

### Activity: **Get Off The Fence!**

#### Overview

When we share things in common with others, we are more likely to give them the benefit of the doubt and seek to understand them. After you get to know people on a more personal level, you have the advantage of discovering commonalities with each other, which in turn develops a rapport. Going through this process with team members assists in making the group process a success.

In *Get Off the Fence!*, participants respond to a series of questions by moving to one side of a rope or the other. The chosen side represents the answer they most closely associate with themselves. No one may stay in the middle, so a choice is required. This activity creates a safe and fun environment for people to notice commonalities and/or differences within their group.

#### Set Up

Using one 20-foot rope, create a line on the rope, dividing a room or space.

#### Instructions

1. Ask everyone to stand along the rope with a foot on each side, all facing the same direction.
2. Next, call out two words or phrases and say "get off the fence."
3. Instruct participants that if they agree with, favor, or are otherwise inclined toward the first word or phrase, they are to get off the fence on the left. If they agree with, favor, or are otherwise inclined toward the second word or phrase, they must step off the fence on the right.
4. Periodically ask if anyone would like to discuss their choice. This could lead to some wonderful "in-the-moment reflection" opportunities.

You may use these sample words/phrases or choose to use words/phrases more appropriate for your group.

- Loud/quiet
- Running/walking
- Save money/spend money
- Bus driver/bus rider
- Problem solver/problem maker
- Meat and potatoes/vegetables and fruits
- Security/freedom
- Planner/spontaneous
- Practical/imaginative
- Conflict avoidance/conflict confrontation
- Leader/follower
- Cat/dog
- Playing/watching
- Doing/being
- Cooking/eating

#### Story Line

You're sitting on the fence with a group of other people. It's a great fence, affording a great view, but the neighbors really don't like folks sitting on the fence. They are worried it might break under all the weight. When the neighbor catches you, she will give you two choices before telling you to get off the fence: You need to pick the one most akin to you, and join others on that side of the fence for a bit of conversation. Then, when the coast is clear, you can hop back on the fence.

#### Safety

Although everyone must commit to a choice, not everyone must defend or explain that choice. Open the space for sharing, but be careful not to put anyone on the spot.

#### Variations

Add more controversial statements; see where people are willing to take a stand. You may wish to process this variation while the activity is in progress. For example, ask participants to take a few moments to discuss their decisions with the people who are on their side and with those who aren't.

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### Reflection

#### Discover

- What did you discover about this group and yourself?
- How did these discoveries promote respect for differences and diversity?

#### Connect

- How might just this simple activity impact your interactions with some of these people if you were to find yourself in conflict with them?

#### Create

- How can you take this lesson into work, school, or home?