

FOCUS

A Herff Jones Impact Resource For Advisers

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SEPTEMBER FOCUS:

GAMES AND ACTIVITIES FOR GROUPS TO LEARN TO WORK TOGETHER

Games and Activities For Groups To Learn To Work Together

As a new school year begins, student activity advisers need ways to get their groups to work together. Every group starts at a different level and all are unique. Games and activities are a way to make the group into a team. Games and activities receive different feelings from different people. Some will find them silly in the beginning and will not want to participate. During the fun and silliness, things are happening with the group. People who have never spoken to one another will start talking. People who thought they did not like each other will start talking, laughing and working together.

Two goals of these games and activities include:

1. To build self esteem and confidence
2. To build cooperation and respect with the group

In the beginning, students should agree that:

- ◆ There will be no put-downs of others or themselves
- ◆ All should give 100% to the group effort
- ◆ Everyone should have fun
- ◆ Everyone will speak in a positive manner
- ◆ They should give encouragement to individuals and the group
- ◆ They understand the rules
- ◆ They will keep it safe

As the adviser, you should be prepared to lead the game or activity. Make yourself comfortable presenting to the group. Practice if necessary. Be ready to handle problems. Have all necessary materials and allow yourself to have fun when leading the group.

Before choosing a game or activity, determine the group's goals. Is the goal for all group members to learn the names of group members? Pick a game or activity that fits the size of the group. Ask yourself if the space is large enough for the activity that is planned. Is

there a Plan B if the activity is outside and the weather does not cooperate? Do all helpers understand the games or activities? In what order will the games or activities be done?



It is a good idea to write the games or activities on an index card and carry in your pocket for quick reference. Another good idea is to over-plan, because some games and activities will move faster than anticipated. Have some backup games and activities.

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RECOGNITION · EDUCATION · MOTIVATION

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Group members need a time to reflect what was happening during the activity. Decide if the goals were achieved.

It is good to have the group members sit on the floor in a circle where everyone can be seen by everyone else. Ask questions that require more than a “yes” or “no” answer.

For example:

- ◆ How did you feel during the....?
- ◆ What was the highlight for you?
- ◆ What did you get out of it?

During processing be sure that everyone gets chance to speak. If it is a large group you might ask each person to say the one word that best describes the game/activity.

As the adviser, your role is critical for the success of the program.



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ICEBREAKERS, WARM-UPS AND ENERGIZERS

These activities are fun and allow group members to get comfortable with one another. Some allow the group members to learn each other’s names. Things to consider:

- ◆ Fun is the major component
- ◆ The members must be successful
- ◆ Little problem solving should be required
- ◆ The activities focus on learning each other’s names
- ◆ Members begin to see that they have a lot in common
- ◆ Names are learned in a fun and fast way

COMMUNICATION SKILLS

These provide the opportunity for group members to get better at communicating thoughts, ideas, and feelings and to also improve listening skills. Things to consider:

- ◆ Use precise, descriptive words to solve the problem
- ◆ Involve talking, listening, and discussion
- ◆ Include sharing ideas with others to help make group decisions
- ◆ Allow leadership to come from the group
- ◆ Most activities are done in pairs or small groups

TEAMBUILDING

Building on the previous activities, these provide the opportunity for group members to work together as a team and learn to value all the members of the group. The results will be:

- ◆ Fun for the whole group - people will work as a team
- ◆ Members will begin to face challenges
- ◆ All members will be used
- ◆ Members begin to see the strengths of the different members and that one cannot do it alone

DECISION- MAKING AND PROBLEM SOLVING

This provides the opportunity for group members to communicate and cooperate with each other through activities that require them to make decisions and solve problems. The results will be:

- ◆ The activities will be used to help members make decisions and solve problems
- ◆ Try (and sometimes fail) and try again
- ◆ Members will be patient and not give up
- ◆ Combining many suggestions
- ◆ Members who aren’t usually perceived as leaders show that they have a lot to contribute