

Experiential Education Activities

Adapted from Project Adventures by Karl Rohnke & Jim Grout

There are many positive reasons, as well as great outcomes, for planning experiential activities for your class group. First, a lot of **communication** will happen. These activities are all **problem-solving challenges**, and therefore, the group members have to begin to talk. But as they communicate, they also realize that they MUST listen to other members as well. **Cooperation** happens, and so there are results. There will be lots of action, but to achieve the goal, the cooperation of the group is a necessity.

Shared experiences slowly build **trust**, and it will grow as more activities of this type of education takes place. Based on mutual respect and being consistent, the trust will grow slowly. These activities should be fun. If they are NOT enjoyable, the group will not feel excited about participating in other similar activities. Groups can learn some powerful lessons and strategies through play, so keep the fun in them!

Humor will make this series of activities worthwhile. You will find that the best humor will come from the participants themselves. Here are teacher/leader clues for success:

1. Explain each game's rules as clearly and simply as possible.
2. When you explain the rules, indicate that rules can be followed only as long as the group wants to. Be open to rule changes, and encourage communication and creativity. If the group doesn't like a rule, play without it.

Keep all the rules that make the game fun.

3. Consider changing the rules to fit your situation. Remember that rule variations can add some nice new dimensions to certain games/activities.
4. Understand the fun and value of shared stupidity. Demonstrate games with outrageous or foolish words/actions, and encourage the group members to join in. If you play the fool first to demonstrate to the class members, just be sure you are a cool-fool, not a stupid fool!
5. For a ball, do NOT use footballs, basketballs or baseballs. Instead use balloons, rubber chickens, squeaky soft rubber toys, fleece balls, beach balls plastic deck rings, etc. _____
6. Use unique, silly, or nonsense names for the games and for the play objects. Intrigue the participants with something new...just make it up!!!

The DIRTY DOZEN for teacher/leader of the games:

1. Have a comfortable relationship with the participants- talk, share, smile, compare, be relaxed.
2. Create a classroom atmosphere that is an invitation to learn, EVERYDAY.
3. Extend a well heard and open welcome to all new or late arrivers.
4. Be a player as well as a leader from the beginning. Personalize the games with your own personality and the classes.

5. Begin with games that include movement and a few easy rules.
6. Let the players stretch their bodies and feelings slowly at first. SO, no running, no competition and no contests...in the beginning.
7. Combine description and demo, and lots of facial expression. NO LECTURES!
8. After a game, ask students for some feedback about the game. If there are suggestions for variations, this is an opportunity to empower individuals, and then the group takes charge of the game.
9. A coerced player is no longer a player. Offer choices.
10. Before a physical or active game, remind participants of the safety issue, big people watching out for the little ones, no knocking down.
11. Know the rules of the game well enough to help the group change them
12. "A good idea doesn't care who has it." Share and share and share, ALL that you learn as a leader of games. PASS IT ON!!

What is a Full Value Contract? (Commitment)

Many teachers already may know that a prescribed set of rules which REQUIRES participants to commit before they've had a chance to get acquainted may certainly be ignored or tested. Teachers also know that it is often a matter of time and efficiency that rules must be imposed. If this is true, be simple and clear, like this set of 6... Participate; Work Together; Share Opinions & Feelings; No Put Downs; Have Fun; Be Safe.

And so to follow are ...**THE GREAT EIGHT!**

Here is an activity suggestion for a group for achieving group ownership of behavior and defining how a group wants to be together.

1. The Being

This is a large outline of a person or an object that the group chooses to symbolize itself. It can be a person, animal, tree, or anything. The group is provided a large piece of butcher paper or poster board. Have them draw the outline of the object they have selected to represent them. Once the object is drawn, the group then brainstorms a list of the positive behaviors they want the group to maintain---such as, listening, caring, supporting, cooperating, respecting others opinions. Write them all down inside the object outline. Next ask the group to think of distracting behaviors such as—ignoring new ideas, goofing off, devaluing others, etc. write these down outside the object. Students can come back to The Being at any time to add behaviors as they come up, or to simply review and ask the group if their guidelines are being followed and respected.

2. 7-11

Three people stand facing each other. One player says, "One, two, three, SHOOT." On SHOOT, all three players throw out as many fingers (0-5) on one hand as they think necessary to come up with a solution, which is: To **achieve the number 7**. Any total other than 7 is wrong, and the process must be repeated until the 7 is achieved.

TALKING or SHARING SIGNALS is not allowed.

Variation:

If players enjoyed trying to reach 7, next suggest that they use both hands and try to reach 11. Same rules apply. (It will take longer to achieve 11, because of more possibilities)

3. Competition Line-Up

Form two teams of equal numbers, or divide the class in half. Join in if you have an odd number in the group. The goal is to line up most quickly according to the topic assigned. Here are a few ideas, but keep adding to this list!! Have your group suggest topics too!

- Date of birth
- Height

- Thumb length, knuckle to tip
- The width of your smile
- Shoe size
- Length of hair
- Number of buttons visible on your outfit
- Number of siblings, living or deceased
- Alphabetically by LAST letter of last name
- Flat-footed overhead reach
- Favorite food (by first letter alphabetically)
- Number of pets or animals at your home

When a team (or line of 10-12) thinks they've got it, have them put their arms on their hips and shout, "We've got it." If you have more than two groups, allow the others to continue so you'll have a back-up winner if the first team erred.

4. Great to See You

A group of 10-20 finds a partner. The whole group mills around with each partner about 25' from one another. Then begin to move slowly toward one another, waving, smiling, blowing kisses, or any gesture for a homecoming or a welcome. When you get within a few feet of your partner, you realize that this is a TOTAL STRANGER. What happened? Look cool, save face, whatever. The simplest solution is to look right past to someone just beyond your partner. So move right past your partner, without missing a beat, until you make eye contact with your long lost "friend." For this person, greet them with a sturdy handshake, or a hug, and the words, "Great to See You!" "Really, Great To See You!" After hearty greetings, begin again to scan the crowd for other lost friends, but now it's back to the original enthusiastic but misplaced greeting with the STRANGER.

This is a good activity as an icebreaker/get to know you. Alternate the greetings between the walk-by, "I thought I knew you," to the "Great to See You," real thing, allowing participants to meet and learn names.

5. Have You Never...?

The idea of this game is to ask a question that reveals if anyone in this group has NEVER done something that is considered common.

Have you never...

- ...watched an entire VCR movie?
- ...flown in an airplane?
- ...changed a car tire by yourself?
- ...played Monopoly?
- ...left the United States?
- ...left the state that you were born in?
- ...worn sneakers with Velcro instead of laces?
- ...mowed a lawn?
- ...broken a bone?
- ...thrown a Frisbee?
- ...gotten a speeding ticket?
- ...operated a microwave oven?
- ...ridden a two runner sled?
- ...had stitches?
- ...surfed the Net?
- ...eaten a Twinkie?

...had a Coke?
...worn a watch?
...cleaned a toilet?
...sucked your thumb?
...eaten at MacDonald's?
...ridden bike with gears that shift?
...used an obscenity?
...played with Silly Putty?
...been in a car accident?
...taken a city bus?
...set off a firecracker?
...run a mile without stopping?
...used an ATM card?
...eaten a bagel?
...worn Teva-type sandals?
...driven a standard shift vehicle?
...rappelled?
...used a computer?
...grown zucchini or lived with someone who did?
...purchased your own underwear?
...drunk coffee?
...eaten an Oreo cookie?
...watched a black & white TV program?
...eaten tofu?
...taken a black and white photograph?
...used a cell phone

As one way to de-brief the activity, ask member volunteers to identify one person and one thing they have NEVER done.

6. Name Roulette

Divide the group into two smaller groups, or in half. Ask each group to form a circle. Participants face the center of the circle. Second circle of participants is around the outside of the first circle. When leader says GO, the two circles begin to rotate in OPPOSITE directions. Decide on the direction for each circle before you say GO. When the leader says STOP, two people (one in each circle) will be standing back to back. When leader says LOOK, those two people spin a 180, and the first of the pair to name the other person wins that person for their circle. Try using a quick on-and-off portable CD player to provide the START and STOP piece of the game.

7. Pairing Up Ideas

Finding a partner can be a lot more fun than just counting off by twos. Here are some good ideas for you:

- Find someone with a different eye color from you.
- Put your right thumb or your left pinky in the air. Find someone showing the same finger as you.
- Put from 0-5 fingers in the air, find a partner that gives you an **odd** total.

- Think of your birthday date (day of the month). Find someone so that when you add your dates together, you get an **even** number.
- Find a partner whose favorite movie is different than yours.
- Decide if you are an “either” or an “or” person. Label yourself appropriately and then find a partner who is opposite.
- Find someone with the same thumb size, or close.
- Find someone with a different number of siblings than you.
- Find someone who appears to be about as smart as you are.
- Close your left eye, or your right eye, find someone with the same eye closed as you.
- Are you a hockey puck or a hockey stick? Pucks go with pucks, sticks with sticks.
- Find someone who has a different favorite food.
- Find someone who appears to be totally opposite from you.
- Hop on either your left or right foot, find someone who’s hopping like you (same foot)
- Find someone whose color of clothing matches yours.
- Find someone wearing a belt, if you are, or someone not wearing a belt, if you aren’t.
- Find someone whose tone of voice is similar to yours.
- Are you wearing shoe laces? If so, find someone else who is, if not, find someone who isn’t.

8. Weird Walkin’

The group of participants can be assembled anywhere. Divide group in approximately one half, with each at the opposite ends of the “walking line”. The only requirement is that the players need to be able to walk in a reasonably straight line for about fifty feet. Ask each player to walk toward the destination about 50’ away displaying “creativity” and originality in their walk. Each player is allowed ample time to display their own unusual, weird walk, with supportive cheers from both ends of the walking area. When all members have completed the individual walks, then ask for pairs to create a weird walk in tandem. Then triplets walk weirdly next. As a finale, the entire group combines their creative efforts to mass ambulation for the final weird walk of 50’ of laughter and silliness.