Smart Games for Smarter Learning

UNCOORDINATED TEAMS

Teams in the Balance: Clinical

Exploring the delicate balance of team members' efforts

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

1. Collaborate as a team to complete a simple task, observing the effects their contributions.
2. Discover an effective strategy to help their team succeed.
3. Implement that strategy through careful self and situation monitoring.



Image: 3D digital illustration of a brass three-pan balance scale weighing three stylized human peg figures in purple, red, and yellow

Team members must constantly evaluate the effects of their contributions to team success, knowing when to give more, and when to pull back. This simple activity reminds players of the attention needed by team members.

Materials:

lightweight rod, such as an unfolding, lightweight tent pole

Instructions

1. Assemble students into teams of 5-6 using some method to ensure diversity/interprofessionalism on each team.
2. Provide each team with a lightweight rod, such as an unfolding, lightweight tent pole. All team members extend the index finger of both hands, and the pole is balanced on them at a height of approximately 45-55" from the floor. Team members are instructed that their task is simply to collaboratively lower the pole to the floor. All team members must remain in contact with the pole just as they are currently, until the pole is within 2" of the floor. They may then, and only then, remove their hands.
3. If the pole is dropped or team members become disconnected, the activity must be reset at the original height, with the team starting again.
4. The activity may have the risk elevated by placing a time limit on it, prohibiting conversation, and/or done blindfolded.

Note: You can increase the likelihood of this demonstration succeeding by holding the rod in the middle while team embers take their positions. Once everyone is in place, as you explain the activity, keep slight downward pressure on the rod. The initial result once you start the task is that the rod will actually go up as members attempt to keep their fingers connected to the rod. This is sometimes referred to as a "helium stick" for that reason.

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Lesson	Debrief Questions	Clinical Application	Bloom's Taxonomy	TeamSTEPPS™ Domain
Team Membership: In their individual attempt to be supportive of the team task, and wishing to be fully contributing, team members may lose sight of how their contribution may actually be working against team success. Intention to help does not always mean that team members are contributing to success.	1. What went well? 2. What were the challenges for team members in completing this simple task? 3. How did you balance your own responsibilities (keeping your finger on the pole) with the task assigned, especially given that they sometimes seemed to be in opposition to one another?	1. How do team members on a healthcare team determine whether it is time for them to contribute to what is going on, or not? 2. When two or more providers have the same or similar skill sets, how does the team determine who will provide the service?	Analyze / Apply Evaluate / Create	Mutual Support Communication Leadership
Communication and Leadership: Some tasks are simple, but require leaders to encourage rather than command to achieve success. In this variation, teams designate one leader and are prompted to pay specific attention to the instructions they receive.	Leaders: 1. Given the delicate nature of this task, what was your communication strategy to achieve team success? 2. How did you explain what team members should be doing? Team members: 1. How might the team leader have helped you more? 2. If your team had to reset the pole, how were subsequent efforts different from previous ones for both leaders and team members?	1. How can leadership on a healthcare team manage the strong needs and personalities of team members when it is clear that they may actually be working against one another? 2. How would you address a team member whose enthusiasm may mean that they are actually getting in the way of optimized team function (they are trying too hard)?	Analyze / Apply Evaluate / Create	Communication Leadership
Situation Monitoring/Mutual Support: Striking a balance between your own efforts and the team's needs can be challenging. Finding ways to support others as they complete a task to which you may not be able to contribute or help is not easy. In this version, the task is completed with no speaking unless the team is in the midst of resetting the pole after a failed attempt.	1. Rather than this task allowing you speak to another team member to provide support; you would have needed to compensate for their work by changing your own behaviors. What did you do when you saw other team members struggle with this task? 2. If you had difficulty with this task, what would have been helpful to you in terms of what other team members did or did not do?	In patient care, there must be a delicate balance among team members. That balance can be elusive because you can't identify an imbalance until something is going wrong. 1. List factors you need to monitor in order to help your team succeed. 2. What kinds of self-management issues present themselves when working on teams?	Analyze / Apply Evaluate / Create	Communication Situation Monitoring Mutual Support

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

Interprofessional Education Collaborative. (2023). *IPEC Core Competencies for Interprofessional Collaborative Practice: Version 3*. Interprofessional Education Collaborative. https://www.ipecollaborative.org/assets/core-competencies/IPEC_Core_Competencies_Version_3_2023.pdf

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