Smart Games for Smarter Learning

M2W

Low Resource, Rapid Events

Quick training, low resource ideas for time-pressed teams

As a result of participating in this activity, learners will:

1. Collaborate as a team to build trust and optimize team performance.
2. Organize the team around each member's successful completion of a common goal or pathway.
3. Support team members who struggle with tasks essential to success.
4. Reflect on the function of their team and how they might improve it.

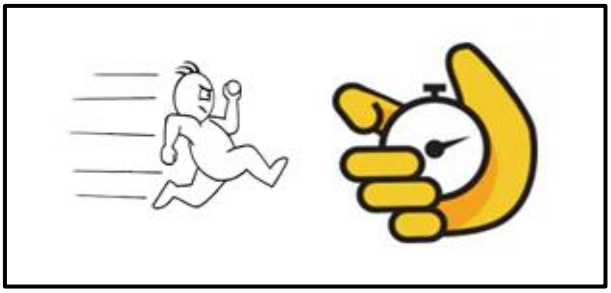


Image of a cartoon person running and a hand holding a stop watch

Team training activities do not require a large budget and can be done in just a few minutes, such as in conjunction with a team meeting. These challenge activities are broad metaphors for how teams work, and can be used to raise team member skills and awareness.

Materials:

Common everyday objects

Instructions

1. Using common objects, create challenges such as those listed below, which require little to no previous skill. Divide teams into smaller groups if you want to foster competition, or keep your team together as a unit and have them run against a timer/clock.
2. Retain time at the end of your activity to ask questions such as those suggested in the Debrief Questions column below. Debriefing an activity helps participants to find meaning and learning in the activity, and transfer that to their real-life situations.
3. Many activities can be used to discover or teach multiple issues. They have the potential to provoke multiple kinds of discussion. Utilize the metaphors of these activities to target a specific team issue. Generally, limit yourself to attempting to teach/train/raise awareness of one or two issues at a time.
4. By doing these sorts of activities on a regular basis, you begin to bring reflection and conversation about team function into your local culture. We suggest doing them with minimal introduction at the beginning of a meeting, followed by the debrief.
5. In our culture, we tend to focus on individual performance, yet on a collaborative team, members win or lose as a unit. Activities can reinforce team cohesiveness and elevate common goals.

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Lesson	Debrief Questions	Suggested Topics to Debrief	You will need:
Coin Stacks: For this activity, you use a small dish of coins of various sizes. The task is for each team member in sequence to stack coins in order of size. You will determine whether they need to be in ascending or descending order (or may include stacking them according to a pattern and creating a minitower of coins. The more complex the pattern, the higher the cognitive load. Consider creating simple cards that list coins in various order, and have team members draw a card(s) to determine their task. Each team member must accomplish this task individually before the team's task is complete.	1. What went well? 2. What struggles presented themselves for the team members? For the team as a whole? 3. What is the best way for team members support one another in times of stress? 4. How effective is it for team members to encourage one another on your team? 5. Some teams formulate "agreements" about expectations when working together as a team. What are the formal or informal agreements under which your team functions? List them to clarify expectations across the team.	Communication Mutual Support/ Supporting team members Coaching/Encouragement skills Situation Monitoring / Big picture thinking Collaboration Team agreements/values/rules	--A small bowl, cup, or other container into which you place the coins. Between each participant, shake the container to mix up coins. --A pocket full of coins. Consider borrowing them from contributions made for coffee, for example. --You may want to change up this activity by providing cards that list the order in which the coins must be stacked.
Blind Trust: Sometimes team members are working at a disadvantage, such as lack of knowledge or experience, anxiety, or distractions. Team members must support that person to success. In this version, one or more team members have been blindfolded and they require help to get through the task. You can increase difficulty and challenge in this task by utilizing colored pieces (such as M&Ms) that feel the same to the blindfolded participant. Sighted participants must help them find the correct pieces to complete the task.	Sighted players: 1. How did team members encourage you (if at all) to complete your required part of the challenge? 2. How did players who were blindfolded experience being totally dependent on other players for directions? 3. What should teams do when they realize that one or more members may be struggling? 4. On your team, are there more helpful and less helpful ways to communicate with struggling team members? What are they?	Trust building Communication skills under stress Understanding team strengths and challenges Supporting struggling team members Closed loop communications/check backs	--Remember that this task produces vulnerability for the person who is blindfolded. You may have resistance from some participants. --A variant on this would be to use colored candies, gummy worms, etc. and have participants sort by color. Sighted people will have to direct the blindfolded in selecting colored pieces, which must be laid out in a predetermined order.
Straw Towers: Utilizing materials provided to them, such as drinking straws or coffee stirrers with an 8" piece of tape (masking or transparent), and a small piece of soft candy, gum, or a grape, the task within the allotted time is to construct the tallest tower possible, standing independently of other supports. It must have the candy, gum, or grape at its highest point. This may be competitive between/among teams, or may be a single team against a timer. For the latter, you will want to set a standard for success, such as height.	1. What kinds of communication strategies were used? 2. How did you determine leadership in the design of your tower? 3. If your design was not utilized, how did it feel to make a suggestion that did not end up in the final design? 4. In your work, what are the complex tasks that require team members to collaborate to reach a solution? What are the barriers you experience in those kinds of events?	Leadership Communication Collaboration Mutual support Respect Civility Valuing the ideas of others	--This activity can be done on a variety of scales. You will need items such as drinking straws, coffee stirrers, tongue depressors, etc. to construct the tower. --Cellophane or masking tape, approximately 8" pieces. --A weight for the top of the tower. This should be soft enough to be pierced by the building materials.

For additional information about Debriefing, please refer to the ***Rosalind Franklin University of Medicine and Science Smart Games for Smarter Learning Debriefing Guide Supplement.***

References:

Department of Health and Human Services, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, & Department of Defense. (Year of publication/last update). *TeamSTEPPS: Team Strategies and Tools to Enhance Performance and Patient Safety.* [Description of material, e.g., Curriculum, Toolkit, Webpage]. Retrieved from https://www.ahrq.gov/teamstepps-program/index.html

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