



Team building is usually undertaken with groups of people who are coming together for the first time or who have little experience of working together. Exercises should begin at a basic level for people who have not engaged in team building before, whether they are a new team or a group that has been together for some time. Exercises should be quite straightforward and, if at all possible, achievable. A group or team who feel that they have 'failed' to achieve an exercise can become very demoralised.

The purpose of team building is to develop relationships between individual members of a group and to foster co-operative working practices. Team building is excellent for building trust between group members. It should lay a solid foundation for future work. It is important to ensure that all group members participate in team building exercises, otherwise those who have missed the experience can feel isolated from the rest of the group. Team building should be highly participative and fun. This does not necessarily mean physical exercises, as these may not be suitable for all group members.

It should also be noted that there are limitations to undertaking team building exercises. Team building is an ongoing process fostering relationships and, as such, exercises can only contribute so much. Team building exercises should never be undertaken on a one off basis, but as part of a rolling programme of events, for example, a slot devoted to team building at regular group training sessions or meetings.

The person facilitating the exercises (facilitator) should always be aware of and sensitive to issues that can impact on the team building process, for example:

- A clash of personalities between individuals

- An imbalance of power within the group or power struggles between group members
- Entrenched differences of opinion between group members

These and any other such issues that may present themselves need to be addressed and explored honestly by the facilitator to enable progress to be made on team building.

Preparation for Team Building

Large Group Discussion - There should be a general discussion on what people feel the purpose of team building is and what they hope it will achieve for their group.

Fears and Expectations - Group members should have the opportunity to write their own thoughts on flipchart sheets headed fears and expectations. Everyone should be encouraged to be honest about their worries in relation to team building and what they hope to gain from the experience. When everyone has had a chance to record their views, the facilitator can identify common themes.

Group Agreement - A positive way for group members to address fears identified in the previous exercise is to draw up a group agreement. This should be drawn up and agreed to by all group members. Any group member can make suggestions, however consensus to accept the suggestion/s must be achieved before the group agreement is finalised. An example of a typical group agreement is given below but each group must come up with its own individual agreement. This can include suggestions made by the facilitator, provided they meet with the agreement of group members.

Team Building Exercises

Detailed below are just three basic team building exercises. There are many team building exercises, however a key aspect of team building is not the exercise in itself but the discussion that people have

Group Agreement

Start and finish all sessions on time.

Listen to all contributions and don't interrupt other people.

Respect everyone in the group as individuals and respect their views.

Everything that is said in the group is confidential and should not be discussed outside the group.

about their experience of it. When a team building exercise has been completed, group members should discuss the following questions in a group setting

- What happened during that exercise?
- Who talked/took part the most and why?
- Who didn't talk/take part and why?
- Who took a leadership role and why?
- What have we learnt from this exercise about how we work together as a team?
- Based on what we have learnt, how can we now work more effectively as a team?
- What did it feel like to have to work as a team/trust another person in the team?

The facilitator should always observe team building exercises and give appropriate feedback in a constructive manner.



The Egg

Allow 20 minutes

You will require (per team):-

- One uncooked egg*
- Four short pieces of string*
- Four short pieces of sellotape*
- 1½ sheets of A4 paper*

Group members will also require access to a safe place overlooking a drop of approximately ten to fifteen feet (onto a hard surface). It is best if this is outdoors, for example, the top of a fire escape or from a first floor window.

The group is asked to work in small teams of four or five people (depending on the overall number). Each team is given one egg (not cooked), four short pieces of string, four short pieces of sellotape plus one a half sheets of A4 paper. The task is for each team to have one member drop the egg from a height of ten/fifteen foot onto a hard surface, without breaking it.

Team members should be given ten minutes to prepare for their launch and are only permitted to use the materials they have been given to assist in achieving the task. At the end of the ten minutes allotted each team is, separately, given the countdown to launch their egg. Be prepared – this can be messy, but it is possible!

Solutions to this exercise include:-

- Making a parachute with the paper and attaching the egg via the string. Then parachute the egg to the ground.
- Making a cone with the paper and taping the egg to the top of the cone. The cone then takes the impact when the egg is dropped.

These solutions can be very effective but be warned that they don't always work!

Blindfold Pairs

Allow 20 minutes

You will require:-

- Blindfolds (one per pair)*
- Lots of rope*
- Objects to construct the obstacle course. Indoors this will be safe, using stable items of furniture but outside use trees and other natural resources.*

The facilitator prepares a simple obstacle course in advance of the session. Ensure participants are not exposed to danger, for example, by having to climb too high. Participants are in pairs with the facilitator in a supervisory capacity. One person in each pair is blindfolded and their partner then leads them around the obstacle course without speaking. Pre arranged signals may be used, for example, touching or tapping the blindfolded person to signify left, right, up, down, etc.

The facilitator then changes the layout of the obstacle course. Partners then change places and repeat the activity on an altered obstacle course.

Find Your Partner

Allow 10 minutes

You will require:-

- Blindfolds for each group member*

Participants are in pairs. Each pair is given the name of a farmyard animal/pet. All participants are blindfolded and the facilitator separates the pairs. When all participants have been moved around the hall each person has to find their partner by making the noise of their animal/pet.

This activity can be adapted to include any significant signal agreed between the pair, for example, a song, item of clothing or jewellery.

For further exercises which promote co-operation/team building refer to:-

Training for Transformation Volume 2,
A Handbook for Community Workers
By Anne Hope and Sally Timmel,
Illustrated by Chris Hodzi, Mambo
Press, 1992 Pages 80-84

Facilitative Leadership, Tapping the
Power of Participation
Interaction Associates 1997
Sections 2.3, 2.4, 7.3