teams perceive themselves as isolated and separate from the others (and even in competition), then conflict will arise when groups all converge in the center at the same time, competing for another route. In addition, it will impact their willingness to cooperate in sharing mats/paper with members of another team. If they work together as one large team, this activity is relatively easy and conflict does not arise. To do this they must see the big picture, cooperate as a whole group, challenge their assumptions and perceptions, come to agreement on the mission, trust one another, and be willing to be flexible, patient, and supportive. Good communication, leadership, and a shared vision are essential for smooth success.

Take time after *Chris-Cross* to explore some of the issues stated above by asking some of these questions in your group:

Discover

- What behavior and thought pattern had an impact on the way you moved through this activity?
- What planning competencies did you use?
- How did you challenge assumptions or suspend your preconceived patterns?
- What thoughts and behaviors enabled you to move through the challenge?

- What types of conflict emerged for you and your group during this exercise?
- What leadership characteristics emerged as important to the process and your success?

Connect

- How was this team exercise similar to other team experiences in your past?
- Have you ever been on a team that made something apparently difficult attainable through its teamwork and planning? Explain.
- If you have ever been on a project where the team that made something apparently simple more difficult, what did you do to move through this?
- How can you build on the excitement of competing and being challenged and still work cooperatively and easily?

Create

- How can you assure that creating a simple, cooperative process is experienced as something positive and keep those who need challenge and competition inspired and involved?
- What kind of work environment would you have if people became inspired to do their best? What will it take to bring more inspiration to your workplace? How can you contribute to this cause?
- What are possible benefits to simplifying the tasks we do on a regular basis? What might the benefits be to cooperating instead of competing?

Thanks to Chris Cavert and Laurie Frank for this activity. Games & Other Stuff for Teachers by Chris Cavert and Laurie Frank. Wood 'N' Barnes Publishing & Distribution, 1999.