

Activity: **Operation Transfer**

Overview

Operation Transfer challenges your team to work quickly and carefully to move six cups of water from the center of a circle to the outside perimeter. The team must communicate effectively and put aside differences in order to succeed. Patience, planning, and coordinated effort are among the many topics addressed in this activity.

Set Up

Props

- 1 Brass ring (The smaller the ring, the more difficult the task will be.)
- 1 75-foot rope
- 4-6 20-inch ropes
- 1 Black hard-plastic panel
- 1 18"x18" mat
- 6 Small cups
- Water
- Plastic tarp or newsprint (optional)
- Blindfolds (optional)

If you plan on facilitating this activity indoors or in an outdoor location where you cannot afford a mess on the ground, cover the floor with a plastic tarp or newsprint.

First, attach the 20-foot ropes to the brass ring using a 1/2 hitch knot. View the video and images for help with this knot. Space the ropes evenly around the ring. You will have multiple rope ends, each 10-feet long, when you are finished. Depending on your group size, you may add or subtract ropes as needed. Everyone should have their own rope end. For example, if you have 16 people in your group, you will want to attach eight lengths of rope to the ring. However, if you have only 8 people, four lengths are ideal. Another option is to play with enough rope ends for half of the participants, and ask the other half to serve as the "leaders" during the process.

Create a circle approximately 16 feet in diameter with the 75-foot rope (if you are using a floor covering, it should spread throughout the circle and a little beyond). Place the ring with the ropes attached in the center of the circle. The ropes should stretch out past the outside edge of the circle.

Next, rest the hard-plastic panel on top of the ring. Place one cup of water in the center of the plastic panel and the remaining cups of water on the floor/ground next to the panel.

Instructions

The challenge is for the team to move all six cups of water from the center of the circle to the outside edge using only the "retrieval system" provided, and without any of the water spilling. The instructions are as follows:

1. No one may enter the circle at any time.
2. Each rope must be staffed by a different team member.
3. Those not managing a rope (if any) are the leaders. (In this case, those managing a rope end may only speak when spoken to, and they can only answer direct questions from the leaders.)
4. You may blindfold some people and have other team members give them instructions (optional).
5. If any of the water is spilled during transit, that attempt has failed and that cup is removed from play.
6. When a cup is removed or spilled, the facilitator enters the circle and places the next cup on the black plastic panel.
7. Cups may only be removed one at a time.

Sample Story Line

Water from the fountain of youth has just been discovered on a remote island. They've found only one spring, but fortunately there is just enough water for your study. Your team has been sent to find the water and bring back as much of it as possible. There is, however, one small problem. The spring rests in the middle of a

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quicksand pit, so you cannot travel to the water's edge for samples. You've been able to create a makeshift device that will allow you to retrieve the precious liquid. However, the retrieval device is crude and must be operated with care so no water is spilled. You must work together if you are to succeed. Good luck!

Facilitator: At this point, follow the instructions as presented.

Safety

Here are a few additional safety tips to consider during this activity:

- Spot anyone that you have blindfolded.
- If using plastic to cover the floor, take care to walk around it to reduce the risk of a slipping injury.

Variations

As previously addressed in the set up section, you may wish to add or subtract ropes to change the dynamic of the activity. If leadership is your focus, designate enough rope ends for half of the group, and assign the other half the leadership role. The leaders must talk the rope handlers through the process, and may not touch the handlers or the ropes at any time.

Another very successful variation is to blindfold each member of the team that is managing a rope end. Assign a sighted team member to each of the blindfolded participants as a coach. Coaches may not touch rope handlers or the rope at any time. In this instance, you may wish to alter the story line to involve workers and supervisors or students and teachers.

Try making the circle bigger, changing the size of the ring, or using an egg or beans instead of water.

Reflection

Both natural and situational conflict can come up in this activity. The physical challenge (natural conflict) presents the opportunity to use creativity, planning, shared vision, and a coordinated team effort to move beyond the conflict. In addition, there is an opportunity to develop interpersonal/leadership skills between leaders and rope managers that support success beyond conflict.

Discover

- What are your thoughts or feelings about your results?
- What potential conflicts did this activity present? How did your team work together to move beyond them?
- How did your plan come together? What natural conflicts arose when you implemented your plan?
- Were adjustments needed in your plan? How did the team know to make these, and how did you specifically respond? Did your response move you toward or away from further conflict? What specifically enabled movement beyond conflict?

Connect

- Think about life situations that might be similar to this, where there are natural conflicts arising when you go to implement a plan. What kinds of conflicts arise that require collaborative adjustment? How do you get the necessary feedback in these types of situations to make the decision to adjust? What worked well here and what would it look like in a work or life situation?
- Can someone provide an example of a situation (present or past) where, after a plan had to be adjusted in midstream, the response from the team could either increase or decrease conflict? How would you apply your experience here to that situation?
- Feedback was crucial for success; where did it occur and how? How was feedback given that resulted in collaboration instead of conflict? What made it easy to listen to the feedback?

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- The water provided an opportunity for feedback during this activity. What kind of feedback was it and how was it valuable? What role did listening play in giving and receiving feedback? How does this support working beyond conflict?

Create

- What might the water represent in a real conflict situation?
- How might you manage future conflict or challenges as a result of this exercise?