

MARBLE EXERCISE

Objectives:

To emphasize the responsibility in teamwork and the connections everyone plays in accomplishing the group's goals.

To allow for observation of team interaction while exploring problem solving, communication skills, cooperation, planning, roles and expectations.

Group Size:

Up to 25 people

Materials:

2 ball bearings or marbles

1 pvc pipe piece (12") per participant

1 cup, bucket, or receptacle used for receiving the ball bearing/marble

Instructions:

1. Give everyone a piece of pvc pipe.
2. Identify a starting point for the group.
3. Have the ending point (where the bucket/cup is located) approximately 3 times the distance of the number of pipes people are using (since each pipe section is 12", for a group of 10 people, you would have the bucket located approximately 30 feet away from the starting point.)
4. Instruct the group that they must get the ball bearing from the starting point into the bucket, without the ball dropping or anyone touching it (with anything other than the pipe) as quickly as they can.

Usually with these instructions, the group will assign a couple of people to walk, with the bearing caught in their pipe pieces, to the bucket and then drop it in. Be sure and time this. Ask the question "Can you do it any faster?" If you add another ball bearing, they might rethink their approach, using all the people and all the pipes.

If they don't use everyone in getting the ball bearing from Point A to Point B, you can instruct them that they can't move until the ball bearing has left their section of pipe. This usually gets everyone involved.

Processing Questions:

1. What happened during the process? What worked? What didn't or what hindered the process? (If the group changed strategies after the first round, ask why and to compare the different approaches.)
2. What were the individual roles people played? Were members comfortable with their roles?
3. Did everyone know/understand what the process was? How did you communicate the plans to group members? How did you decide which approach to take?
4. Did you use all of your resources? How? If not, why not?
5. Was leadership exhibited in the group? How?
6. How is this applicable to situations you deal with? What lessons can you take with you?