

Building Dynamic Groups



Do Your Best

Objective: To help participants discover how well they communicate.

Materials: Sugar Cubes
Exercise Handout

Time: 20 minutes

Procedure: Divide the participants into groups of two. Have the groups determine who will be the committee leader and who will be the committee member. Give the committee leader the sugar cubes and exercise handout. Tell the committee leader to read each exercise's directions before beginning each activity.

Exercise #1

1. Read the following instructions to your committee member. "Your job is to stack as many blocks as you can in one minute. Each sugar cube will be stacked one on top of the other in a single, vertical column. How you stack the sugar cubes is up to you. If the column topples and time remains, you may rebuild. Your score is the number of sugar cubes standing in a column when I call time. Your minimum score is always one."
2. Do not specify or suggest how many sugar cubes might be stacked. Simply say, "Do your best."
3. Time the exercise as accurately as possible. (1 minute)
4. When the exercise is finished, have the committee member count the number of sugar cubes standing.
5. Do not comment (verbally or nonverbally) in any way on your committee member's results. If asked directly, avoid the question.

Discussion Questions:

1. Was this exercise easy or hard?
2. How did it feel to not have any positive feedback or encouragement?
3. How did it feel to not have any say in the goal setting?
4. How is this similar to "real life" situations? How does this make you feel?

Exercise #2

1. This time you set the goal (number of sugar cubes to be stacked) based on the number actually stacked in Exercise #1. If the total was fewer than 10 sugar cubes, then set the goal at 10. Do not allow any committee member participation in setting the goal for Exercise #2. Become autocratic, if necessary. Remember, the goal should be exactly what was stacked in #1, with 10 being the minimum.
2. Allow 1 minute for the exercise.
3. Do not comment (verbally or nonverbally) in any way on your committee member's results. If asked directly, avoid the question.

Discussion Questions:

1. Was this exercise easy or hard?
2. How did it feel to not have any positive feedback or encouragement?
3. How did it feel to not have any say in the goal setting?
4. How is this similar to "real life" situations? How does this make you feel?

Exercise #3

1. Repeat Exercise #2, but this time set the goal 20% higher than actually achieved in Exercise #2. If the result was fewer than 10 sugar cubes, then set the goal at 12. Do not allow any committee member input on the new goal.
2. Allow 1 minute for the exercise.
3. Do not comment (verbally or nonverbally) in any way on your committee member's results. If asked directly, avoid the question.

Discussion Questions:

1. Was this exercise easy or hard?
2. How did it feel to not have any positive feedback or encouragement?
3. How did it feel to not have any say in the goal setting?
4. How is this similar to "real life" situations? How does this make you feel?

Exercise #4

1. Repeat exercise, but this time increase it by another 20% if the committee member achieved his/her goal. If fewer than 10 sugar cubes were stacked, the new goal should be 15.
2. This time, if the goal is not met, provide negative feedback. Say something such as; "You could have done it if you had tried a little harder." If the goal is met, say nothing.
3. Allow 1 minute for this exercise.

Discussion Questions:

1. Was this exercise easy or hard?
2. How did it feel to not have any positive feedback or encouragement?
3. How did it feel to not have any say in the goal setting?
4. As the committee leader, was it difficult to only offer negative feedback?
5. How is this similar to "real life" situations? How does this make you feel?

Exercise #5

1. Repeat exercise, but this time increase it by another 20% if the committee member achieved his/her goal. If fewer than 10 sugar cubes were stacked, the new goal should be 15.
2. No matter what the results, say nothing. Do not repeat the negative feedback of the previous exercise.
3. Allow 1 minute for this exercise.

Discussion Questions:

1. Was this exercise easy or hard?
2. How did it feel to not have any positive feedback or encouragement?
3. How did it feel to not have any say in the goal setting?
4. How is this similar to "real life" situations? How does this make you feel?

Exercise #6

1. Repeat exercise. Set the same goal as was set in Exercise #5. Do not increase the goal if the committee member stacked the number of sugar cubes that you requested. If fewer than 10 sugar cubes were stacked, keep the goal at 15.
2. This time, however, make a substantial change in your feedback practices, if the goal was met. Praise the committee member by saying, "great job" or "I knew you could do it." If the goal was not met, say and do nothing, keeping the negative impact of this to a minimum.
3. Allow 1 minute for this exercise.

Discussion Questions:

1. Was this exercise easy or hard?
2. How did it feel to be able to offer positive feedback or encouragement?
3. How did it feel to not have any say in the goal setting?
4. As the committee leader, was it difficult to only offer negative feedback?
5. How is this similar to "real life" situations? How does this make you feel?

Exercise #7

1. Repeat the exercise. To establish the goal this time, ask the committee member for his/her input. Say, "You've had some experience in stacking sugar cubes now, what do you think the goal should be?" As the committee leader you are to provide your insight and help in establishing the goal; this is to be a shared, participative process. Do not set the goal until you have mutually agreed on the number to be stacked.
2. If the goal is reached, praise the committee member as in the last exercise. If not, say nothing.
3. Allow 1 minute for this exercise.

Discussion Questions:

1. Was this exercise easy or hard?
2. How did it feel to have positive feedback or encouragement?
3. How did it feel to both have a say in the goal setting?
4. How is this similar to "real life" situations? How does this make you feel?

Exercise #8

1. Do Exercise #8 exactly as #7 was performed: ask for input; jointly establish the goal; and provide positive feedback if the goal is achieved. The purpose of this exercise is to establish the general conditions of two-way communication.
2. Allow 1 minute for this exercise.

Discussion Questions:

1. Was this exercise easy or hard?
2. How did it feel to have positive feedback or encouragement?
3. How did it feel to have a say in the goal setting?
4. How can we increase two-way communication within our group?
5. How is this similar to "real life" situations? How does this make you feel?

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Do Your Best Exercises Handout for Participants

(Read the directions for each exercise before beginning)

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2. Do not specify or suggest how many sugar cubes might be stacked. Simply say, "Do your best."
3. Time the exercise as accurately as possible. (1 minute)
4. When the exercise is finished, have the committee member count the number of sugar cubes standing.
5. Do not comment (verbally or nonverbally) in any way on your committee member's results. If asked directly, avoid the question.

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1. This time you set the goal (number of sugar cubes to be stacked) based on the number actually stacked in Exercise #1. If the total was fewer than 10 sugar cubes, then set the goal at 10. Do not allow any committee member participation in setting the goal for Exercise #2. Become autocratic, if necessary. Remember, the goal should be exactly what was stacked in #1, with 10 being the minimum.
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3. Allow 1 minute for this exercise.

Exercise #5

1. Repeat exercise, but this time increase it by another 20% if the committee member achieved his/her goal. If fewer than 10 sugar cubes were stacked, the new goal should be 15.
2. No matter what the results, say nothing. Do not repeat the negative feedback of the previous exercise.
3. Allow 1 minute for this exercise.

Exercise #6

1. Repeat exercise. Set the same goal as was set in Exercise #5. Do not increase the goal if the committee member stacked the number of sugar cubes that you requested. If fewer than 10 sugar cubes were stacked, keep the goal at 15.
2. This time, however, make a substantial change in your feedback practices, if the goal was met. Praise the committee member by saying, "great job" or "I knew you could do it." If the goal was not met, say and do nothing, keeping the negative impact of this to a minimum.
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