

Activity: **Virtual Group Juggle**

Overview

Virtual Group Juggle demonstrates how lost and confused people can get when there are too many things going on at once. Within the group, players create three separate patterns and try to perform them all at the same time. The confusion comes on gradually as group members accept more responsibilities. This is a fun example of how people can learn through play.

Set Up

Props

No props required.

Set Up

Arrange your group in a circle.

Instructions

Participants create a pattern in the circle by pointing at someone and saying “you.” The pattern must get around to everyone and then back to the person who started it. You can monitor this by having everyone raise his or her right hand in the air, and bring it down, pointing at the next person in the pattern. Spend time mastering this pattern.

Create a new and different pattern by passing the name of a fruit or vegetable. For example, a player would point to a person other than the person they pointed at in the “you” pattern, and say “apple!” Again, he or she must create the pattern with the last person passing it back to the first. This time, monitor the pattern just as before, but with the left hand.

Now try both patterns at once and see if both make it back to the person who started it.

To challenge participants even more, try the advanced version by adding movement within the “fruit/vegetable

pattern.” The “you” pattern remains unchanged and must be passed as normal. However, during the “fruit/vegetable” pattern, participants must move to where the person they are pointing at is standing. When everything is said and done, if they are successful, they will have executed both patterns in the group and will have made it back to the person who started them, while moving one spot in the “fruit/vegetable” pattern.

Sample Story Line

“I would like to introduce this next exercise by asking a question. How many of you multi-task? For those of you who try to manage many things at once, have you ever messed up because you forgot a step, or because things got a little too busy for you to manage?”

“This exercise will give you an idea of how important communication is when managing many things at once. Are you up for the challenge? I need everyone to raise his or her right hand. I am going to begin by pointing at someone in the circle and saying ‘you’ to them. When I say ‘you,’ I will point right at him or her. The person I passed the ‘you’ to will then point to another person who still has his or her hand in the air. This process will continue until the last person finishes the ‘you’ pattern by pointing back at me. We must remember this ‘you’ pattern before we move on to the next part.”

Practice the pattern several times.

“Now I would like for you to raise your left hand in the air. We are going to create a pattern just like before, but this time by passing to different people and using the name of a fruit or vegetable. For example, I would point to a person other than whom I pointed at in the ‘you’ pattern, and I might say ‘apple!’ Again, we will create the pattern with the last person passing it back to me.”

Practice the pattern several times.

“Now that we have the two patterns, I will introduce the ‘you’ and the fruit or vegetable at the same time.

Activity: **Virtual Group Juggle**

This means that each person passes his or her 'you' after receiving it, and his or her fruit or vegetable after receiving it. The goal is to successfully pass both patterns around the group and back to me. Start with both hands in the air, remembering to point with the RIGHT hand for the 'you' pattern, and the LEFT hand for the 'fruit/vegetable' pattern." [Practice the pattern several times. This might take a little longer.]

"Now that we have successfully passed both patterns around the circle, I am going to introduce one more thing... movement. This will take you to the advanced level. Listen closely. The 'you' pattern will remain the same, but the 'fruit/vegetable' pattern will require movement. When I point to my 'fruit/vegetable' person, I will move into his or her spot. He or she will then continue to pass the 'fruit/vegetable' pattern by pointing to their 'fruit/vegetable' person and moving to that position. All the while, the 'you' pattern is also moving about the circle. Remember, you do not move on the 'you' pattern, just try and get it back to me like normal. If you are successful, you will have passed both patterns through the group and back to me while moving one spot in the 'fruit/vegetable' pattern."

Practice a few times until the team has it down. Be mindful of the breakdowns and use that time to process what's working and how to improve. This obviously can be very confusing, but very powerful if you get it.

Variations

Try one pattern using balls. Ask group members to set a goal of how many balls they can successfully "juggle" through the pattern and back to where they started. This is a classic team-building variation.

Safety

When played with common sense, this activity is very safe. The only potential concern involves the variation. When balls are being thrown back and fourth, remind group members to pay attention and take care of one another.

Reflection

Virtual Group Juggle is rich with learning opportunities. These questions help explore the importance of effectively communicating your message to the appropriate person.

Discover: "What was this exercise like for you? What made it that way? How important was communication in successfully doing this exercise? How much responsibility does the sender have in making sure the receiver gets the message? How much responsibility does the receiver have?"

Connect: "Can you think of a time when you asked someone to do something and this person either didn't do it or didn't do it correctly? How was this exercise similar? Different? What would happen if the message sender and receiver were responsible for sending and receiving the correct information?"

Create: "What do you need to be aware of the next time you are managing multiple tasks? How will you communicate to others who may be as busy as you? What is one thing you will focus on in your own communication with others?"