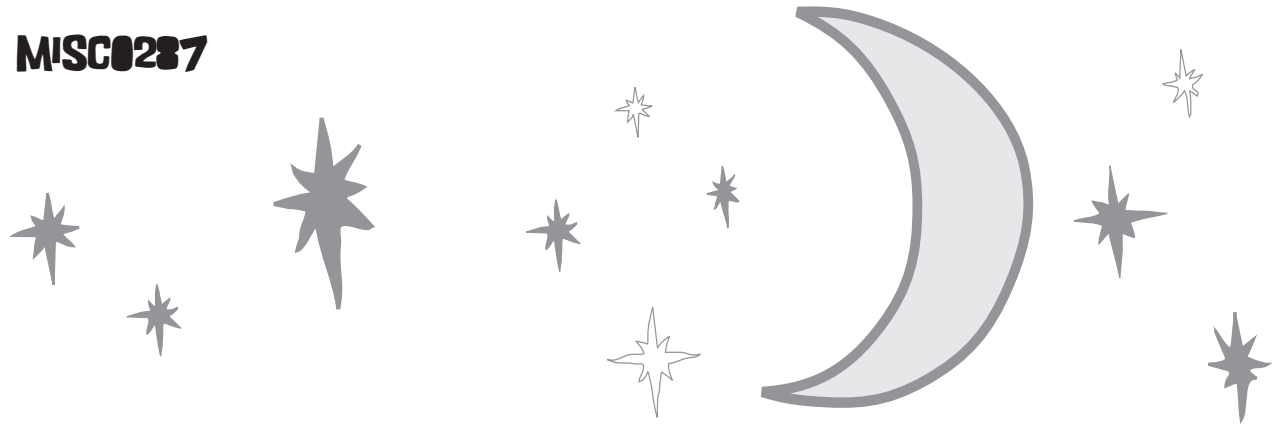


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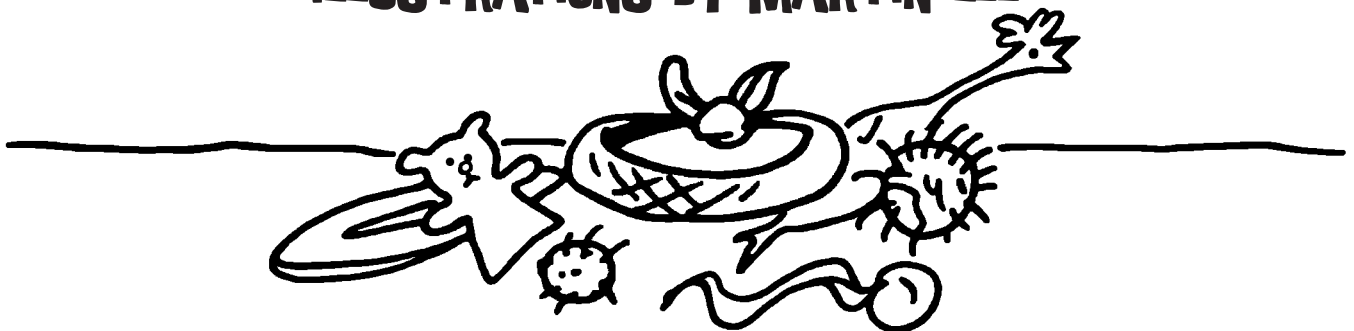


FAMILY NIGHT OUT!

**4-H PORTABLE CHALLENGE
FOR FAMILIES**

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Authors' Note: Family Night Out! works best when facilitators are trained in experiential education and/or adventure based counseling techniques. This manual is not meant to be a substitute for professional facilitator training. Individuals who are interested in training can contact a variety of sources that include, but are not limited to, 4-H Youth Development Programs, Project Adventure, and the Association for Experiential Education. Contacts for each are available in the reference section at the end of this publication.

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AN OVERVIEW

Family Night Out! is an effective and fun way to work with families. The Family Night Out! model utilizes 4-H Portable Challenge or experiential/adventure based learning with families. The model has been used extensively in several regions of Washington State by Washington State University (WSU) Extension and its community partners since the mid-1990's. Family Night Out! has proven to be an extremely well received family activity in underserved rural areas across the state. Family Night Out! has helped to build more resilient families and communities by bringing area families together to meet and play, often for the first time. The networking done at Family Night Out! has encouraged participation in other school community events.

Family Night Out! is a family enrichment program with an educational component that attracts an audience who otherwise would not participate in traditional programs. It has also been successful with parents of young adolescents in urban areas. It is designed to train parents, strengthen families and prevent risky behaviors. Family Night Out! is a strength-based, not deficit-based, program. Its non-threatening "hands-on" experiential activities attract and encourage the participation of all family members.

The program is designed to take place in three two-hour sessions on weeknight evenings or weekend days, working with multi-family groups of 20 to 80 participants. 4-H Challenge uses a mixture of experiential learning and group facilitation techniques to address family issues and build new skills in an atmosphere of fun and support. Examples of activities include:

- Games which encourage fun and cooperation.
- Problem-solving exercises called Initiatives, which stimulate communication, group and individual initiative, interdependence, competence, and a deeper appreciation of family strengths.
- Trust exercises, which develop cooperation, empathy, support and appropriate risk taking.

Family Night Out! facilitators strategically select fun activities and playful scenarios to create positive awareness and outcomes for participating families. 4-H Challenge incorporates the use of unusual play-objects, such as rubber chickens, koosh balls, hand puppets, beach balls and parachutes, as well as alternative, non-competitive activities to create a novel and fun environment. Activities are designed to be non-threatening to encourage full involvement of participants.

OUR TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

The 4-H teaching philosophy is "learning by doing." Studies have shown that experience-based, action-oriented learning has the greatest long-range impact on the learner. The teaching techniques used in this program completely involve the participants in the learning process and are based on the Experiential Learning Model. Experiential learning encourages participants to DO, REFLECT, and APPLY (Fig. 1).

Do the Activity

Participants explore and learn when they are involved in a hands-on activity. They use all of their senses and interact with others. Parents and



Figure 1.



children work together as a team and with other families in Family Night Out! activities.

Reflect on the Activity

Participants reflect on the activity through sharing their thoughts. During this debrief, the facilitator asks participants about their experience. What did you just do? How did your plan develop? Were everyone's ideas heard? Did everyone know the plan before you started? Why is it important that everyone know? What was your role in the planning process?

Apply the Activity

To complete the learning process, participants must apply what they have learned to everyday family life. For example, the facilitator might ask: What did you learn about working together as a family? Think of an activity that you are going to do as a family. Now, how can you apply what you have learned here to plan that activity?

This process can turn any experience, good or bad, into positive learning. To make this process work effectively, family members must understand how they can apply the results of the activities and the knowledge they have discovered into their everyday lives.

4-H PORTABLE CHALLENGE

The 4-H Portable Challenge Program incorporates broad learning objectives aimed toward all aspects of personal development: physical, emotional, social, and spiritual. The program emphasizes successful participation and feelings of accomplishment. The inherent fun of the activities keeps the participants motivated and engaged in learning.

In order to create a safe and welcoming environment for personal development, 4-H Portable Challenge uses two essential non-negotiable ground rules: The agreement from participants to behave safely, both physically and emotionally, and the understanding that all activities are "challenge of choice." No one

is forced to do any activity with which he or she is uncomfortable.

A 4-H Challenge experience provides a series of manageable challenges. Completing each activity requires members to learn new skills, set goals, problem-solve, communicate effectively with others, and apply challenge by choice. Through this process, participants learn how to reflect on their experiences and gain insights into personal and social behaviors and attitudes that they can apply in future settings.

Facilitators provide a structured sequence of skill development, experience, involvement in the activities, and reflective discussion (debriefing) for the greatest learning to occur. Knowledge from the preceding activity is applied to the next one and so on. Participants can experience a quick, dramatic increase in knowledge, skill level, personal effectiveness, and self-worth.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

On the surface, 4-H Challenge activities, such as problem-solving initiatives and name games, appear to be nothing more than fun and exciting experiences. Though having fun is a worthy goal, the complexity of Challenge activities offers a variety of educational opportunities for learning about oneself and how to participate in a group. Below are some areas of learning and self-development that the facilitator and his/her Challenge group are likely to experience.

- A sense of moving beyond current limits with an increased awareness of personal capabilities and potential
- A working knowledge of group and team interaction
- Improved interpersonal communication
- A working knowledge of goal setting, problem identification, and decision-making skills
- An increase in respect for self, others, and the environment
- A working knowledge of stress management and body awareness aimed at improving one's sense of well-being

- An increased familiarity and identification with the natural world
- An understanding in taking appropriate risks and overcoming fear

ADVENTURE LEARNING MODEL

The 4-H Challenge Program uses “The Washington 4-H Challenge Adventure Learning Model,” an out-growth of work done by Jim Schoel (1988), and adapted to 4-H by Sam Tower, Jerry Newman, and Mary Deen. The model allows the facilitator to introduce the background for each activity or “brief” the activity, “explore” or do the activity, and “debrief” the activity (Fig. 2).

Each Family Night Out! experience starts with setting ground rules with the group. There are two non-negotiable rules that must be agreed to by all group members: Physical and Emotional Safety and Challenge of Choice. The first non-negotiable, Physical and Emotional Safety, is easily expressed with an intergenerational group as “being safe with our bodies and safe with our words.” The facilitator who works with the group to establish this contract can explore with the group members what the dimensions of physical and emotional safety mean for the group. The second non-negotiable, Challenge of Choice, is explained as everyone has a right to choose his or her level of participation in an activity. All family members are expected to be part of activities. Individuals are asked to decide at what level they will participate. Participation through observation and coaching are as welcome as physically doing the activity.

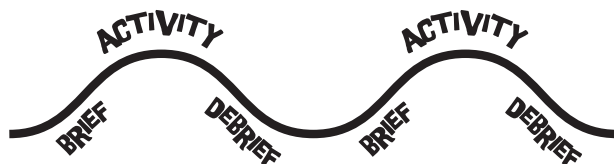


Figure 2.

Briefing is the process the facilitator uses to prepare the group to do the activity. This may include: framing the activity by using a story to engage the imagination of the participants, addressing safety concerns particular to the activity, and explaining the rules of the game or initiative. During the activity, the facilitator allows the group to experience the process. The role of the facilitator during the activity is to observe group behavior and intervene when necessary. Interventions range from increasing the level of challenge by modifying the rules to stopping the activity to prevent unsafe behavior. The facilitator may also intervene to encourage greater playfulness or to stop the activity when a critical incident has occurred that requires group reflection. In the debrief, the facilitator guides the group through a process that allows the participants to reflect on their feelings and thoughts about the activity. Following this step, the group will apply what they have learned from the activity to the next activity and to their lives.

The entire process can be described as an undulating wave as the cycle of Brief/Activity/Debrief is repeated throughout the group's Challenge experience. Figures 1 and 2 portray the Washington 4-H Challenge Adventure Learning Model.

FACILITATOR ROLE

Being an effective Challenge facilitator is demanding and requires a strong skill base. The facilitator must be willing to share his or her skills and knowledge on a personal and professional basis with a variety of people. Because concern for physical and emotional safety is a foundation of the program, the facilitator needs a high level of expertise in interpersonal and technical skills and experiential learning.

It is the facilitator's responsibility to facilitate only to his/her level of training and experience and to meet the group's goals on the continuum of practice. The continuum of practice includes recreation, education, training and development, and therapy. WSU 4-H trains facilitators only in education and training development methods.



The facilitator's approach to experiential teaching and learning is important. He/she should be able to describe why the activity is useful to the group or individual, what the learning objectives are, and how to facilitate all of the activities safely.

DEBRIEFING

Essentially, the art of debriefing is the successful use of questions to expose the learning of a group from the activity experience. For those who have any anxiety over the prospect of debriefing a group after a challenge activity, relax, this can be done. By asking sound open-ended questions, the group will provide both the content and direction of the debrief. Some of the best debriefs have been those when the facilitator has said the least and the group has mostly found its own way. Of course, sometimes it is helpful to provide boundaries to a discussion, to quiet a dominant participant, or draw out a quite one. Overall, debriefing is asking questions about what was experienced during the activity and about what results from discussing the activity.

In order to have questions to ask during the debrief, the facilitator must watch the group with attention to interactions among the group members. Attention needs to be paid to who plays what roles. Who's talking? Who's quiet? What is the posture of the group members? Is everyone participating? One should become a naturalist observing the group.

As the activity draws to a close, and the group has circled for the debrief, the facilitator should lead the discussion to follow this three-part structure: what, so what, and now what (Schoel, 1988).

What?

What happened? Involve concrete facts about what was said and done, when, by whom, and where. How did the group plan? Was everyone involved?

So What?

These questions help the learner investigate relationships between different aspects of what

happened. This leads to new learning about the meaning of what actually happened.

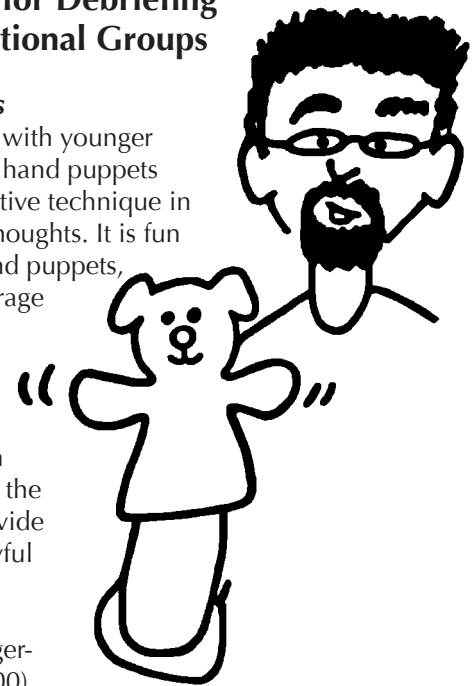
Now What?

How can participants apply what they learned in future situations? How can they avoid similar problems? What will they do differently?

Techniques for Debriefing Intergenerational Groups

Hand Puppets

When working with younger children, using hand puppets can be an effective technique in eliciting their thoughts. It is fun to talk with hand puppets, and can encourage shy children to take part. The facilitator's use of a hand puppet can draw in the attention of the group, and provide a model of playful behavior.



The Whip (Sugerman, et al., 2000)

Ask the group to form a circle where everyone can see one another. The facilitator directs each member of the group to choose one word or short phrase that describes his or her impression of the activity or his or her personal contribution to the group. The facilitator asks for a volunteer to share his or her one word or phrase and then has each person take his or her turn in order proceeding either clockwise or counter-clockwise around the circle. Participants are allowed to pass.

Human Sculpture

The families or groups of families are asked to form a picture with their bodies that represents an aspect of what they learned from the activity. In one group,

family members formed an arch to demonstrate that they worked together to complete the exercise. The possibilities are limited only by imagination.

SEQUENCING

Experiential educators often refer to the agenda for a series of activities as a sequence. Sequencing is the act of designing activities in a specific order that meet the learning goals of the group and the sponsoring organizations. To plan a successful experiential program, the facilitator must consider both the kinds of activities chosen for the group and the order in which they will be delivered. Working with a large group of sixty is quite a different challenge than leading a smaller group of fifteen. In the Family Night Out! model, facilitators are called upon to do both.

At the beginning of a Family Night Out! program, large group activities break the ice, warm up participants physically, and set the tone for fun. Once the group is warmed up, it is divided into smaller multi-family groups of no more than fifteen for name games and initiatives. Name games are used to help participants become more familiar with each other. Initiatives encourage communication and problem solving skills. Before participants know it, they're learning about themselves and how they interact in their group. In between Initiatives, facilitators lead Quick Silly Games (QSG's) to keep everything fun. Participants are invited to take what has been learned from debriefing the initiatives into family activities. Families should work on the activities together, exploring issues of strength, communication, and support. The program ends with a final debrief and closing activity. Some sample sequences are included in the appendix.

GRABBS

The GRABBS modality developed by Schoel, Prouty and Radcliffe (1988) is a tool facilitators may use in sequencing. GRABBS provides a useful "checklist" of issues to consider when selecting the next activity for a group.

- **Goals.** How does the activity relate to the group and individual goals that have been set?
- **Readiness.** In regards to the level of instruction and safety skills, is the group ready to do the activity? Will they endanger themselves or others? Do they have the ability to attempt or complete the activity? What modifications to the activity do you need to make to compensate?
- **Affect.** What is the feeling of the group? What is the level of caring and empathy in the group?
- **Behavior.** How is the group acting? Are they resistant or disruptive? Are the participants self-involved or group-involved? Are there any interactions between participants that are affecting the group, either positively or negatively? How cooperative are they?
- **Body.** What kind of physical shape are participants in? How tired are they?
- **Stage.** What developmental stage is the group at? (Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing)

Stages of Group Development

When individuals are brought together in the form of a group, there are stages of development which are commonly experienced. It is helpful to be aware of the stage the group is experiencing when selecting activities. **Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing** are stages of Tuckman's group development model (1965).

- **Forming.** As a group forms, its members begin to establish roles of leadership. Participants may experience confusion and anxiety as these roles are established. People tend to be more polite at this stage.
- **Storming.** Testing of leadership roles begin, as frustration and conflict become more likely. This stage offers the most opportunities for interventions that challenge participants' negative behaviors, and encourage them to explore new problem solving strategies.
- **Norming.** The group starts to operate as a unit. Expectations of behavior become better understood. Members find the group is a safe environment for working together and sharing their emotions.
- **Performing.** The group is able to deal with the tasks



members bring to it. Leadership is less an issue as participants become comfortable with their roles.

All of these stages can be seen in a multi-session Family Night Out! program.

Advice on Sequencing

Sequencing is not a static process. Facilitators should observe their groups and be prepared to change the choice of activity according to the needs of the group. Often through debriefing, the needs of the group will become known. As facilitators become more familiar with activities, their intuitions will help lead them from one activity to the next. It's important to remember that there is no right or wrong sequence. Activity choice becomes just another subtle (or not so subtle) addition to the art of facilitation. Remember to be creative, and don't be afraid to move on to another activity if the one you thought was going to go over great falls flat.

Themes

At Family Night Out! programs, plan the evenings around a single theme relevant to the families in attendance. Focus on these themes in both the framing of the activities and during the debriefing after the activity. Possible themes include:

- **Family strengths.** What makes your family special? What helps your family achieve its goals? How do you keep your family safe? What does your family like to do together?
- **Support.** How do your family members support each other? In what ways do you ask for and receive support in your family? How do you ask for the support you're not getting, but need? How do we care for each other?
- **Communication.** How does your family communicate? What other ways can you communicate a message? What do you do when you aren't understood? What are some ways your family could communicate better?
- **Working together.** How does your family cooperate? What roles do you play?
- **Problem solving.** How does your family solve problems together? Does everyone get to share his

or her ideas? How do you make your decisions?

- **Social connectedness.** How is your family connected to the community and the wider world? How does your family celebrate its ethnic or cultural heritage?

The facilitators can use the theme for an evening to frame chosen activities. For example, a Family Night Out! program that was held on February 14 had "Caring for Each Other" as a theme. The activity "Magic Sunglasses" was used to help people practice giving compliments. This was followed by an activity where each family member made valentines for each other based on those compliments. The metaphor of caring was continued with the "Nurturing Spoons" activity. (See Appendix for other examples of sequences.)

WORKING WITH FAMILIES

Family Night Out! is a strength-based program. The focus with families is on what works, and how participants can find positive solutions for each of their family members. Remember, families are capable of identifying and using their own personal strengths and resources when facing life's challenges.

CHARACTERISTICS OF HEALTHY FAMILIES

Research on strong, healthy families and the related practices that sustain them have identified nine characteristics related to family strengths. These characteristics and the practices that families use are shown in table 1.

Family Night Out! programs focus on promoting one or more of these characteristics in any given program. Some families are better able to work in this framework than others. Families with fewer resources, physical or emotional, are allowed to grow at their own pace.

The Family Night Out! program seeks to create

some new frames of reference through which families view themselves and how individual members view each other. An empowerment approach to families discards the notion that some families are dysfunctional and others are functional. Parenting experienced by people that is less than healthy can be seen as uneven and that which is healthy as even. This model applied to the family system and the nine characteristics implies a greater evenness in strong families. Family Night Out! programs

can give families some skills to create more even and healthy environments for children and adults (Clarke and Dawson, 1998).

Three things that children and adults need to feel healthy and loved are stimulation, recognition, and certainty (Clarke and Dawson, 1998). Stimulation is the hunger for contact that is vital to life—**Let's do something!** Recognition is the hunger to be acknowledged—**Look at me!** Certainty is the hunger

Table 1. The Nine Characteristics of Family Strength

Characteristic	Family Practices
Adaptive Ability	Family members manage everyday and unpredictable stress.
Commitment	Family members recognize the worth of individuals and are committed to the value of the family as a unit.
Communication	Family members practice open and clear communication that is direct but not unkind. Family members speak for themselves and take responsibility for their feelings.
Encouragement	Family members promote a sense of belonging and individual development.
Appreciation	Family members demonstrate emotional closeness and support. They show their caring in a number of ways and express positive feelings towards one another.
Spiritual/Religious/Values Orientation	Family members share a belief in something greater than themselves. They hold similar values and ideals about what is important. Often, shared rituals enhance family life.
Social Connectedness	Family members are connected to others in the community, such as extended family, friends, and neighbors, and are involved in community organizations.
Clear Roles	Family members have a clear idea about their roles and responsibilities and carry them out. Roles are flexible, so they can be adapted in times of need. Power is shared. Discipline is fair and flexible. Reasons for rules and discipline are clearly explained.
Time Together	Family members share time together that is formal and informal. Family time is satisfying to all members in quantity and quality. Togetherness is not left to chance! A sense of fun and playfulness are part of what families experience.

Sources: Duncan, 1996; Lee and Goddard, 1989; NNFR, 1998.

for physical, social, and psychological systems that keep us safe and make life predictable—***Who's in charge here?*** All of these must be provided in the Family Night Out! program. Activities are structured to ensure family members meet each other's needs, as well as their own.

DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES

Developmental issues can arise during family inter-actions and it is very helpful for facilitators to be aware of the developmental stages and tasks that are being displayed. Clarke and Dawson (1998) present a clear picture of ages and stages in their classic, ***Growing Up Again, Parenting Ourselves, Parenting Our Children, 2nd Edition***. They use an Eriksonian model and divide the life cycle into stages that have predictable tasks. In describing how the process of human development proceeds, they describe the theory of recycling that is offered by several developmental and personality theorists. The theory of recycling assumes that at the same time a person is working on the tasks in the stage they are in age-wise, they will also be working on tasks from previous stages that are stimulated by life situations and cyclical forces. An example of this is a 14-year-old who, on the surface, is working on the adolescent life stage tasks of identity, sexuality and separation from his or her parents. According to Clarke and Dawson, the 14-year-old may typically be working on some of the tasks of the 2-year-old (18 months–3 years) or Thinking Stage, as well. Early adolescence is a critical period for using refusal skills. These skills are first learned in early childhood and depending how the family interacted and encouraged the 2-year-old in making choices, the 13- or 14-year-old will re-experience those early experiences and learn to use those skills in new ways with peers. Emotional outbursts and back talk are more sophisticated, but the underlying behaviors and motivation of the 2-year-old and the young teen may be the same. The choices and level of independence differ. Families often respond with similar frustration to both age groups. The same skills that allow parents to successfully navigate the “terrific

twos” are needed for their 13- and 14-year-olds.

The themes of the stages that will be encountered in any given Family Night Out! program include:

Being.

First experienced in infancy and supported with a high amount of recognition and belonging.

This is revisited throughout the life cycle as children and adults enter new situations and relationships. Starting a new job or starting kindergarten can evoke similar needs of being welcomed and developing a sense of belonging. The same thing happens as people come to Family Night Out! Facilitators need to be welcoming and plan the time and activities it takes for people to figure out that they do belong.

Doing.

First experienced between 6 months and 18 months and throughout life as new skills are learned.

Exploration is the key to this stage and there is little or no judgment about whether one is capable or good at anything. People recycle this stage when they are learning new skills and it is very evident in 6–7 year-olds and 12–13 year-olds who are trying out a variety of new things. Parents of children in these ages need to be prepared to expose children to a wide range of activities while assuring they are safe. Safety is paramount. Children who are experiencing the tasks for exploration are often not evaluating the task for safety. It is the task of the adult to provide the safety. While this is simple for parents of toddlers and first grade teachers, it is much more complicated for parents of pre-adolescents. Family Night Out! can use safety and boundaries as a theme to help families think about how they provide safety for their older explorers. “Family Obstacle Course” is a favorite for helping families explore boundaries and safety issues.

Thinking.

First experienced between 18 months and 3 years and throughout life as identity is developed in a variety of situations.

The tasks of this period revolve around thinking and feeling, being able to say no and be accepted, making choices, and being different from others. These tasks are recycled at 8–9 years and again at 14, as described previously. This can be a exciting period for families. Activities that stretch the family's view of themselves enhance their ability to appreciate intra-family diversity, and the practice of communication skills are a huge success for families with children in these age groups. "Human Knot" is a powerful way to explore communication and connection. Youth are often leaders in finding the solution.

Identity and Power.

First experienced by preschoolers and throughout life as one experiences competence.

The themes for this stage include finding out about power, roles and feelings in oneself and others. One easily recognizes the playful preschooler who tries on the adult world through play and imagination. Those same skills are tried on more seriously by 10- and 11-year-olds when they start to take on responsibilities in schools and clubs seriously and again by 15–16 year-olds when they start to date, drive, and work. Intra-family conflicts can arise as the locus of power and control shifts from parent directed to youth directed. Being aware that a family may be experiencing these issues can be helpful in structuring and debriefing various activities. Activities that restrict the senses by use of blindfolds or imposed silence can help shift the balance of power within the family. "Cup of Dreams" and "Blindfold Tag" are two examples of such activities.

Structure.

First experienced by 6–12 year-olds and throughout life as people work and live within structured communities and organizations.

The essence of structure is to learn rules that help people live and work with others. Developmentally, the school-aged child is cognitively ready to learn rules and grow within a rule-based framework. Children start to internalize the rules and they become of paramount importance in the play of 6–8 year-olds.

Parents of children this age who experienced uneven parenting during this phase may be challenged in providing rules for their children at any age and may need assistance in exploring how to provide structure in a safe and healthy way. Family Night Out! can open the discussion. Often a family that struggles with providing healthy boundaries for children can practice their skills at a Family Night Out! or may need a referral to counseling or other parent education experiences. Any rule-based game offers an opportunity to explore structure.

Identity, Sexuality and Separation.

First experienced by 13–19 year-olds and often in adulthood, especially during the young adult years, but not infrequently at mid-life.

The tasks of exploring sexuality in the teen years can be extremely challenging for families. One of the key needs that families can support in adolescents is the need for nurturing touch. Providing safe and consistent touch for adolescents may help them delay sexual experimentation. A dynamic can often occur as the child enters puberty where the adults withdraw touch, either from their own or their children's confusion. Family Night Out! programs often engage families in activities that require physical contact. These can be powerful for the adolescent who is experiencing less touch from the adults in their life. "Human Knot" is one of many activities to offer opportunities for safe touch among participants.

Interdependence.

Experienced by adults throughout their lives.

Successful living and working in groups and families requires interdependence. Adults who come to Family Night Out! programs can make connections with other adults informally and in a structured manner through various activities. Issues of independence and interdependence often create rich ground for debriefing activities.

Understanding the developmental stages and tasks can be a useful tool for designing and facilitating Family Night Out! programs. For more information, refer to Clarke and Dawson, 1998.

COORDINATING A FAMILY NIGHT OUT! PROGRAM

PARTNERSHIPS

Family Night Out! is a group effort. A successful Family Night Out! program requires partnerships with community organizations, such as PTA's, churches and schools. It is important to seek co-sponsors who will recruit their own families, serve a meal to participants, and provide child care to children under six. 4-H and Extension provide the facilitation; the families provide the fun and sense of adventure!

SELLING THE PROGRAM

The first task is to sell the program to potential co-sponsors, and find a community organization that will host the Family Night Out! series. Use a short video to convey the nature of the program. The video should clearly illustrate what a Family Night Out! looks like. Viewers get a strong sense of the activities by watching real families participating and having fun. Showing the video and answering questions afterward has been an effective means of getting interest and eventual buy-in from community groups. If a video is not available, demonstrating one or two of the simpler activities with the potential co-sponsoring group can be an effective way to illustrate the model.

FACILITIES AND SCHEDULING

Once a group is interested, appropriate facilities and scheduling must be considered. Family Night Out! requires a space big enough for large group activities that can be provided by the average school gym or cafeteria. It is helpful if the room has acoustic tiling or carpet to cut down on echoes. Sometimes activities do get loud! It is also convenient to have enough room to break the group into smaller subgroups or have additional rooms as smaller breakout spaces. When the weather is

cooperative, it's nice to do some activities outdoors.

Care should be taken to schedule Family Night Out! events with as few conflicts with other community events. In some communities, trying to hold a Family Night Out! program on the night of high school basketball or football game is futile. Families who attend Wednesday evening church services will not make a program on that night. These issues are particular to each community and need to be considered before the final dates are set.

Meals and child care are essential elements of the program. Children younger than six often need a different experience than what the Family Night Out! activities provide. The more complex and rule based activities are, the more frustrating they become for younger children. Child care gives these children a safe and satisfying alternative. Busy families universally appreciate free meals. Simple menus work well. Pizza, salad, and cookies have been featured at many Family Night Out! programs.

FACILITATOR RECRUITMENT

At the same time the event is being scheduled, one needs to consider the availability of facilitators. Facilitators should be trained to lead portable 4-H Challenge activities. Contact a local Extension office to find out about 4-H Challenge Facilitator training in your area. One might also seek out other people who are experiential educators through the Association for Experiential Education or Project Adventure (see the reference section for information on contacting both organizations).

It is helpful if the facilitators have experience in working with youth and families, as well as being aware of developmental and parenting issues. The most important attribute needed is a warm, fun-loving attitude conveying a casual competence to both children and adults. Above all, facilitators should focus on creating a setting that is both safe physically and emotionally, and therefore should have the interpersonal skills and style necessary for creating a warm and welcoming environment.

Historically, Family Night Out! has depended on volunteer 4-H Challenge facilitators to deliver programs. In recent years, grants have allowed facilitators to be paid. In one program in Washington State, Family Night Out! facilitators earn \$30 an evening and lead facilitators earn \$50. Individuals new to 4-H Challenge facilitation are often willing to volunteer their time in exchange for the experience.

FUNDING FAMILY NIGHT OUT!

Grants and community contributions have funded Family Night Out! programs in Washington State. The majority of grants have been small (\$1000–\$7000), funding one or more series in a specified school district. PTO's have co-sponsored the event by providing the meal. Larger grants and contracts help fund the program in some locations. Often, Family Night Out! is one of several activities that is

incorporated into a program for families and youth.

Typical expenses for a 3-evening series of Family Night Out! for 60 people are:

- Facilitation: \$350 (\$50 per night for a lead facilitator and \$30 per night for 2 other facilitators)
- Supplies: \$50–\$75
- Meals: \$225
- Travel (if needed): depends on the site.

The costs will vary for each site as will the arrangements for staffing. Some programs are able to function with volunteers and some have regular staff who incorporate Family Night Out! facilitation into their job descriptions.



ACTIVITIES

Many of the activities in this resource have been adapted from other challenge activity resources to be used with families. Countless adventure professionals have contributed to the field of experiential education through hours of play and facilitation. (See Bibliography for published resource references.) Particular mention for creative activities is due Karl Rohnke, 1984, 1989, 1994, 1995; Sam Sikes, 1995; and Jackie Gerstein, 1989, 1999.

ICEBREAKERS

Icebreaker activities are designed to coax participants into opening up and having a little fun. Activities should be non-threatening, and if possible, should help build rapport among group members. Some of our icebreaking activities include: Yurt Rope Circle, Common Ground, Salmon-Bear-Mosquito, and Fishy-Fishy; all work well for large groups.

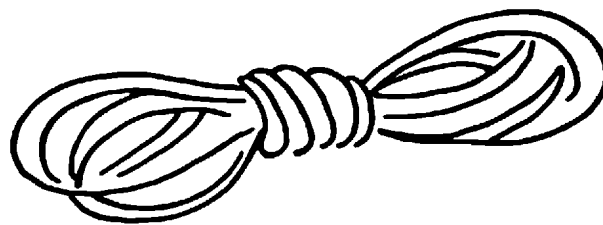


Yurt Rope Circle

OBJECTIVES: Increase group rapport, calm and focus the group, and demonstrate support

TIME: 10 minutes

MATERIALS: 2–3 feet of rope per person, approximately .5" in diameter



Yurt Rope Circle is one of the fastest ways to quiet a group and create focus. It is a good activity to begin and end sessions. Simply put, you take a nice strong rope and tie the ends in a secure knot and then lay it out in a circle on the floor. Ask your group to evenly distribute themselves around the rope and to pick it up with both hands. You now have an instant circle. Voila! Have the participants space themselves evenly around the rope and take all the slack out of the rope.

At the beginning of the session take a moment to make a brief introduction about your organization, as well as introduce the facilitators. The ground rules are brief. First, ask participants "to be safe with their words and their

bodies.” Second, all activities are “challenge of choice” (each participant has the right to decide his or her own level of participation). At this point, have the participants either drop the rope and move on to the next activity, or move into a demonstration of support sustained within the group.

Have the participants stand evenly around the rope and remove all the slack. Then have them get a solid, even stance with their feet about hip-width apart, while firmly gripping the rope with both hands. If there are smaller children in the group (who often love to hang from the rope) set appropriate ground rules so as not to disturb the balance of the group. On the count of three, have the group lean back slowly while holding tight. Participants will find that they can put a considerable amount of their weight on the rope and remain supported. Use the count to bring the group back up again.

VARIATION:

- Have the group lean back as before, and then lower into a squat. Always remember to use the count to initiate each move. If well-synchronized this can be a very smooth move.

DISCUSSION:

- What’s holding us up?
- What would happen if someone let go?
- As family and community members, how do we support each other?

Common Ground

OBJECTIVES: Icebreaker, build rapport in the group

TIME: 10–15 minutes

MATERIALS: 1’ x 1’ carpet squares, one for every participant, minus one

Have the group stand in a circle. Give each member of the circle a carpet square. Tell the group to put the carpet squares on the ground in front of them and that they are the bases. Move to the center of the circle. Point out that everyone has a base except the person in the middle. Tell them, “The name of this game is Common Ground. I’m going to make a common ground statement. If the statement is true for you, you must get off your base and find an open one. You cannot move to the base directly to your right or left. Whoever is left without a base is IT. The common ground statement goes like this. ‘I have common ground with everyone who ____ (fill in the rest of the sentence).’ Give an example to model the kind of statement you’d like to hear, i.e., everyone who...likes camping with their family, likes the color blue, ate pizza for dinner, etc. The common ground you call must be true for you. For easier comprehension, you may wish to compare the game with Musical Chairs.” If you play through one or two rounds, most people will pick it up.

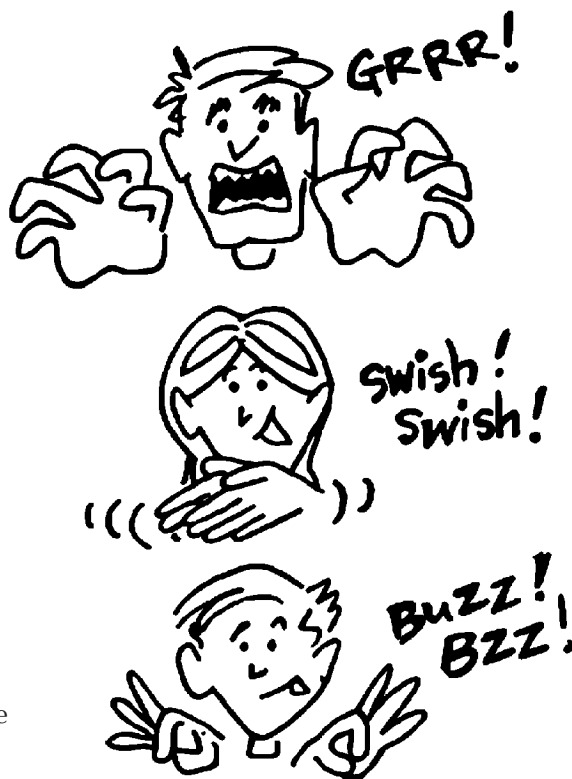
Salmon-Bear-Mosquito

OBJECTIVE: To increase group cooperation and decision making, warm up physically, have fun

TIME: 5–10 minutes

MATERIALS: Boundary markers, rope or a line on the gym floor for the center line, and cones or markers approximately 15 feet away, parallel to the center line to mark safety boundary

Divide your group in two. Explain the activity by comparing it with the game Rock-Paper-Scissors, but in this game you have a Salmon, Bear, and Mosquito. The sign for Salmon is putting your hands together, waving them back and forth like swimming through water while making a swishing sound. You make a Bear by bringing both of your hands over your head and roaring like a bear. Finally, you make a Mosquito by bringing your thumb and index figure of both hands together like your were pinching something, and buzzing like a mosquito. Salmon eats Mosquito, Bear eats Salmon, and those treacherous little Mosquitoes eat the Bear.



Play goes like this: Each team has a huddle and secretly decides which creature they plan to be. Then both teams line up along the centerline. On the count of three, each team reveals their creature. The winners are IT and must tag the other team before they retreat to their boundary. If there is a tie, the teams must go back and pick again. You could have your groups pick back-ups in case there's a tie.

Fishy-Fishy

OBJECTIVES: To warm up physically and have fun

TIME: 10 minutes

MATERIALS: Boundary markers; set up rectangle large enough for all participants to line up on one side; the opposite side should be at least 40 feet away

This is a good game if you have a big open space and large group you want to warm up. Set boundaries that accommodate everyone standing on one side and give a little room to run. Have everyone line up on one side. Depending on the size of the group pick one or two volunteers. Explain that these are the sharks and everyone else is a little fish. Each round, the sharks make a little invitation by calling out, "Fishy-Fishy, come swim in my ocean." At this time, all the fish must cross to the other side. If a shark tags a fish, the fish becomes seaweed. Participants who become seaweed must stay where they were tagged, but can reach out and help tag fish on the next round through. Action takes a few rounds to start accumulating fields of seaweed. Eventually all the little fish get tagged.

NAME GAMES

Name games should take place in small groups of no more than 15. Any bigger than that becomes too challenging for participants to effectively learn other group members' names. All name games include an activity that is fun and encourages the use and learning of names. The activities for learning names include Name Toss, Warp Speed, Wampum, and Peek-A-Who?



Name Toss

OBJECTIVE: Learn names of group members

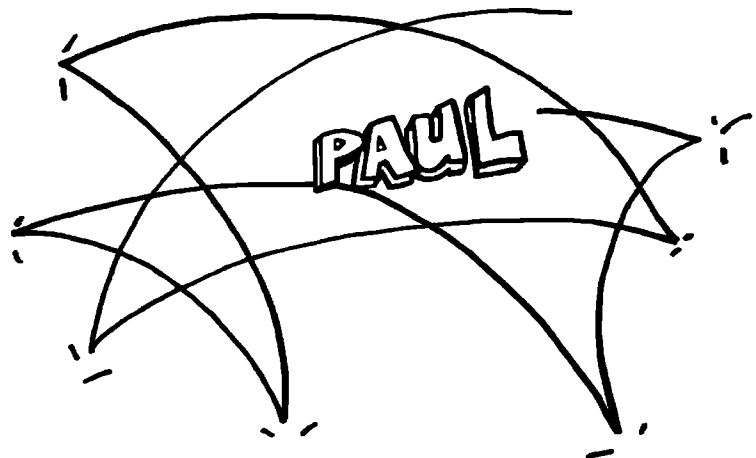
TIME: 5–10 minutes

MATERIALS: Soft throwables, koosh balls, rubber chickens, etc.

Have the group stand in a circle. Go around the circle and have everyone share names, one at a time. Be sure to note at least one name and let everyone know up front that it's OK to ask someone else's name if you don't know it. Start with one throwable, like a koosh ball. Explain that in this game you say your own name and then the name of the person you would like to throw to. This is a good point to encourage people to wait until the person you call looks at you to throw the koosh ball. When that person catches the ball, he or she says his or her own name, the name of the person he or she would like to throw to, and then throws the ball. As the action gets going, add more soft throwables to increase the chaos and fun. When enough time has passed, ask the group to stop and ask if there is anyone in the group who can name everyone. If they can, move on to the next activity.

VARIATION:

- When you catch the soft throwable, you thank the person by name who threw to you and then continue with the pattern, your name, the person you intend to throw to, and throw.
- Say your name, the catcher's name and the person you want him or her to throw it to.





Warp Speed

OBJECTIVE: To learn planning and cooperation

TIME: 10 minutes

MATERIALS: Soft throwables

This is a great activity to go into right from Name Toss. Start in a circle with participants holding their hands out, like they're ready to catch a ball. Use the same pattern from Group Juggle; say your name, then the person you want to throw the ball to, then throw it. As each person throws the ball, he or she puts his or her hands down. This indicates he or she has already gotten the ball. Do this until everyone has had the ball once. Ask them if they can remember in what order they just threw the ball. Ask them to do it again, and this time you're going to time it. Tell them the time in which they did it. Ask them if they can do it faster. Challenge them to set the "world record." Encourage the group to try any ideas that have promise. Through creative planning, it is possible to shorten the time to a split second. How? Getting there on your own is half the fun! This is a great way to let the group experience success early in the sequence.

DISCUSSION:

- How did you come up with this solution?
- Did everybody get to share his or her ideas?

Wampum

OBJECTIVE: Memorize group members' names

TIME: 5–10 minutes

MATERIALS: None

Have the group stand in a close circle, each person with one hand extended. One person is in the middle. All players should be within arm's reach of the middle person. A player in the circle volunteers to be "IT." He or she must say his or her name and the name of the person he or she is "passing" the IT to. The person he or she calls is now IT and must say his or her name and the person he or she is passing the IT to before the person in the middle slaps his or her hand. If the middle person slaps his or her hand before he or she passes on the IT, he or she is now in the middle. Enforce the flinch rule: if you pull your hand away to avoid being tagged, you're in the middle.

VARIATION:

- Can be played with a Wampum Stick (a foam tube, a.k.a. a fun noodle). Players sit in a circle with their feet out. The player in the middle whacks the feet instead of slapping the hand. Flinch rule is still in force.

Peek-A-Who?

OBJECTIVE: Memorize group members' names

TIME: 10 minutes

MATERIALS: A 6' x 4' tarp

Divide your group in two. Hold the tarp up so that it divides the two groups and they can't see each other. (Hint: it takes two people to hold up the tarp.) Have each group silently pick one person who squats down behind the tarp. When both players are ready, facing each other with the tarp between, the tarp is dropped. The player who calls out the other's name first wins. The loser goes to the other team.

VARIATIONS:

- The players sit back to back as their respective groups describe each player without saying his or her name.
- Each group picks a player who leaves the group. The other team must figure out who is missing and name him or her first.

QUICK SILLY GAMES

Quick Silly Games, or QSG's, are brief activities which can be explained quickly and increase physical activity. They are great to use in transitions, or after a particularly serious debrief. They bring the focus of the group back to the idea of having fun. Always keep a QSG or two in your proverbial "pocket," just in case. QSG's include: Everybody's IT, Flip Me the Bird, Triangle Tag, Hospital Tag, Elbow Tag, and Amoeba Tag.



Everybody's IT

OBJECTIVE: QSG

TIME: 5 minutes

MATERIALS: Boundary markers

Got a group with a little too much energy? This is a great fast-paced, frenetic game with simple rules. Mark off a playing area free from hazards, not too big though. In this game everyone is it. If you get tagged, you're out, and must sit down. If there is a tie, you're both out. You won't be sitting long, so don't worry about it. As the activity

begins to slow down, the facilitator yells out, "What's the name of the game?!" Participants reply, "Everybody's IT!" Everyone can get back up and the activity begins again. The action is so fast, it won't take the group long to get tired.

VARIATION:

- Let anyone shout out, "Everybody's IT," whenever he or she wants.

Flip Me the Bird

OBJECTIVE: QSG, encourages communication and cooperation

TIME: 5 minutes

MATERIALS: A rubber chicken

This is a tag game. One person is IT. The rubber chicken is safe. If a player is being pursued by the IT, he or she may call out, "Flip me the bird!" Whoever has the chicken must pass it to the person calling. The game encourages communication and cooperation. More chickens can be added for larger groups. This is a great game to play with middle schoolers. There are usually a few snickers when they hear the name of the game.



Triangle Tag

OBJECTIVE: QSG, demonstrates support and team work

TIME: 5 minutes

MATERIALS: None

Break your group up into groups of four. This game requires a Tagger and a Taggee. The other two players hold hands with the taggee and attempt to keep the tagger from tagging the taggee by moving their bodies to keep the two apart. The tagger may not tag across the arms of the supporters. They must tag around.

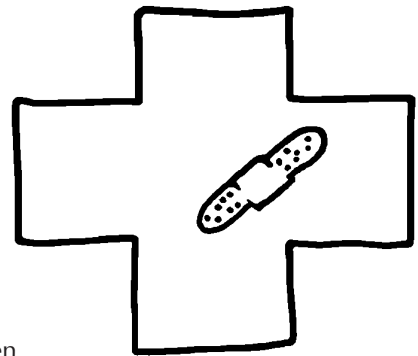
Hospital Tag

OBJECTIVE: QSG

TIME: 5 minutes

MATERIALS: Boundary markers

This tag game is similar to Everybody's IT. In Hospital Tag, when you are tagged, you must place one of your hands on the place where you've been touched. You will still have a free hand to tag. If you are tagged again, you must cover that spot with your other hand. Try tagging someone with your hip! It's not so easy. When you're tagged a third time, you are out. You can play this game to its completion or you can renew the play with the call "Everybody's It!" or "Go!" or whatever you decide on.



Elbow Tag

OBJECTIVE: QSG

TIME: 5–10 minutes

MATERIALS: Boundary markers

Start your group off in a circle. Have the group pair up and link arms. Ask for a pair to volunteer. Appoint one to be IT and the other the tagee. This is like a standard tag game until the tagee, fearful of being tagged, links arms with one member of a pair. At this point the status of "tagee" falls to the other member of the pair. Off she or he goes, avoiding the IT, until she or he is tagged or links up with another pair.

VARIATION:

- Allow the group to scatter about, in no particular order, around the playing field.
- For even more chaos, allow them to move around during game play.

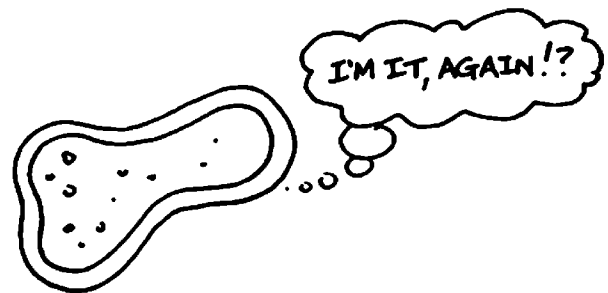
Blob Tag

OBJECTIVE: QSG

TIME: 5 minutes

MATERIALS: Boundary markers

One person is IT. When he or she tags someone, he or she links up and works cooperatively to tag the others. Action goes until everyone has been tagged and becomes part of the blob.



INITIATIVES

Initiatives are small group activities that present the group with a scenario or problem which they must solve by working together. By their nature, initiatives encourage group communication, creativity, and problem solving. Some of the initiatives we use include: Blindfold Tag, Human Knot, Dot-to-Dot Blindfold, Cup of Dreams, The Family Obstacle Course, Happy Family Island, Blind Polygon, Spotting, Grass in the Wind, and Group Lift.

Blindfold Tag

OBJECTIVES: To build clear verbal communication and have fun

TIME: 15–20 minutes

MATERIALS: Blindfolds, boundary markers

Mark off a playing area free from hazards. Have the group choose partners. Give each pair a blindfold. One group is IT. One member of the pair wears the blindfold. As with any 4-H Challenge activity, wearing a blindfold is “challenge of choice.” Participants who are uncomfortable wearing a blindfold may simply shut their eyes if that lets them feel more secure. The sighted partner gives verbal directions to his or her partner without touching him or her. When the blindfolded IT tags another blindfolded player, that group is now IT. The new IT group calls out, “We’re IT! We’re IT! We’re IT!” Only blindfolded people can touch blindfolded people. Sighted players cannot block for their blindfolded partners. Halfway through, have the partners exchange the role of being blindfolded.

DISCUSSION:

- What worked? What didn’t?
- What did you need when you were blindfolded?
- What was it like to be sighted?



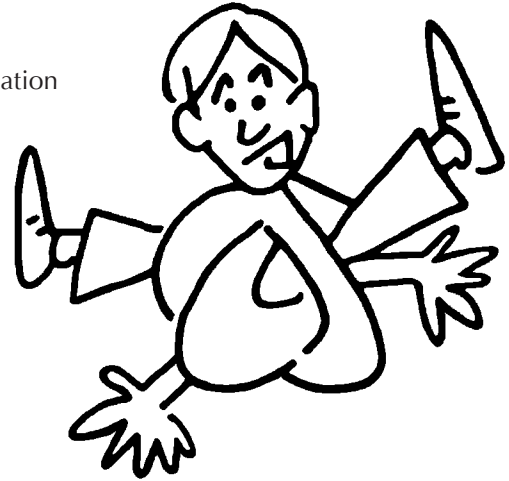
Human Knot

OBJECTIVE: To learn problem solving, cooperation, and communication

TIME: 10–20 minutes

MATERIALS: None

Have your group stand in a circle. Have each participant reach one hand in at a time and take the free hand of any other participant. Again, have each participant reach in and take another hand, this time being sure not to grab the other hand of the person he or she is holding onto already. You now have a knot! Instructions are brief. The group is to unknot itself without letting go of hands. This can be quite a challenge. Sometimes you'll end up with more than one circle. If the group gets frustrated, you can offer them the right to break a connection. But, caution them to think before they select, because you're only going to let them do it once.



VARIATION:

- Use buddy ropes, short lengths of ropes or bandanas with participants of significantly different sizes, or those who seem uncomfortable with the idea of holding hands.

DISCUSSION:

- What did it take for your family to untie this knot?
- How does your family work together to untie the “knots” of everyday life?

Dot-to-Dot Blindfold

OBJECTIVE: To learn cooperation and communication

TIME: 15–20 minutes

MATERIALS: Copies of children's dot-to-dot activities, blindfolds, pens or pencils

Break your group up into small groups of five or six. Each group gets a blindfold and a couple different dot-to-dot's. One member of the group volunteers to be the drawer, is blindfolded and given a writing implement. The rest of the group is responsible for giving directions to the blindfolded drawer for drawing the lines from one dot to the next.

DISCUSSION:

- What did your family do well when you were blindfolded?
- How could the directions you were given have been clearer?
- When is it important for your family to communicate clearly?

Cup of Dreams

OBJECTIVE: To learn planning, cooperation and communication; to share hopes and dreams for participant's families

TIME: 30–40 minutes

MATERIALS: Cup of Dreams is an adaptation of the activity Nitro Transfer. The props include a “nitro kit” which consists of two cans, one smaller than the other, and a small bungee loop (sized to fit over the small can) with six hand lines to “operate the device.” Try to provide a kit for every 12 participants. In this adaptation, use individually wrapped candy, such as caramels or chocolate kisses, at least one per participant, and blindfolds.

PROCEDURES: Begin the activity in a circle; give each individual the opportunity to share a dream he or she has for his or her family. As they share their dreams, they are given a candy to place in the can to represent those dreams. When each participant has had a chance to share a dream, the real action begins. Introduce the device as the “dream catcher,” and explain the rules for its use. For each hand line, there is one blindfolded individual who is allowed to touch and manipulate that hand line. No sighted participants may touch the lines. They are only permitted to give directions. The essence of the activity is to get the bungee loop over the small can full of candy, transport it to the larger can and dump the contents into that can. Twelve participants is optimal group size.

VARIATIONS:

- Participants must hold on at the end of the line.
- Place boundaries around each can that may not be crossed by any body parts, only the bungee device.
- After doing it once, switch roles (blinded and sighted), and do it again.

DISCUSSION:

- What was it like to be blindfolded in the activity? What did your sighted group members do that was helpful?
- What was it like to be sighted, yet not able to touch the “dream catcher?”



Family Obstacle Course

OBJECTIVE: To identify obstacles and supports to achieving family goals; to build clear verbal communication and trust

TIME: 35–45 minutes

MATERIALS: Blindfolds, objects for building the obstacle course (soft throwables, etc.), 3 x 5 index cards.

Often, the activities chosen for Family Night Out! raise issues of communication, support, and family strengths. One such activity is the Family Obstacle Course. The activity involves having a blindfolded family member verbally led through a small area covered with assorted soft objects (koosh balls, etc.).

As the group gathers near the obstacle course, whose boundary is laid out by ropes or other boundary markers, each family member is asked to pick an object and identify an obstacle they experience in protecting their children from substance abuse or other risky activities, for example, “peer pressure.” The object is then placed within the boundaries of the obstacle course. Each participant gets an opportunity to identify an obstacle and place an object. Then, ask for examples of things that help keep children safe, which could be anything from family activities to friends, church, etc. Offer index cards on which to write their “support.” Place the cards on the obstacle course as well.

Now pair up family members. In the initial activity, the child will wear a blindfold as the parent gives verbal directions to the child crossing the obstacle course. The blindfolded child must navigate through the course without stepping on the obstacles. If he or she does, he or she must take two steps back, or for a higher challenge level, start over. However, if the child is guided to an index card, he or she may pick it up and use it as a safety card if he or she does step on an obstacle, protecting him or her from the consequences. If time allows, parents and children switch roles and navigate the obstacle course again. This is a great opportunity to create perspective and topics for debriefing. After all participants are finished crossing the course, bring the group back together to discuss their experiences.

VARIATION:

- Blindfolded participant may ask questions which can only be answered with a “yes” or “no” to be guided through the course. This is a particularly powerful intervention to use with blindfolded teens and their parents.

DISCUSSION:

- What were some of the obstacles you identified?
- What were some of the supports you used to keep you safe?
- What supports can you use to keep your family safe from risky behaviors?



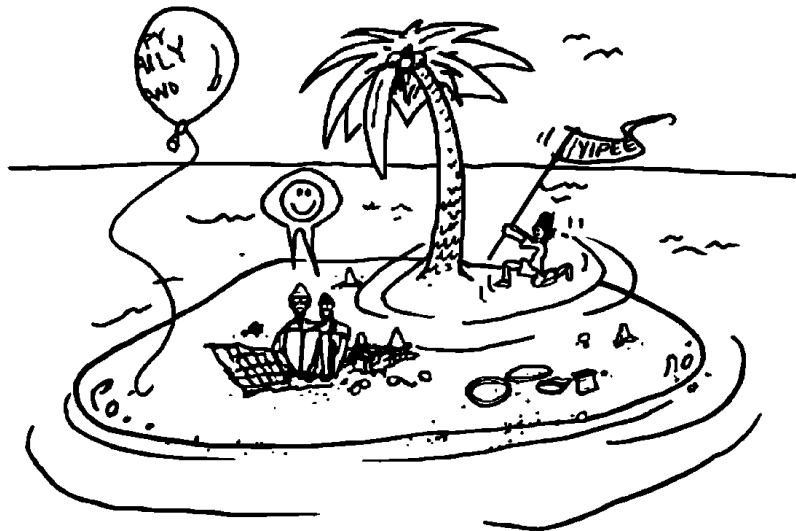
Happy Family Island

OBJECTIVES: Families work together and explore the strengths that help them through conflicts

TIME: 30–40 minutes

MATERIALS: One spot marker or carpet square per participant; cones or other materials to mark boundary lines, two parallel lines approximately 30' to 40' apart

Every family encounters conflict now and then. This activity is based on Rohnke's Stepping Stones, 1994, and addresses the strengths and supports families use to "navigate" through conflict.



To begin have all the participants on one side of one of the boundary lines. Explain that this is the island of "everyday life." The space in between the two boundary lines is called the "sea" or "muck" of conflict. Beyond the far boundary is "Happy Family Island." If anyone steps into the muck of conflict he or she will get stuck and have to go back to the island of everyday life. Luckily each participant has a spot marker or carpet square which represents a support that can help him or her get through conflict. Only these supports may make contact with the muck without getting stuck. Have each family member think of a strength or support which helps his or her own family get through conflicts. Having participants think of these supports can be a helpful way of "front-loading" the activity, essentially getting participants to reflect before the debrief.

Participants make their way across the muck by working together and sharing supports. The group has reached its goal when all participants have arrived safely at Happy Family Island.

VARIATION:

- The support (spot marker or carpet square) cannot lose human contact. If it does lose contact it will disappear.
- Stepping in the muck causes one to become blind (use blindfolds) or lose use of the hand or foot which made contact with "the muck."

DISCUSSION:

- What supports does your family use to get through conflict?
- In what ways did you share your supports to get through the sea of conflict?

Blind Polygon

OBJECTIVES: To learn planning, cooperation, and support; to increase awareness of one's behavior and sense of group belonging

TIME: 20–30 minutes

MATERIALS: Rope, blindfolds

Have the group form a circle with participants evenly spaced around the rope. Have them put on the blindfolds and pick up the rope. Ask them to form a perfect square, a triangle, or a pentagon. Everyone must have one hand on the rope at all times.

VARIATIONS:

- Allow participants to see, but not talk.
- Mix up who can see with who can talk.

DISCUSSION:

- How did being sightless (or mute) affect the way you participated?
- What role did you play (leader, follower, optimist, helper, etc.)?
- Were you comfortable with your role in this activity?

Spotting

OBJECTIVE: To learn to keep yourself and others safe

TIME: 30 minutes

PROCEDURES: Before facilitating support exercises (Spotting, Grass in the Wind, and Group Lift), individuals should seek training from a qualified 4-H Challenge professional. The first thing one learns in spotting is respect for the hard ground and the short time it takes a person to hit it if he or she falls. The second thing is feeling responsible to protect any participant from harm.

The physical skills necessary for spotting are simple. Develop a firm, flexible stance by placing one foot in front and one foot behind you with your feet about shoulder-width apart. Focus your eyes and body upward, toward the climber. Position your hands about shoulder height, facing up, palms open. Your hands would grab or hold up and support a falling climber.

The main purpose of spotting is to protect the head, neck, and shoulders of a climber. One spotter might not be able to catch or stop a falling climber; however, he or she can slow the fall and prevent serious injury. Several spotters can form a solid support and completely stop a fall. Spot in groups to provide the most support.

During an intentional fall while practicing spotting, the faller keeps his or her feet together and the body stiff. Hands should be twisted and clasped and arms folded across the chest.

1. Have participants divide into groups of two or three. One or two spotters position themselves in spotter's stance behind the faller. The faller stands just a foot or two in front of the spotter(s) in falling position. When spotter(s) and faller are ready, the faller falls back into the hands of the spotter(s). Experiment with the distance between partners, and have them get a real sense of how much force spotters can support. Caution them to keep the falling person's head from hitting the ground.



2. The command sequence of the exercise is:

Faller: "My name is _____ and I choose to do this activity. Will you support me?"

Spotter: "Yes." Faller: "Ready to fall." Spotter: "Fall away." Faller: "Falling." (This command sequence may vary according to site.)

For every person off the ground, a minimum of two spotters is required, unless otherwise directed. If at any time a participant's head will be lower than the waist, you must approve the group's safety plan.

Grass in the Wind

OBJECTIVES: To practice spotting, develop group support, increase self-confidence, and overcome fear

TIME: 15–30 minutes

GROUP SIZE: At least 6 people

PROCEDURES:

1. Ask the group to form a tight circle with one person in the center. The circle must be close enough to the center person so that someone can catch him or her.
2. When everyone is in the spotting position the person in the center goes through the command sequence, then falls, with the entire body stiff, into the hands of the other members. Have the spotters move the faller around the circle, speaking reassuringly to the faller.
3. Take turns doing this activity until everyone has had a turn. This activity can create a tone of warmth and caring.

DISCUSSION:

- Ask members how it felt to be in the center.
- Did they receive support from the group?
- How does your family show support at home?

Group Lift

OBJECTIVES: To increase group skills in lifting and moving bodies safely

TIME: 30–40 minutes

GROUP SIZE: At least 9 people

There are a number of ways to do this activity safely. Here is one of them.

PROCEDURES: Ask the group to stand shoulder to shoulder in two lines of at least four people on each side, facing each other. Choose someone to be the faller. This person stands completely stiff throughout the activity. Designate someone to protect and cushion the head and neck.

Following the command sequence, the liftee falls and the spotters catch and lift the person. Don't let participants lift with their backs, only their legs. Lifters should always make controlled movements until the liftee is brought safely back to the ground.

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

Offer at least one activity every program that allows each individual family to work together and explore what makes them special. These activities are more craft or hands-on project oriented than the group initiatives, and allow families more creative expression. These activities include: Balloon Tower, Family Strength Protector, and Magic Sunglasses.

Balloon Tower

OBJECTIVES: Families work together, explore strengths and what makes their family special

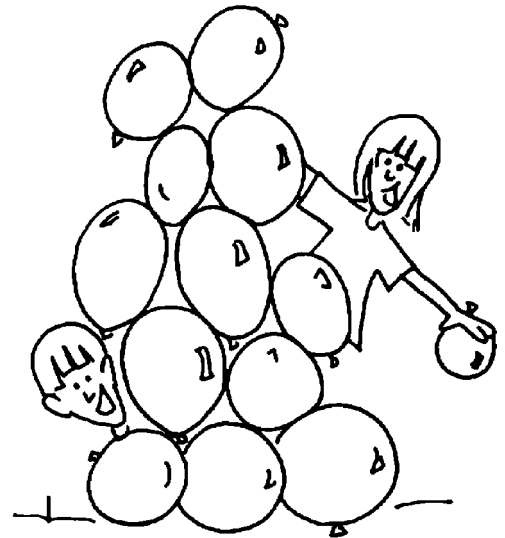
TIME: 30–40 minutes

MATERIALS: It requires a supply of balloons (30 per family, a variety of colors is nice), a roll of scotch or masking tape, and one marker per family

Balloon Tower is a hands-on project for families which focuses on family strengths and uniquenesses. Distribute the supplies to families as you give instructions to begin blowing up balloons. Each family member should come up with something that makes his or her family strong, or an activity he or she enjoys doing with his or her family. Each member writes the family strength he or she thought up on an inflated balloon. Instruct each family to work together to build a family tower by blowing up the balloons and using the tape provided. A nice minimum height requirement is taller than the shortest family member. Give the group 15 to 20 minutes to work together. This is a good time to circulate, observing families working together. Look for interactions you can discuss during debriefing.

DISCUSSION:

- What did you write on your balloons?
- How did you build your tower together?
- How did you decide how to build it?



Magic Sunglasses

OBJECTIVE: To model and practice appropriate compliment giving

TIME: 10–15 minutes

MATERIALS: Plastic sunglasses (activity can be done with a single pair, though we often give each person a pair to wear during the activity)

Magic Sunglasses is an activity that models appropriate compliment giving and provides skill building practice. This activity often appeals to younger children. Bring a large bag of plastic sunglasses so everyone can wear a pair.

The progression is simple. One person has the “magic sunglasses,” and the group chants “Sunglasses, Sunglasses, Who do you see?” The person with the sunglasses turns to his or her left/right and says, “I see _____ looking at me, and he/she (fill in with a compliment, e.g., has a nice smile, is always so positive, etc.).” The sunglasses are passed to the participant who has just been complimented, and the pattern continues until everyone has given and received a compliment.



The Family Strengths Protector, a.k.a. the Great Egg Drop (Gerstein, 1999)

OBJECTIVES: To emphasize family strengths, the means to protect the family's strengths, and the effect stress has on the family system

MATERIALS: Each family group needs crayons, a raw egg, 25 straws, about 35" of masking tape, an 8' or taller step ladder, and if indoors, a drop cloth to catch eggs.

Eggs and crayons are distributed to each family. Introduce the activity as the Family Strengths Protector. As a group, name some of the things that make your family special and would not want to lose. Make sure every member gets a chance to speak. Have one or more members write down the answers on the egg using the crayons.

Give each family 25 straws and 35" of tape. Direct each family to make a protective device for the egg that will protect it from sudden shock and stress. You will be dropping each egg from the air to the ground in its carrier.

Give families 20–30 minutes to complete the task. While they work, have them think about what things in the real world protect their family's uniqueness.

After 20 minutes, or when all groups are finished, have them gather around the launching area (ladder and drop cloth or table and drop cloth). It is best to have a graduated height system to give the family choices about how high they will go in order to drop their egg. As long as the egg stays intact, they may try a higher level. You may choose to front load this as a metaphor for outside stress. Invite them to think about how much stress they are willing to put on their family's uniqueness.

After every family has completed the exercise (make sure people applaud for each group no matter what the outcome—the applause is for participation not results), gather the entire group in a circle and debrief.

DISCUSSION:

- What are some of the special characteristics you identified?
- You protected your eggs with straws and tape. What kinds of things can be used to keep your family's strengths intact during times of stress?
- What can you do if your family's specialness becomes stressed or threatened by outside pressures?
- How can you prevent too much stress from occurring in your family?

SAMPLE SEQUENCES

“CARING FOR EACH OTHER”

Night 1: Family Strengths

- Yurt Rope/Intro/FVC
- Common Ground
- Name Toss/Warp Speed
- Happy Family Island (Stepping Stones)
- QSG
- Family Balloon Tower
- Final Debrief
- Yurt Rope

Night 2: Communication and Problem Solving

- Yurt Rope
- Salmon-Bear-Mosquito
- Peek-a-Who
- Human Knot w/buddy ropes
- QSG
- Family Obstacle Course
- Parachute /Final Debrief

Night 3: Support and Social Connectedness

- Yurt Rope
- Sunshine/clouds
- Family Hog Call
- Magic Sunglasses
- Valentines
- Nurturing Spoons
- QSG
- Family Candle Sculpture
- Debrief
- Yurt Rope

RESOURCES

Washington State 4-H Challenge Program

WSU Puyallup Research and Extension Center
7612 Pioneer Way E.
Puyallup, WA 98371
(253) 445-4500

<http://4hchallenge.wsu.edu>

Project Adventure, Inc.

P.O. Box 100	P.O. Box 14171
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Fax (978) 468-7605	Fax (503) 236-6765

<http://www.pa.org>

Association for Experiential Education

2305 Canyon Boulevard, Suite #100
Boulder, CO 80302
(303) 440-8844
Fax (303) 440-9581

<http://www.aee.org>

The Family Night Out! Video

Produced by WSU Extension, includes interviews with key program staff who describe the program to the viewing audience and present scenes from an actual community based Family Night Out! program. You will see real families participating in 4-H Portable Challenge activities. This video is a great tool for building enthusiasm for sponsoring a Family Night Out! event in your community. 20 minutes. DVD109. \$25.00

Order video from:

Bulletin Office
Extension
Cooper Publications Building
P.O. Box 645912
Washington State University
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(509) 335-2857 or 1-800-723-1763

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