

Building a Bridge

Materials Needed: Lots of newspaper, rolls (6-8) of masking tape, a gallon jug 1/4 to 1/2 full of water, a plastic dishpan type container, CD with "William Tell Overture" or music with a hectic pace.

Focus Area: To introduce the idea of teamwork, communication and creative problem solving.

Group Size: Small groups of 5-7 people.

Space Required: a room with ample space for movement.

Time Required: 45 mins-1 hour

Activity Instructions: "You are going to build a bridge using only the newspaper and masking tape. The bridge must be strong enough to hold 3 text books. Also, the bridge must be tall enough for this box to pass through it. The bridge must be free-standing; not attached to the wall, a piece of furniture, a person or an article of clothing...FREE-STANDING."

Process:

Tell them they will have 7 minutes to plan, discuss, etc., and to be sure everyone in the group is included. DO THEY HAVE ANY QUESTIONS? Time the 7 minutes. **After the 7 minute discussion period, pass out the newspaper and tape.** Inform the group they will now have 8 minutes to construct their bridge and, by the way, there will be no talking allowed during this 8 minutes.

At the end of 8 minutes, allow the groups 30 seconds to speak to each other and then an additional 3 minutes of SILENTLY work to complete their bridge. During this last work session, play the "William Tell Overture" (or other such music) loudly.

Call time and have one group at a time present their bridge. A spokesperson from each group will tell about their bridge and pass the box under and put the books on top. When the books are put on top, all will count for 10 seconds. (This will be done for each group).

Processing/discussion questions:

- How did you work as a group?
- Which part was the most difficult?
- Did everyone participate in some way?
- Did you feel like you contributed to the group?
- Did you feel like you were part of the group?
- Was there one particular person that kept the ball rolling?
- Were there individuals who were particularly quiet?
- How was their quietness interpreted: agreement or disagreement?
- What influenced the type of bridge built by each group?
- Why were no two alike?
- How did communication or lack of it affect the work of the group?
- What characteristics of teamwork became evident during this exercise?

The Leadership Education And Development Office at George Mason University

These resources have been adapted throughout the years. If you know the origin of any of these activities, please feel free to let us know so we can list the proper citation. A special thank you to the students, faculty, and staff who have contributed over the years.