

Activity: **Mat, Puzzle, Screw**

Overview

Mat, Puzzle, Screw was designed to help people recognize that effective communication happens between speaker and listener, not with either one independently. This activity will give participants the chance to practice both sending and receiving information effectively as they attempt to send and follow a simple set of instructions. *Mat, Puzzle, Screw* will help participants recognize numerous key factors in effective communication.

Set Up

1. Each pair will need 2 mats, 2 screws, and 2 identical puzzle pieces. If you do not have these props, you may substitute two identical sets of any 3 unique objects.
2. Once the materials have been distributed, ask group members to sit back-to-back and wait for further instructions.

Instructions

1. Ask participants to divide the props in their partnership so each person has the exact same props.
2. Next, ask each pair to determine a person A and a person B. Person A must create a pattern with the three objects in his/her possession.
3. He/she must then describe the pattern to person B who must attempt to replicate the pattern exactly.
4. After successful completion, have the pairs switch roles and repeat the exercise.

Rules:

1. Neither partner may look at the other partner or the other partner's work.
2. Options: Only A can talk; B may only ask yes or no questions.

Story Line

You have been sent to a remote spot, to set up a device that will track a rare species of bird. Only three pieces of equipment are needed, but the exact configuration

of these pieces is of paramount importance for the equipment to work properly. You had the diagram with you when you left, but now that you have arrived you cannot locate it anywhere. Fortunately, you have a two-way radio and you have been able to contact your colleague at headquarters. He or she will describe the configuration for you and you will have to do the best you can.

Safety

Only general safety precautions are necessary.

Variations

You may wish to add more props to this activity. This will allow for more complex models to be developed and shared.

Reflection

Effective communication is a tricky endeavor, especially when we cannot add the important sensory cues of vision into the equation. Many factors enter into the equation: learning style, perception, expectation, clarity of information, patterns of perception, interpretation, and terminology/language.

Spend some time exploring the above issues by addressing the following questions:

Discover

- What information helped you gain an accurate picture of the configuration?
- What did you learn about yourself? Your partner?
- What enabled you to move through challenging moments?
- How did you know if your instructions were heard the way you intended?
- What was your experience in giving directions? In receiving directions? Did your perception or perspective change when you changed roles? If yes, how?

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- Did your joint communication style change during the second round? If you were more effective, what allowed you to be more effective?

Connect

- What examples can you think of at school, work, or home similar to this exercise?
- When have you experienced a time when you thought what you said was clear and that the person understood, only to find that they did not? What happened? How might you have discovered this "in the moment?"

Create

- What will be your biggest "take away" from this exercise? How will you apply it in your life?
- What can you do to make sure communication between you and others is truly shared? What will you do as the "sender?" What will you do as the "receiver?"