

Activity: Levitation Challenge

Overview

Levitation Challenge is a notoriously difficult activity that initially seems quite simple. The team must lower the levitation pole from waist level to the ground without anyone becoming disconnected from it at any time. What appears to be an easy task will cause ultimate confusion as people play the blame-game when the pole goes up, up, and away! *Levitation Challenge* gives participants an opportunity to recognize how easy it is to “find fault” when they’re doing their part and a project is not moving forward.

Set Up

- 1 Levitation Pole per 6-10 people.

If you are using Mobile Team Challenge equipment, use the Levitation Pole(s) provided. If not, you may substitute a long dowel, tent pole, or collapsible antenna. Have participants form two equal lines facing each other, standing about a foot and a half apart.

Instructions

With both hands, ask participants to point at the person across from them, index fingers extended at about waist level. Place the levitation pole down the top of the participants’ outstretched index fingers so everyone is in contact with the pole. The group’s challenge is to lower the pole to the ground, with the pole remaining straight and parallel to the ground, without anyone becoming disconnected at any time.

The following rules apply:

1. At no time can anyone lose contact with the pole. If a participant loses contact with the pole, he/she is obligated to call “disconnect,” at which time the facilitator removes the pole and the team must start over.

2. The pole must rest on top of the fingers. Fingers cannot be bent or otherwise used to hold the pole in place.
3. No other body parts or objects can be used to secure the pole.

Typically, the pole will rise into the air until it is too high for most people to reach. Participants will be frustrated at the levitation effect, and will no doubt start over several times before any progress is made. Have patience and remember to reflect on this experience to bring about the most effective learning.

Safety

This activity can lead to some heated moments. Be aware of the frustration level of the group and remind them that emotional safety is a critical component of teamwork.

Variations

You can make things easier by asking participants to use only one hand or one finger.

Reflection

When a process or task appears to be very easy and turns out to be quite challenging, frustration easily sets in. Lack of understanding, confusion, and irritation often result in fault-finding and blame. (After all, someone has to be causing the problem!) Such conflict is a result of the paradigm, the mindset, and the need to be in control.

Discover

- What was your experience during this activity?
- What happened when you discovered this challenge was more difficult than you expected?
- How do our expectations impact how we approach situations?

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Connect

- Where have you experienced this level of frustration in work, school, or life?
- What valuable insight did you gain about yourself?
- How will you utilize this insight at school, home, or work?
- How does frustration impact conflict?
- How did your group move beyond frustration?

Create

- What is your biggest “take away” from this activity?
- How will you apply this learning in your life? Work? Family?