

Low Ropes Training Manual



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Revised 04/23

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Dear Facilitator,

If you have been through one of our training programs, you will have read through at least part of the first two sections entitled, “Background and Facilitation” and “Initiatives”. The “Background and Facilitation” section gives you an overview of our Teambuilding programs, the rationale behind our efforts, and a framework to begin your Teambuilding experience. The “Initiatives” section covers teambuilding activities that require minimal-to-no props and can, in general, be adapted to any environment.

This section covers what we will call “Low Ropes”. (Other groups call these “Low Teams”, “Elements”, etc.) For the sake of a clear definition, when we refer to “Low Ropes”, we will be referring to any obstacle / element that has been physically – and usually permanently – installed in an outdoor environment.

Barry’s Comment: Please note that there ARE such things as “Portable Low Ropes” and we will note which of these activities can be adapted for portable events by placing an asterisk (“*”) next to the title of the element.

As with Initiatives, it can be easy to become overwhelmed by the number of Low Ropes Elements available. Please do NOT assume that you need to know how to lead all of these activities right away! Also, keep in mind that you can get the same outcomes from using “Initiatives” as you can from “Low Ropes”! ***The results you will achieve are based on your ability to Facilitate effectively, NOT the size or complexity of the challenge you are able to present to a group!*** Because of this, we recommend that you become skilled at leading a few activities and then, as you feel comfortable, expand your repertoire.

As always, when in doubt, we encourage you to write down notes on index cards that you can carry with you in the field. That way you can refresh your memory before you begin. (Some of our Primaries still do that!) besides, it’s still WAY more convenient than lugging this manual into the field with you...

For our returning Facilitators, there are both cosmetic AND major updates in our methods of facilitation. We have also added new activities to the mix, however, and we encourage you to learn how to Facilitate them both safely and effectively.

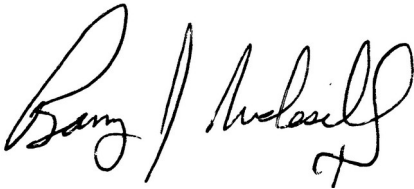
As always, there are a few disclaimers:

1. This training manual is for use ONLY by those who have purchased a Teambuilding / Community-Building Kit from Acedelmar Consulting. Please do not copy or distribute this either in part or in whole, by paper or electronic transmissions, etc.
2. This book does NOT represent a comprehensive Teambuilding program. It does NOT provide enough information to safely lead a Teambuilding program. It does NOT confer the ability to fly, run faster than a speeding bullet, look good in red-and-blue spandex, or have x-ray vision. Please use this as a reference ONLY; not a guidebook. Acedelmar Consulting shall assume no responsibility for accidents / injuries resulting from the misuse of this training manual. **Failure to receive proper training and certification prior to leading teambuilding activities will likely result in serious injury and/or death to program participants.**
3. Ropes Course obstacles and Initiatives vary widely in design, depending upon the Ropes Course

Builder, location of the obstacle, composition of the group and weather conditions. The following information is complete, *to the best of my knowledge*.

4. Some of the material contained herein is copyrighted by other authors and is used in this manual simply to provide a condensed reference source for our staff. This copyrighted material – specifically the Project Adventure books – are included in our Kit. ***This material was assembled by Barry Rudesill and is the property of Acedelmar Consulting. All Rights Reserved.***

Good luck and happy Teambuilding!



Co-Owner, Acedelmar Consulting
Rev. 06/21



Before you use any Low Ropes Elements, you need to be aware of the following:

1. Before the group arrives, take a few minutes and walk through the course. Are the paths cleared? Are there any tree branches hanging over the trails that could pose a hazard to participants? Overall, be asking yourself, “Is the course, itself, safe for use with this group?” If the answer is “no” – for any reason! – then close the course or parts of the course that are unsafe, communicate this to all other Facilitators working with the group, and report it to the Ropes Course Administrator!
2. Before the group arrives, take a few minutes and walk through the elements. Use the “Look up! Look down! Look at!” method to verify it’s safe. Are there any tree branches hanging over the elements that could pose a hazard to participants? Is the ground cleared of tree branches or other materials which could harm participants? Are there any stumps which could harm participants if they fall? Are there any signs of damage to the element, itself? Overall, be asking yourself, “Is this element safe for use with this group?” If the answer is “no” – for any reason! – then close that element and communicate this to all Facilitators! ***The rule is: If it’s broke, don’t use it!***
3. Before the group arrives, assess the weather and any concerns that may result from it. Is there a storm in the area? Are obstacles covered in snow? (Remember: Even wet elements can pose a danger to the group, if not properly facilitated!) Is there ice which may impact the environment? (When in doubt, look up!)
4. During the group, monitor all of these safety concerns! Just because something was safe in the morning DOES NOT mean that it is safe to use in the afternoon! If something has changed, please communicate this to all Facilitators immediately.
5. Pursuant to ACCT C.3.2.1, all groups must provide, in writing, a “needs assessment”. This can include, but is not limited to: age of participants, group goals, number of participants, and medical conditions (including nutrition, accessibility, or health concerns.) This information may be requested in advance or filled out upon arrival. (Note: Summer Camp and Camp-sponsored Retreats are exempt from this requirement, provided we have Health Forms on all participating campers and the Low Ropes Course is operated as part of our preapproved, structured programming.)

To sum all of this up, here’s the most important rule: ***If it looks unsafe, it probably is! Do NOT use it!***



Low Ropes Elements

(Rev. 3.0)

Name of the Activity

Level: Green = Minor Potential for Physical Risk, if not run properly.
Yellow = Fair Degree of Physical Risk, if not run properly.
Red = Major Physical Risk and/or Death, if not run properly.

Sequence: Early = Schedule near the beginning of the day.
Middle = Can be used after the team is working together.
End = Should only be used if the team is working well.

Focus: Communication
Cooperation
Caring (Trust)

Description: What the obstacle physically looks like.

Objective: What is the basic premise of the obstacle?

Story: A story to tell groups to make the activity more interesting.

Variations: Other options to allow you to reconfigure the obstacle to meet other needs or present different challenges to your group. *Any variations that are significantly different than those described in this manual MUST be submitted, in writing, for approval prior to leading the activity!*

Rules:

1. What you need to abide by to remain safe and not cheat on the activity!

Safety Considerations:

1. What to watch out for. These are just general guidelines and do not represent all of the physical, mental and emotional hazards that you may encounter. There is a cardinal rule to teambuilding: as soon as you say that you've seen it all, God will prove you wrong.
2. Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc. is a default safety consideration. Always check to make sure it is safe to use the obstacle!

Processing Questions:

What questions can you ask to facilitate discussions? These are provided in case you get stuck on what to say or how to relate an activity to your group. These are very "bare-bones" and you will need to practice your skills to process effectively!

Records:

These are records from other groups and camps. If you beat them, let me know and I will update this manual. (I will – sometimes – use "records" to motivate some groups to achieve.)

TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

As of May 2022, Northern Lakes Partners (d.b.a. Crescent Lake Bible Camp, d.b.a. Northern Lakes Impact Center) has made the following decisions regarding training of Staff:

“Beginner” Activities

Staff may lead these activities with their cabins or groups after receiving training in their use AND being given permission from the Ropes Course Administrator or a Ropes Course Trainer:

- Corporate Maze
- Maze
- Towers Of Hanoi
- Trolleys
- Whale Watch (Basic Play)

These activities are considered “safe” for most groups with minimal training. To be approved, the Staff person must read through the rules for the activity to familiarize themselves with the proper method of facilitation. Then, they must be verbally quizzed by the Ropes Course Administrator and/or Ropes Course Trainer.

If approved, they can lead these activities with their group.

All other activities require Facilitator training and are off limits to untrained staff!



A-FRAME*

Level: Green
Sequence: Early
Focus: Cooperation

Description: Three pieces of wood in an A-frame shape with rope attached to the top.

Objective: To move one person, on the A-Frame, a set distance.



Story: King Kong, desperate to get away from attacking planes, just climbed up on this A-Frame. (Monkeys climb things, just in case you weren't sure.) Realizing that this may be your one chance, you and your team must work together to "walk" the A-Frame out of the city! (Thankfully Kong will help you move the A-Frame because he/she wants to get away from the aforementioned attacking planes!) If you succeed, you will save the city...and leave Kong – sad and lonely – in the middle of nowhere... *sniff*

Variations: In a pinch, we've made these out of saplings and knots. (Hopefully y'all know "Geodomes"!) Also, you can tie the knots to the A-Frame ahead of time (this makes the game very easy); or you can leave it up to the team to figure how to tie ropes (this can make it very hard).

Rules:

1. The A-Frame must maintain at least one point of contact with the ground. (No hopping!)
2. The A-Frame cannot have more than two points of contact with the ground. (This is called "falling".)
3. Only one person may be on the A-Frame and they MUST wear a properly-fastened Ropes Course helmet.
4. Whoever plays the monkey – no offense intended – cannot touch the ground.
5. Teammates on the ropes cannot be any closer than five feet from the A-Frame. (I usually use ropes to mark go/no-go areas.)
6. The ropes cannot touch the ground in the "no-go" area!
7. Working together, move the A-Frame from the start line to the finish line.
8. There are no wrong solutions, only unsafe ones.

Safety Considerations:

- The person standing in the A frame could fall. They are the biggest concern in this activity. Make sure to have them wear a properly-secured helmet from the High Rope's shed.
- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Check the boards and ropes for any sign of rot before using this activity.
- Be sure ropes do NOT wrap around the participant on the A-Frame. I always require ropes tied to the left side go out to the left, and ropes tied to the right go right.
- Be aware of the surface you're playing this on! Karl Rohnke wants to try it on ice; we prefer soft, squishy grass!

Processing Questions:

Who had the harder job: the person on the A-Frame or the team on the ropes? Why? Do you struggle to tie the ropes on to the element? If so, why? Did you ever get into a rhythm? If so, what did that look like? Did you know what you were doing at the beginning or did you have to modify your process as you went? If you did modify the process, what changes did you make and why?

Records:

Um, encouraging teams to rush through this could prove...detrimental!

Level: Green
Sequence: Early
Focus: Cooperation

Description: A series of five progressively smaller platforms.

Objective: To get the entire group onto the available wooden platform.



Story One: The group is a bunch of penguins that are adrift on icebergs that are slowly melting due to “global climate change”. They must keep their feet out of the water due to the killer whales that have been following the icebergs in the hopes of a snack.

Story Two: Mount [Insert Facility Name Here], a volcano we thought was extinct just erupted. Lava is rushing this way very fast and the only place of safety is the rocks in front of them. Unfortunately “lava waves” keep taking out the rocks and reducing the ground they have to stand on.

Variations: Can be done on as an Initiative using towels, if necessary. There is also a portable set of “Icebergs”.

Rules:

1. No heroic sacrifices! (Everyone must be on the platform.)
2. No body parts can touch the ground for ten seconds.
3. Trees may be used if the group is physically capable of doing it safely and they figure it out on their own.
4. There are no wrong solutions, only unsafe ones.

Safety Considerations:

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc. Also, platforms can be slippery if wet or icy.
- Do NOT allow ANY group to have participants sit or lie down! (Go look up the torture called “pressing” to understand why this is not allowed!)
- Do NOT allow groups to get on shoulders unless you have plenty of spotters and can ensure the safety of the participants! (I usually reserve shoulders for adult-groups only.)
- Watch younger groups “charging” to get onto platforms. There are NO time restrictions. (A hint I like to give is: “Most groups that have solved this have started from at least five feet away!” What I mean – and I don’t tell them this – is that they need to stand back, make your plans, and then approach the platform!)
- Instruct participants that if they start to fall, to simply step off and prevent others from falling. Be careful of the group falling off a platform in a “clump”. Facilitators should be prepared to spot; chaperons and group leaders can spot, as well. (I usually have adults help to spot as it increases the safety of the participants AND it gives them something to do other than trying to tell the group how to solve the puzzle!)

Processing Questions:

When looking at the size of the platforms, did you think you would be able to complete the task? Why or why not? As the icebergs/rocks disappeared, what happened to the challenge? Was there a particular leader at the beginning of the activity? How about at the end?

Records:

Huge Platform -	25 Adults (Family Camp 5 – 2010)
Large Platform -	23 Adults (Family Camp 5 – 2010)
Medium Platform -	22 Adults (Subway Regional Managers – 1998)
Small Platform -	None, yet... Not really sure why...
Tiny Platform -	5 Adults (Summer Staff 2010)

BARREL ROLL / MEAT GRINDER (ADJUSTABLE)

Level: Yellow / Red
Sequence: Middle to End
Focus: Cooperation

Description: A wire spool suspended off the ground.

Objective: To move the entire group over the barrel.

Story: Famed nature magazine, International Geographic (not “National Geographic” so they can’t sue me), has sent you on assignment to a meat factory to discover what truly lurks inside a hot dog. Unfortunately, as you work the night shift one Thursday, you get locked inside the factory. With the “Meat Chunk” holiday going on, no one will be back to rescue you until Tuesday! You realize there is only one way out: climb through the meat grinder, drop to the floor below and go through the emergency exit.

Variations: Depending on how this is constructed, it can be adjustable in height. This means you can adapt it to work with differing groups.

Rules:

1. Everyone must go over the Meat Grinder, not around, under, etc.
2. All participants not in the process of going over must spot!
3. All participants must land feet first on the other side.
4. No one going across can walk back around to lift – they can come back and spot, however!
5. The last person is NOT allowed to try to jump over! (They will hit their chest on the barrel, their feet will go underneath and they will land on their back!)
6. You can’t touch the inside (vertical) or outside of the grinder as they are covered with “blades”! The only “safe” areas to touch are the horizontal surfaces facing you. Touching the blades results in everyone starting over. (Variation: If you touch a blade, you lose the use of that body part.)

Safety Considerations:

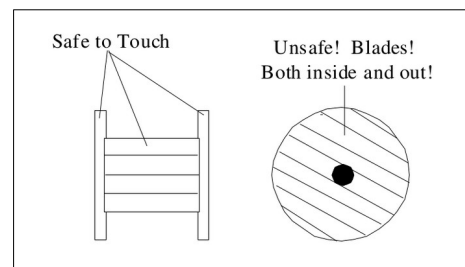
- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- If the barrel rolls forward with someone lying on their stomach, the participant will land on their head and break their neck. If it looks unsafe, it probably is...
- The most likely place for injury is when the person is on top of the wire spool.
- The barrel can be raised or lowered to accommodate different skill levels.

Processing Questions:

How long did it take your group to find a safe solution? Were you nervous going over the barrel? Why or why not? What was the greatest challenge for this activity? Who did the lifting? (Usually groups will have the “men” lift and the “women” step back and spot.)

Records:

None. Don’t time this activity as it is dangerous enough without the added pressure.



BEAM / ADJUSTABLE BEAM

Level: All
Sequence: Early to End
Focus: Cooperation



Description: A horizontal beam of adjustable height.

Objective: To move the entire group up and over the beam.

Story One: *If used as an Early Activity:* Have you ever wondered how High Jump people get started? Do they simply start leaping over tall objects? What if they are afraid of heights? Here is the [Insert Facility Name Here] Olympic High Jump obstacle, and we are going to train you to clear this bar safely!

Story Two: *If used as an End Activity:* Welcome to the Beam! You must be good! Not many groups get to play on this puppy! The Beam is pretty straightforward: you must move your group up and over.

Variations: Adjust the height to the level of difficulty required by the group. If this is an opening activity, lower it to approximately four feet. If you are using this as an ending activity, raise it to the full eight feet mark. (Feel free to start at four feet and then raise it as the group becomes more proficient.)

Rules:

1. Everyone must go over the Beam, not around, under, etc.
2. You are allowed to touch the Beam, but not the support poles. If you do, the whole group starts over.
3. Everybody must land, feet first and gently, on the other side. If anyone lands unsupported, the whole group will start over.
4. Up to two people may sit on top of the Beam and lift, but they are only allowed to lift twice before they must come down.
5. Everyone must spot. Anyone not spotting (hands up, attention focused) will cause the group to start over. If this becomes a big problem, quit this activity.
6. Once over, you may assist people as they come down and spot on either side, but you cannot walk back around and lift!

Safety Considerations:

- If your group cannot handle it, don't attempt it! Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc. Make sure the group spots at ALL times.

Processing Questions:

This is bragging rights to simply reach this obstacle. If the group completes it, they have finished one of the more difficult obstacles!

Records:

None. To attempt this as a timed activity is simply too dangerous.

Level: Yellow
Sequence: Middle
Focus: Cooperation

Description: A rope net suspended parallel to the ground.

Objective: To move the team through the net.



Story: I don't really have one for this obstacle. If you find a good one, let me know.

Variations: If you look at the cargo net, you will notice that there are essentially two directions you can move: side/side and high/low. I usually start with the side-to-side variation. All the group must do is move their teammates from one side to the other without touching the ground. (If you really want to be nice, let them touch the ground.) This is just to get participants used to stepping on the ropes and moving safely.

The high-to-low variation requires the group to move their team from the high side to the low side without anyone touching the ground. Touching the ground or "falling" from the net causes the group to start over.

Rules:

1. Everyone must go through the net; not under, around, etc.
2. Everyone must stay on their side of the net; no running around to other sides to assist teammates.
3. If anyone touches the ground, the whole group must start over.
4. If anyone jumps out of the net, rather than being spotted, the whole group starts over.

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Don't allow somersaulting into the cargo net! This is exceptionally dangerous! Enter gently!
- Watch how the group dismounts on the far side. It must be spotted. If no one is over there (e.g. the first person), the Facilitator will need to spot.
- Caution the group against sudden tugs on the net when someone is moving.

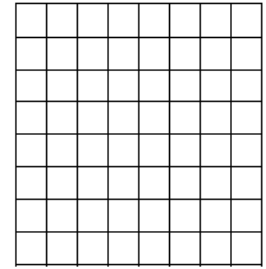
Processing Questions:

Did your teammates help or hinder your movements? Why? What could the group have done better to assist you? Did you have a strategy or did you just "go for it"?

Records:

None. Don't bother timing this one, either...

Level: Green
Sequence: Early to Middle
Focus: Communication



Description: A grid of either bricks or lines painted on a board.

Objective: To move the team through the hidden path.

Story: None. (In the past, I've used the analogy that the maze represents movement toward a goal. Then I've let the group process it in light of any goals they may have.)

Variations: I usually play this game by not allowing a group to make the same mistake twice. In other words, one person cannot get up, step on a wrong square and then have someone else make the same move. It is up to the group to prevent that from happening... (In other words, learn from the mistakes of others!)

Have "trap doors" in the maze. A trapdoor can either be positive (reveal the next correct square, two free mistakes, etc.) or negative (maze route changes, everyone silent) consequences. Inform the group ahead of time about this rule, however, otherwise it will look like you are changing the rules.

Finally, I have done this as a portable event using spots, PVC pipe squares (there's a bag in the Program Closet), or even using poker chips to mark each potential step.

Rules:

1. One person is allowed in the Corporate Maze at a time.
2. You may indicate the starting square – if you're nice – and you may point out the final square – if you are really nice. (I usually don't do either. In real life, we may have an idea of where we can begin to move toward our goals, but it's rare that we know exactly where to start. Also, unless the goal is very specific, how do you know when you are done – when you've reached "the end"?)
3. Participants may step left, right, forward, backward or diagonal. If they step correctly, the Facilitator will not respond and they can move again. Every misstep will result in a "buzz" from the Facilitator. If they are buzzed, the participant must step off the maze and let someone else try. (Just because a square is buzzed does not mean it isn't used; it just means it isn't used *now*.)
4. No placing objects to mark correct squares. (Hansel and Gretel approach.)

Safety Considerations:

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc. Also, blocks can be slippery if wet or icy. (In winter, it's easy for ground-based blocks to be covered by snow, so plan ahead!)

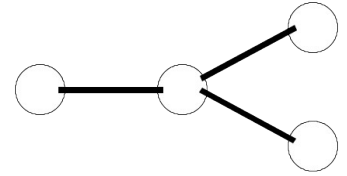
Processing Questions:

How many times did you repeat the same mistake? Why did this happen? Did you have a different perspective of the maze when you were standing on the ground then when you were on the platform? Why or why not? Were you hesitant to step on a new square and "make a mistake"? Why? (Especially since there are no consequences to you or the group.)

Records:

I can't even think of a way to make a record out of this...

Level: Green
Sequence: Middle
Focus: Cooperation



Description: Four stumps (telephone poles) connected by 2" x 10" boards.

Objective: To move two teammates from the far right poles, to the middle pole and to have them work together to reach the final pole. (In some respects, it is similar to a "Wild Woozy".)

Story: I don't have one. Play with the obstacle and find something that works!

Rules:

1. One person starts on each of the two ends of the "T" (more of a "Y", actually).
2. The two teammates must work their way to the middle pole and, from there, reach the final pole before stepping down.
3. If one of the partners touches the ground, both start over.
4. All participants standing on the obstacle must have at least two spotters, one on either side of them. (The more, the merrier!)
5. No jumping or running on the obstacle!

Safety Considerations:

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Make sure spotters are in place *before* someone begins their attempt! Place two spotters behind each person – one to their left and one to their right. Also, place spotters in between to support them if they fall forward. (I would use a "Wild Woozy" style for spotting.)
- Falling off the obstacle can injure ankles. Make sure spotters are paying attention!

Processing Questions:

How did individual movements affect the partners attempting the obstacle? How did spotters play a role in this activity? Were there times that spotters – keeping people safe – were actually a hindrance? Why or why not?

Records:

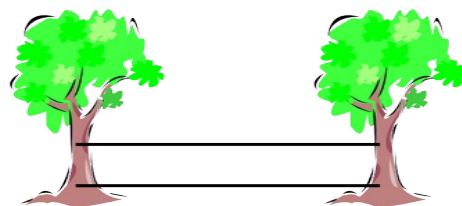
None.

ELECTRIC FENCE / HIGH-LOW*

Level: Yellow
Sequence: Middle
Focus: Cooperation

Description: Two shock cords strung between trees.

Objective: To move the group from one side of the obstacle to the other.



Story: You are out on assignment with International Geographic (not “National Geographic” so they can’t sue me) photographing the famous Upidstay Hyenas in the grasslands of Africa. Suddenly you realize that maybe they aren’t that stupid after all; they are all staring hungrily at you! You take off running back to the village at a pace that would put an Olympic sprinter to shame with the hyenas on your heels! At the village, however, you encounter an electric fence that is designed to keep out the hyenas. Coincidentally enough, it also happens to be keeping you out, as well! You must get over the electric fence to safety!

Variations: Instead of an “Electric Fence”, this obstacle can be treated as a “High-Low”. Simply move the top rope to the highest rings and have half the group go over the top line and half go under the bottom line. The team must have at least two people on each side before they are allowed to pass someone over the cord. (Similar to a “Spider Web”.)

Rules:

1. Everyone must go over the Fence, not under, around or through! (They can *reach* under, if they can figure that out. Don’t tell them that, however!)
2. No one may attempt to climb the trees and no other items may be used to cross the Fence. (This gets rid of the idea of pole-vaulting.)
3. Participants must land in control, spotted, and on their feet; if someone lands hard – say by jumping – then the group starts over!
4. If anyone touches a rope, the group starts over.
5. The group must remain connected at all times. If contact is ever broken between any team members, the whole group must start over. (This is **critical** as it prevents serious injuries!)

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Make sure spotters are in place **before** someone begins their attempt!
- If your group can’t handle Electric Fence, consider switching to High-Low.

Facilitator’s Note:

The Electric Fence achieved notoriety in the 1990s as one of the most lethal Teambuilding activities! Why? Because Facilitators would allow people to vault the line like a high jumper! They would arch their back, hope their team could catch them, and end up breaking their necks! Paralysis and death were fairly common, relatively speaking! This is why everyone remains in contact with each other and lands in a controlled fashion!

Processing Questions:

How many times did you start over? Why? Did you have to change your plan as the activity went along? Why or why not? (Did anyone find ways around the Fence due to rules **not** said?) How did spotters play a role in this activity?

Records:

None.

ENERGY CIRCLE / COMBINATION LOCK

Level: Green
Sequence: Early
Focus: Communication

Description: Two circles of stumps (telephone poles), one within the other.

Objective: To move around the circle(s) to arrive back at your original position.

Story: Have you ever wondered how a combination lock works? Well, today let's find out! We have shrunk you down, thanks to our handy shrinking ray, and have put you inside your standard padlock. To open the lock, you must move in a predetermined manner. If there is a mistake, the lock won't open and you have to start again. (You need to figure out, based on the group, where participants should end. I usually have them complete one circle but must touch every stump in the process.)

Variations: None.

Rules:

1. Have everyone choose a pole to start from (preferably not too far apart).
2. Everyone must stay on the poles. If you fall off, everyone starts over. If you step on a pole that is not in use (had no one standing on it at the start), the whole group starts over.
3. Have the group choose two people and designate them the combination people. They have exclusive use of any pole they stand on; nobody may share a pole with them.
4. No more than two feet may touch a pole at any time.
5. A variation that may be introduced is to require the group to remain connected at all times. If contact is ever broken between all team members, the whole group must start over.

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- It is not inconceivable to fall and injure an ankle.
- Although it is unlikely, someone may fall and land on a stump. Spot anyone that may be a risk. If you have someone who may have problems, have everyone hang onto each other to provide additional support.

Processing Questions:

How did individual movements affect the whole group? How did the combination lock person/people affect the movements of the group? How does working with others here reflect upon your life outside of camp?

Records:

None.



Level: Yellow
Sequence: End
Focus: Communication / Cooperation

Description: A 10-foot vertical telephone pole with a tire at its base.

Objective: To remove the tire without touching the pole.



Story: Oh no! While researching an upcoming seminar on “Pollution and its Impact on Small, Fluffy Creatures”, you discover that the new, multi-billion dollar, anti-pollution, pollution control device has been installed on the specially designed, non-polluting factory’s single, non-used smoke stack has been installed upside down! Because of this, the smoke stack is now pumping out two times the amount of pollution that it would if the device was installed correctly! (Confusing, I know, but remember the key thought: this is an *unused* smoke stack.) You must remove the delicate device, turn it over and lower it back to the base of the stack. This must be done carefully!

Rules:

1. The tire must be lifted off the pole, flipped over and then lowered back down.
2. The tire cannot touch the pole. People can, however. (For an added challenge, don’t let anything touch the pole, including people, the tire, etc!)
3. No other materials, save what the group has on them, may be used. If the group is younger, or is having problems, you may allow them to use whatever they can find in the immediate area...
4. The tire may not be thrown. (It’s a delicate device, remember?)
5. People are allowed on shoulders, if necessary, but only if the entire group is working to spot that person!

Safety Considerations:

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- If you allow people onto shoulders, make sure the team is capable of protecting that individual. If not, do not allow it!
- If it looks unsafe, it probably is!

Processing Questions:

Is there a “best” way to solve this puzzle? Why or why not? Would all the ideas you suggested work? Why or why not? (Disclaimer: the reason I group this with Communication is because they need to have a solid plan in place to successfully complete the activity!)

Records:

None.

INCOMPLETE BRIDGE / THREE ISLANDS*

Level: Yellow
Sequence: Middle
Focus: Communication

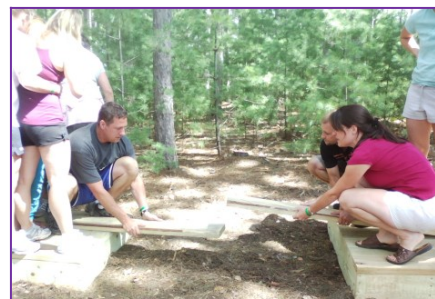
Description: Two (or three) platforms with two boards that do not reach.

Objective: To move the entire group from the starting platform to the end.

Story One: Once there was a bridge builder... This guy, er... She...um... Okay, no real story...

Variations: I really haven't heard of too many variations for this activity. The ones that I am aware of are using longer or shorter boards, blindfolds, etc. Nothing terribly earth-shaking or interesting, I'm afraid. (This does work better *after* "All Aboard".)

This COULD be done with smaller teams by utilizing the portable "Icebergs". (I would recommend teams of no more than 15 attempting this.)



Rules:

1. No running, pushing or shoving.
2. No jumping over "gaps" in between platforms.
3. No "heroic sacrifices". You win or lose as a team.
4. No throwing boards. They may be passed, but all passes need to be kept below waist level.
5. Once you begin to cross, you cannot go back.
6. Once a board starts moving forward, it can't go back.
7. If a person touches the ground, the group starts over. If a board touches the ground, it starts over. (Your group does, too, but that's something they'll have to realize on their own...)

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc. Also, platforms can be slippery if wet or icy.
- Watch people moving too fast! As with all teambuilding, they need to care for their teammates!
- Be careful of how boards are passed! The reason we pass below waist height is to prevent someone getting hit in the head with a heavy board!
- You may need to spot on the final platform.

Processing Questions

How much did you rely on others around you? Why or why not? Is it easier to depend on your team or your own abilities? Why? Did your group come up with a solution right away or did they struggle?

Records:

I had 22 people successfully complete the task.

THE MAZE*

Level: Green
Sequence: Early
Focus: Trust

Description: A maze of bungee cord ropes.

Objective: To move the entire group through the maze while blindfolded.



Story: You have entered the maze of the Minotaur. This is not a good idea, and it certainly wasn't a good idea to do it at night! You must find your way through the maze as a team. The group may decide if they will work together or, since there is a big, scary monster in the maze, let it be everyone for themselves.

Variations: The Maze can be adjusted so that there is an actual end, or isn't... If the group successfully moves their team from Point A to Point B, they have accomplished the task.

Or... Adjust the cords so that there is no ending. Tell the group that they are working as individuals. If you get completely stuck, however, you can stop moving, raise your hand and ask for help. When someone raises their hand, take off the blindfold and lead them quietly out of the maze. With this variation, it teaches people that there are times when you can't do it on your own. (And there are times when the outside world "changes the rules" and, sad to say, they are not required to notify you about the changes.)

Or... Place "obstacles" on trees. The group may touch each obstacle only one time. If touched more than once, the whole group must start over.

Rules:

1. No running!
2. Be gentle when moving around others.
3. If you don't want a blindfold, we will trust you to keep your eyes closed.

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Watch moving too fast!

Processing Questions:

How much did you rely on others around you? Why or why not? Is it easier to depend on your team or your own abilities? Why? How many of you found it difficult to ask for help? Why? If there was no end, how hard was it to ask for help? Why?

Records:

None.

Level: Green
Sequence: Early to Middle
Focus: Cooperation

Description: A series of small platforms with 2" x 6" boards.

Objective: To move the group from one side of the obstacle to the other.



Story: The group has found itself on the edge of a raging river of lava that they must cross. The vapors of the lava are so intense that you cannot jump to the islands without toasting like a marshmallow. The only safe way to cross the river is using the two ("Meuse" has three) "fire-proof" boards. However, the heat is such that once you begin to cross, you cannot return for fear of heat stroke.

Variations: In a "Meuse" setup, there is a point where the participants must place a board between two of the islands and, from the center of that board, extend a second board to reach the next island. This results in one board being left behind; hence the reason "Meuse" has three and "River" only has two.

For added difficulty, assess penalties for touching the River. For example, if I touch with my leg, I "lose" my leg (it is lava, after all). If a board drops in the river, it is swept away and disappears.

Rules:

1. Everyone must go through the river, not around it!
2. Everyone starts on the same side and works their way across the River.
3. Once you begin to cross the river, you cannot go back.
4. No jumping from platform to platform, you must use the boards to cross.
5. No running on boards.
6. No throwing boards or the group will start over. Boards must be passed at waist level or lower.
7. If a person touches the ground in the River, they start over.

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Watch for participants messing around on the boards or platforms.

Processing Questions:

What did your group do to move people across? What worked and what didn't? How does this relate to your group and the goals you have set for yourself?

Records:

None.

Level: Yellow
Sequence: Middle
Focus: Cooperation / Caring

Description: A zigzag of foot wires with a hand rope on the central tree.

Objective: To move the group from one side of the obstacle to the other.



Story: While pursuing the fabled Road Runner for International Geographic (not “National Geographic” so they can’t sue me), you encounter a canyon that makes the Grand Canyon look less than “grand”. Thankfully, you brought the ACME Canyon-Crosser 4000 which will, when activated, create a four-lane interstate highway across the gap. However, as you fire it, true to the cartoon nature of ACME products, you only get a single wire and a hand rope.

Variations: Depending on how much challenge you want, you may choose to not allow the use of the rope. Make the group get to the rope, rather than hand it to them.

Rules:

1. Everyone must go across the canyon, not through it, around it, etc.
2. There must be two spotters for each person attempting to cross. They are to be placed in front and behind the participant and should always be ready to catch. (Things happen fast!)
3. I will allow participants to “tag” a tree, announce they are stepping down and then come back to help spot other people to that point. When they are ready to continue, they start again from the tree they stepped from.
4. If someone touches the ground, leans to the point a spotter must catch them or steps down at a tree before announcing they are going back to spot, the whole group must start over. The rope (if used) goes back to the tree it started from.
5. No other means of support (e.g. crutches) can be used to cross the canyon except what is given to the team. If the group drops the rope, they may retrieve it, but it must be done by hand!

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- A number of participants will attempt to run across the wire, especially as they work to reach the rope. It can be done safely if the spotters are ready, but is NOT recommended.

Processing Questions:

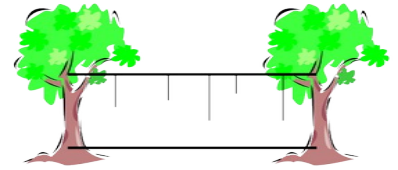
Who had the least problems? Who had the most? Why is there a difference? Who helped out the most? Could the group have made it without them? How could you have helped each other more?

Records:

None. Do NOT rush this activity or people will get hurt!

MULTILINE TRAVERSE

Level: Green
Sequence: Early
Focus: Caring



Description: A foot wire with multivines hanging above.

Objective: To move a participant safely from one side of the obstacle to the other.

Story: Don't have one. Sorry! (But I do have the lovely artwork I made to show you what the activity looks like.) ☺

Variations: Have two people link left arms. They must now move as one person across the wire, utilizing each other and their one free hand to keep their balance.

Rules:

1. Two spotters are needed for each person, one in front and one behind.
2. If two people cross together, you will need to have four spotters, two for each.
3. If a participant touches the ground or leans on a spotter, they must restart. If they are with a partner, both people go back.

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- It is common for adults to fall from this obstacle. Make sure spotters are attentive!
- At most, only allow two people on the activity at any one time!
- If you are uncertain of the athletic abilities of your group, have four spotters per person crossing! (This also makes sure that everyone has something to do!)

Processing Questions:

How easy was it to do the obstacle alone? Did it help or hinder you to have a partner?

Records:

None. To attempt this as a timed activity is simply too dangerous. (Wow! I use that phrase a lot. I should try to find something new and exciting to say here, instead.)

NITRO CROSSING / PROUTY'S LANDING

Level: Yellow
Sequence: Middle
Focus: Cooperation / Caring

Description: A rope swing with optional boundary markers.

Objective: To move the team and a bucket of water over a “canyon”.



Story: You wonder if your boss doesn't like you. I mean, you are the most successful smoke jumpers (firefighters who leap out of planes and fight the fire from the inside out) in the entire country! But, on this mission, you notice that your boss has soaked your parachutes with kerosene and, instead of water, you have been given a canister of nitroglycerin. (It's probably just your imagination.) You leap into the middle of the fire and immediately your 'chutes burst into flames. You land safely (though uncomfortably) but unfortunately the can of nitro lands on a small cliff in the middle of a canyon with only a small vine above it. You must retrieve the nitro and cross the canyon to successfully complete your mission.

Variation: “Prouty's Landing” is played with the same rules as below. However, the group must start on one platform and swing across to the other. Landing off a platform results in the group starting over.

Rules:

1. Everyone starts on one side and must safely reach the other. The distance between boundaries can be no more than sixteen feet. (Ten is usually sufficient for a challenge while still maintaining the safety of the team.) Everyone must go over the canyon, not around or through.
2. Groups must figure out how to retrieve the rope. I generally discourage the run-and-leap method (although for some groups this may be acceptable).
3. Everyone must land gently on the other side. If someone, other than the first person, leaps off the rope unspotted, I usually make the group start over.
4. The can of water starts in the middle of the canyon, right underneath the rope. You must retrieve it at some point in the game. If the water spills, the group starts over. If someone touches the ground between the boundaries, the whole group starts over.
5. If there are PVC pipes marking the start and end lines, knocking a pipe off their stands will result in the group starting over.
6. In the Prouty's Landing configuration, they must start AND end on the platforms. Anyone touching the ground at any time will cause the group to start over!

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Don't let the group leave someone behind! This is an emotional safety consideration.
- Groups that do not have the physical strength to cross can figure out how to use the loop... ☺
- And speaking of “loops”, do NOT let participants put any body part IN the loop!

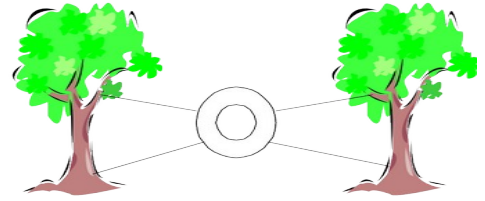
Processing Questions:

Did your group work on getting the team across or did they focus on retrieving the water? Who went first? Did you figure out an order or did people just go and leave the rest to sort it out?

Records:

None.

Level: Yellow
Sequence: Middle
Focus: Cooperation / Caring



Description: A hula-hoop suspended by shock cord.

Objective: To pass the team through the hoop without touching the sides.

Story: Your ship is sinking. (To many people, this is a problem.) You, however, are in a worse state: you are trapped below decks and must escape. Your only chance to be safe is for the group to work their way through the porthole and into the storm-tossed, freezing, shark-filled ocean below. (And this is what you consider safe?) You break the glass out, but some of it remains stuck in the frame. To be safe, you must avoid touching the edges or else you will be cut.

Variation: The hula-hoop can be raised or lowered to accommodate the group's abilities.

Rules:

1. Everyone must go through the hoop, not around it, under, over, etc.
2. Everyone must be involved in spotting. If someone is not paying attention or steps back from the group, end the activity!
3. Before they begin, the group must explain to you how they will safely protect the first person and the last person as they move through the obstacle.
4. Touching the ropes or hula-hoop will cause the group start over.

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Due to the lack of ability to spot the first and last participants, this can be a dangerous obstacle. Facilitators need to spot these people to ensure their safety!

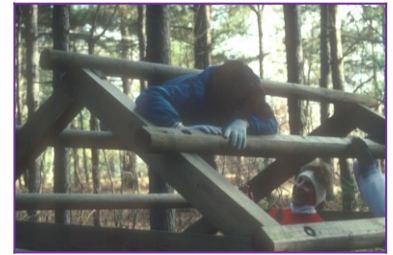
Processing Questions:

How difficult was it to come up with a plan? Did you have to modify the plan as you went along? Why or why not? How safe did you feel with your teammates spotting you? What did they do well? What could they have done better?

Records:

None. To attempt this as a timed activity is simply too dangerous.

Level: Yellow
Sequence: Middle
Focus: Cooperation / Caring



Description: A pyramid-shaped wooden structure.

Objective: To move the team over and under the cross beams to reach the other side.

Story: International Geographic (not “National Geographic” so they can’t sue me) has sent you on assignment to explore the farthest reaches of the remote jungles of Arizona. (They have a lot of money but not a lot of intelligence.) You are out photographing nature when suddenly you stumble into the home of the terrible Gonnegetcha Gorillas who would like to have you come over for dinner (correction, as dinner). You run away as fast as you can, a pack of gorillas on your heels. You come to the edge of a ravine and find there is a bridge that will lead you to safety! It’s built a little funny because the local natives know that the only thing these gorillas are afraid of is heights! Wasting no time, you begin to cross the bridge!

Variation: None.

Rules:

1. Everyone must go over the “Pyramid”, not around, under, etc.
2. Everyone must be spotted by at least two teammates as they cross. Failure to do so will cause the group to start over. Participants who have completed the activity may return to help spot.
3. To move across (and elude the gorillas) you must use the over/under method. You must go over the first board, under the second, over the third, etc.
4. Anyone who is supported by a spotter (as in a fall) or that touches the ground will cause the group to start over.
5. No more than five people are allowed on the “Pyramid” at any one time.

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Spotters need to be stationed under the Pyramid. For lower levels, their only goal is to prevent the participant from landing on their head. Higher levels may be spotted in whatever fashion works best.
- Be aware of emotional safety during this activity. Don’t let the group leave people behind! (Usually the athletic ones will go first and leave the rest behind.)

Processing Questions:

Did the group simply attempt the activity or figure out how to get everyone through first? How did you have to work together to make it across the bridge?

Records:

None.

SPIDER WEB*

Level: Red
Sequence: Middle to End
Focus: Communication / Cooperation / Caring

Description: A web of string or shock cord hung in trees.

Objective: To pass the team through the web without touching the sides.



Story: International Geographic (not “National Geographic” so they can’t sue me) has sent you on assignment. A satellite has detected a new valley in a strange land (like Arizona) and you are sent to explore. You see plants no one has ever seen before, animals no one has ever seen before and giant spiders from “Arachnophobia” that no one has ever seen before. One morning, you wake up to find yourself faced with a giant spider web. Being the clever people you are, you realize that if there is a giant spider web, there must be a ... (giant spider). If you look at the top of the tree, you’ll see the monster! Spiders spin webs and wait for something to get trapped in them. You must get through the web without touching it, otherwise you will be trapped and the spider will come to investigate!

Variation: Hang “jingle bells” on the web. If the group rings the bells, they start over. (This is a little more forgiving than just touching the web.)

Rules:

1. Everyone must go through the web, not around it, under, over, etc.
2. Each hole can be used once; larger groups can use the upper holes twice.
3. Everyone must be involved in spotting. If not, stop the activity!
4. People going through the bottom holes – holes that touch the bottom line of the web – may go under their own power. However, do not allow jumping, diving or rolling through the web!
5. There must be two people on each side before you can pass someone through!
6. All people being passed must go through the web feet-first. When passing, the participant’s head should never go below their waist. On the other side, their feet must be lowered to the ground so that they are able to stand.
7. If someone touches the web, the group starts over. If they are passing someone at the time, they are to put that participant down safely before starting over. (I make them shout, “Go away, spider!” before starting over. If I do not make them say it, they can continue without restarting.)

Safety Considerations:

- Check surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Spotters must be extra careful to protect the participant from landing on their head/neck!
- Facilitators should be prepared to assist in spotting the first and last people being passed.

Processing Questions:

How supported did you feel throughout this activity? What other “webs” will this group face? How will you support each other in the future?

Records:

None. To attempt this as a timed activity is too dangerous. (See? No “simply” in this sentence!)

SUSPENDED LOG

Level: Red
Sequence: Middle to End
Focus: Caring

Description: A telephone pole suspended a foot off the ground.

Objective: To cross over using teamwork skills only.

Story: None.

Variations: Tie ropes to the underside of the log and allow teams to use them to stabilize it.

Rules:

1. Everyone must go across the log, not around it, under, etc.
2. Only three people can be on the log at one time.
3. Participants who are not on the log **MUST** be spotting participants who are moving through.
4. If anyone touches the ground while crossing, the entire group must start over.

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Be aware that if someone tries to “save” themselves, they usually end up shoving the log sideways and landing hard! It’s better if they just step down!
- If your group cannot handle spotting this activity, do not do it. It is that simple...

Processing Questions:

What was the hardest part of this activity? Why? Had we started with this activity, would it have been possible? Why or why not? Did you have someone stabilize the log for you? Did it help?

Records:

None.

TEAM WALL

Level: Red
Sequence: End
Focus: Cooperation

Description: A large, smooth wall with a deck and ladder on the back.

Objective: To cross over the wall using teamwork skills only.

Story: Behold the Wall! You have been sent to Basic Training by International Geographic (not “National Geographic” so they can’t sue me). After weeks of running through toxic peanut butter swamps, challenging Upidstay Hyenas, identifying differences between mosquitoes and giraffes (they look similar, don’t they?), you are given the final challenge: the Wall!

Variations: None.

Rules:

1. Everyone must go over the Wall, not around it, under, etc.
2. The team may climb only the front of the wall, and no other objects may be used.
3. Do not grab clothing, jewelry, etc. for lifting purposes! (Stress proper lifting techniques so the group won’t hurt their backs.) Be aware of how you lift someone. If it is hurting them, change your plan!
4. Everyone must spot! Failure to do so will end the activity. No exceptions! Once a person has gone over the top, they may return to spot (but not lift). Spotters need to be in a horseshoe shape in case the participant falls sideways.
5. No running up the wall! (It doesn’t work!)
6. Each person may only assist two teammates from the top of the wall. At most, only three people may remain at the top of the Wall at any time. Once a fourth person is up, someone must come down. (You can change this to be only two at the top...)
7. The group must present their plan to the Facilitator before beginning.

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- If your group cannot handle this activity, do not do it. It is that simple...
- This is an “end of the day” activity. You WILL NOT lead it before then!

Processing Questions:

This is one of the toughest challenges at camp. How did it feel to get here? Had we started with this activity, would it have been impossible? Why or why not?

Records:

None. There are simply too many ways to get hurt, and your group may find some new ones before the day is over!



TOWERS OF HANOI*

Level: Green
Sequence: Early
Focus: Cooperation / Caring



Description: Three poles and five tires.

Objective: The team must get all five tires on the last pole in the same order they started, but a bigger number can never be on top of a smaller number.

Story: Sorry. No story here.

Variations: Have every team member touching part of the tire when moving them.

Have “talkers” and “movers”. The talkers can’t touch the tires and the movers can’t talk. (You could also blindfold them for an added challenge.)

Rules:

1. The five tires are stacked on one pole at the start from biggest (bottom) to smallest (top).
2. The tires have to end in the same position (biggest on bottom to smallest on top) on the final pole.
3. Only one tire can be moved at a time. A “move” means to take tire and place it on another stack or on an empty pole.
4. A bigger tire can never be on top of a smaller tire.
5. Tires must always be on a pole unless being moved.

Safety Considerations:

- The tires are heavy, especially the bigger ones.
- Watch for fingers, people’s heads, etc. having a tire dropped on them. (Definite loss of “Caring” points there!)
- Watch teams that want to throw tires instead of moving them.

Processing Questions:

Did you come up with a plan first or “just start”? How did that work for you? Did you use the same plan throughout or did you have to change as you went? If you changed, what did you do differently? Was there one person in charge or many? Did that work for you?

Records:

There really aren’t “records” here, but there ARE “minimum moves”. (In other words, these are the smallest number of moves required to complete the task successfully.

- For four tires, the minimum number of moves is 15.
- For five tires, the minimum number of moves is 31.
- For six tires, the minimum number of moves is 63.

TOXIC PEANUT BUTTER SWAMP*

Level: Green
Sequence: Early to Middle
Focus: Communication / Cooperation

Description: Four (or more) tires sitting over a small pole.

Objective: To use the tires to move the group between two boundaries.



Story: While on assignment for International Geographic (not “National Geographic” so they can’t sue me), you are sent to the deep, darkest jungles of Arizona to photograph wild, rabid mongooses. You are doing well until they realize you are there, and then they begin to chase you. Quickly you go from a few animals to herds of wild, rabid mongooses! You dodge, you shimmy, you shake and, even though your moves would win any modern dance competition, the creatures are gaining on you. In front of you, you find a toxic peanut butter swamp. Knowing that wild, rabid mongooses hate toxic peanut butter swamps, you decide to cross!

Variations: If you want to make it much tougher, do not allow the tires to go backwards.

Rules:

1. The entire team must cross through the swamp, not around it.
2. Once someone begins to go across, they must continue going forward.
3. The tires may move back and forth, however they cannot be thrown or rolled. If a tire is lost to the group, they can retrieve it unless it is lost behind them. (If you want to make the challenge even more difficult, don’t allow the tires to go backward, either.)
4. The tires are the only thing toxic peanut butter proof! You cannot use any other items for assistance, as they will all sink into the swamp.
5. If someone touches the swamp, the group must start over. If you are feeling particularly vindictive, you can assess a penalty to the participant (i.e. unable to speak, see (blindfolded or not), use one leg, etc.)

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Avoid letting participants leap from tire to tire. Not all people can do the jump and it’s not safe, anyhow. It also violates the MD² rule: “Manic Dash = Many Damaged”.
- Be careful, the tires will get slick if it is wet.
- If it looks unsafe, it probably is...

Processing Questions:

What was the most difficult part of this exercise? Were the original solutions realistic? Why or why not? Could you have done this if you had less tires? Why or why not? Was there something that could have been useful had I allowed you to use it?

Records:

None.

Level: Green
Sequence: Early
Focus: Communication / Cooperation

Description: A horizontal log or telephone pole.

Objective: To switch positions on the pole without touching the ground.



Story: Explain to everyone that we are just out through a stroll through nature. Hey, look! It's a bridge. Let's go across! Well, sure enough, as soon as everyone is on the pole, a troll jumps out and tells them they must line up in alphabetical order before he/she/it will let them cross. (Okay, lame, but I'd like to see you do better. And if you do, send it to me so I can have a better story!)

Variations: You can add an "acid rain cloud" which will make people mute (make sure you cover your mouth, otherwise it will affect you); you can have groups line up in alphabetical order by middle name; you can blindfold people, etc.

My favorite variation is to first do talking by last name, next is not talking by middle name, then to have them line up by favorite animal by size. As you give the directions, however, do NOT say they have to stay on the log. Use a phrase like, "If too many of you step down, I will point it out." Then, when they step down, say, "Wow, I'm sorry but we have a lot of people on the ground." Note, you did not say they had to start over. However, they will assume they have to...

Rules:

1. Everyone must stay on the log (unless told otherwise).
2. If one person (or a few if you're nice) touches the ground, the whole group must return to their starting positions.
3. No other items may be used to keep people on the pole (e.g. sticks). (They may use trees if they can safely lean on them, but don't say that out loud.)

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- I generally discourage putting blindfolded people on the log...
- If the log is wet, it will be very slippery!
- Tell people if they are starting to fall, they should save themselves! You may need to spot...

Processing Questions:

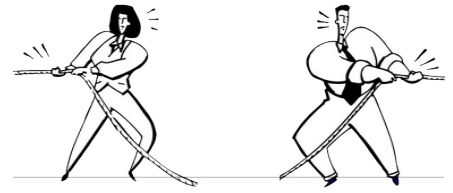
How challenging was this activity? What was challenging about this? How did the group feel when they realized they were "tricked" into staying on the log? Where did the idea that they had to stay on the log come from?

Records:

None.

TRIANGLE TENSION TRAVERSE

Level: Green
Sequence: Early
Focus: Caring



Description: A wire triangle between three trees with two multivines.

Objective: Partners attempt to move in opposite directions around the triangle.

Story: Sorry. No story here.

Variations: None.

Rules:

1. Everyone must be in partners to attempt this obstacle.
2. Both partners start at the same tree, each with their own rope.
3. Two spotters must accompany each participant, one inside the triangle and one outside. Spotters need to have their hands ready at all times. (You can have four spotters per person – two inside and two outside – for extra safety and to provide a task to keep everyone involved.)
4. If one partner touches the ground, both start over. If a partner leans to the point a spotter must intervene, both start over.
5. If you start to slip, save yourself!

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Participants usually slip in the middle of the first and middle of the last wires. These are areas to be especially aware of.
- Beware of people “swinging” when they slip off the wire.

Processing Questions:

Did your partner help you? If so, how? What was the most difficult part of this activity? Why? Did you ever have a point that you were glad you had people spotting you? Why or why not?

Records:

None.

TROLLEYS*

Level: Green
Sequence: Early
Focus: Communication

Description: Two 4" x 4" logs with ropes every 16 inches.

Objective: To move on the trolleys from Point A to Point B.

Story: Mount [Insert Your Facility Here] exploded. (If you've already played "Raging River" or "All Aboard", you can continue the storyline of lava.) I thankfully thought to bring my lava-proof skis and will happily share them with you. You must walk your group to safety.

Variations: If you need a portable version, spool out two long strips of duct tape, have people stand on them, and if they become detached, the group starts over!

Rules:

1. Everyone must be on the "Trolleys", even if there is not enough ropes for them.
2. If someone steps off the "Trolleys", everyone starts over.
3. If you start to fall, save yourself and those around you.

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Watch people getting their toes underneath the "Trolleys".
- Be careful about emotional states; this can be frustrating for some groups.
- If the group says, "Stop", make sure everyone stops!

Processing Questions:

Was there one person in the group who acted as a leader? If so, who? What makes a good leader? Experience? Being loud? How many times did you start over? Why? How could you have prevented people from slipping off?

Records:

None.



TRUST DIVE*

Level: Yellow / Red
Sequence: End
Focus: Caring

Description: A series of stair steps from ground level to approximately four feet.

Objective: To “dive” safely into the arms of the people below.

Story: No story. This is, in many ways, similar to “crowd surfing” at a concert.

Variations: None.

Rules:

1. If the group talks/jokes about dropping someone, the activity is over.
2. The team selects one person to be a “diver”. The rest of the team divides into two even lines, as in “Trust Fall”. They “zipper” their hands (see diagram below) and then wait silently for the “diver” to take position. All eyes must be on the “diver”.
3. Before diving, use the following commands:

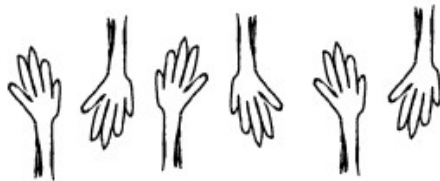
Diver: “Ready to dive.”

Team: “Ready.”

Diver: “Diving.”

Team: “Dive.”

4. The “diver” has the ability to either climb up a step or to have the group take one step away from the stairs. Each time the “diver” is successful, they may continue to climb higher or dive farther, depending on their level of comfort.
5. When you dive, you do not dive as in a pool. Instead, your goal is to fly like Superman, arms stretched out in front of you and body straight.



Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- If your group cannot handle this, they cannot do it!
- Facilitators need to be *first* in line in case the “diver” arches or fails to jump far enough!
- Watch out for wet stairs and ground!

Processing Questions:

This is a great test for “Trust Fall”. If the group can handle this, they can handle “Trust Fall”. If not, wrap up your day and go home.

Records:

None.

TRUST FALL*

Level: Red (High Level)
Sequence: End
Focus: Caring

Description: A platform 3 – 5 feet from the ground.

Objective: To fall safely into the arms of your team.

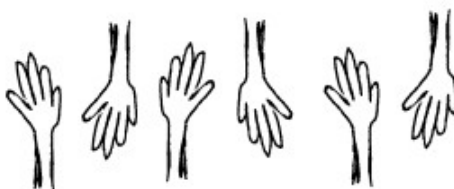
Story: This is it. The ultimate level of Caring a team can show for its members and the highest level of Trust a person can show in their team. It is a victory for a group to make it to “Trust Fall”, and they have already won by getting here!

Variations: If you need to do this as a portable element, a picnic table is a great substitute.



Rules:

1. If the group talks/jokes about dropping someone, the activity is over. (This is an NLP policy and cannot be broken by our Facilitators.)
2. Have the group line up in two equal teams on either side of the platform. You will need *at least* four people on each side! (It really is “the more the merrier”.)
3. The catching team will stand tightly together in a line, with the first person touching the platform with their shoulder. Everyone else will be shoulder-to-shoulder down the line.
4. The catching team will stand with the foot closest to the platform back about 12 inches behind their other foot. (This is not critical, but makes it less likely a falling person will land on a knee.)
5. The catching team will “zipper” their arms. (Do NOT grasp hands, wrists, etc!) They are to keep their elbows bent slightly, their hands raised (the faller will push them down) and their hands at least to the middle of the forearm of the person across from them. (I discourage hand-to-elbow contact because it puts the catching team very close together!)



6. When they are ready, a catcher at the end will make sure the line is straight and even. Any adjustments to the line should be made **before** the falling person gets into position. At this time, the catching team leans back, looks at the platform and waits silently.
7. The falling person climbs to the platform (spot them as they go up) and then leans with their back to the tree. As soon as the catching team is ready, the falling person is to take their position.
8. They are to stand with their ankles just off the edge of the platform, feet tightly held together, body locked so that it is stiff and with their hands wrapped into the sleeves of their shirt. Caution the falling person to stay locked stiff from this point on! They are not to bend as they fall!
9. When they are ready to fall, they give the following commands:

Faller: “Ready to fall.”

Team: “Ready.”

Faller: “Falling.”

Team: “Fall.”

10. After the falling person is caught, set them upright before the catching team lets go.

Safety Considerations:

- *Quick Rule Of Thumb:* If you do not think that your group could catch you safely if you were the first person to go, they are not capable of doing “Trust Fall”. Walk away! (In my opinion, 9-out-of-10 groups that come out here should not be doing this activity!)
- Be sure to check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc. prior to beginning. Watch out for wet ground and platform as this can make things slippery. Be sure to spot people who are climbing up as that is where they are in the greatest danger.
- I have two swear words I do not allow the catching team to say. These are both four letter words that all of you are familiar with. The “D” word and the “F” word. “Drop” and “Fall”. (Shame on you for thinking of other things!)
- If your group cannot handle this, they cannot do it! If someone jokes/talks about dropping someone, there is no second chance. The team is done because they have violated the emotional safety of their teammates.
- Remember at all times, this is “Challenge By Choice”, no matter what a team leader says!
- This is “Trust Fall”, not “Trust Flips”, etc. You may only do the stated activity!
- Have people remove cell phones, pagers, jewelry, glasses, etc.
- Do not allow a falling person to get in place until the team is silent and looking up.
- Have people rotate in to give people a chance to rest from catching. Rearrange the group, as necessary, to protect the falling person. (I usually allow them to place people where they want to so I can guarantee their emotional safety.)
- Review that they need to fall flat. Show them what it looks like if they bend and explain why they will only have two arms catching them if they do bend!
- Position yourself under their bottom, and choose someone strong to stand across from you. If they bend, you want training and strength there to protect them!
- If nothing else, make sure the head and back are caught! If they break a tailbone, they will sue me and I’m fine with that because they are alive to sue me. If they die...

Processing Questions:

If your group has gotten this far, praise them! They have done very well! Even if you must remove them for someone talking about dropping someone, they still had to be very impressive to even reach the obstacle, so congratulate them! Praise team members for going and for not going. It is a choice that is acceptable for them, and so they should be proud for making that choice.

“Trust is the toughest thing to earn in a group and is the quickest thing to lose.” Are there times you have trusted someone with a secret only to find they told others? Did you go right back to that person when you had another secret? Why or why not? If we had dropped the first person, the ambulance had come, resuscitated them and took them away, how many of you would **not** have done this activity? Why or why not? Remember to keep the trust people place in you!

Records:

None. Brag about how you have a perfect record of keeping participants safe!

Level: Green
Sequence: Early (Whale Watch) / End (Four Way)
Focus: Cooperation

Description: A large wooden platform mounted on a pivot.

Objective: To balance the platform.



Story: You are about to embark on a boat trip. However, the captain has moored the boat right over a reef and, if the boat is even the slightest bit off-balance, the hull will break and the ship will sink. You must all board the ship in such a way as to prevent the ship from touching the reef (pronounced “ground”).

Variations: There is a variation built on a central pivot which allows it to rock in four directions. As for a normal ‘Whale Watch’, there are a million ways to play this. Here are some:

1. Have the group all stand on the platform and then try to balance it.
2. Have the group balance the platform with half on one side and half on the other. They must now switch sides without letting the platform touch.
3. Have the group stand in a circle around the perimeter of the platform. See if they can rotate all the way around the circle without touching the ground.
4. With the platform balanced, see if the participants can (safely) exit from one side without touching the ground. (Better yet, see if they can get on!)
5. Assign everyone a board. See if they can balance the platform without their feet leaving their board.

Rules:

1. Everyone must be on the platform when it is balanced.
2. You must balance the platform for 10 seconds to count.
3. No hands can touch the platform at any time for any variation.
4. No feet may ever go under the platform for any variation.
5. If the platform touches, everyone starts over.

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- Watch toes under the platform. If they get crunched, it will take their toes off!
- Direct people on how to get off the platform so no one gets injured.
- Don’t let the group discuss “weight”; rather talk about “balance”.

Processing Questions:

How well did your team work together? What ideas were successful? Why? Was it hard to communicate ideas? Why or why not?

Records:

I had a group that came to one of my facilities and wanted to “set a record”. They then wasted 32 minutes sitting on a balanced platform. Go figure. (I think it has more to do with the laziness of my Facilitator than the desire of the group. Please do not attempt to “create” a record for this activity!)

Level: Yellow
Sequence: End
Focus: Cooperation

Description: A V-shaped set of wires close to the ground.

Objective: To move in pairs as far as possible along the cables.

Story: No story, just rules.

Variations: None.



Rules:

1. The group needs to divide itself into pairs.
2. Before the partners step on the wire, they need to have at least one spotter behind each of them. (I usually recommend two per participant, however.)
3. The partners will stand on the wire and clasp hands in a “mitten grip”. Do NOT let them interlace their fingers, as they will break them!
4. As the partners move along the wire, they will be forced to lean further out. As soon as room permits, place one person in between the two in a semi-crouched position. This way, if the two fall they will have a spotter in the middle to help them. Add additional spotters as the partners move further along.
5. Spotters in the middle will start in a semi-crouch, with their hands on their knees for added support. As the partners lean more, the spotters in the middle may be forced to go to a kneeling position.
6. Once a partner steps down or requires the aid of a spotter, that team is done.
7. Everyone must reset before the next partners are allowed to start!

Safety Considerations:

- Check the surrounding environment for roots, stumps, branches, etc.
- If possible, participants should tell the rest of the team if they are stepping down/falling.
- Don’t allow people with bad backs to fill in the middle positions. They may spot from the outside of the wires.
- Make sure all spotters are ready prior to a participant stepping onto the wire!
- Ignore the person in the picture who is only spotting with ONE hand... (Sigh!)

Processing Questions:

Which team got the farthest? Why? Were there different strategies by different partners? Why or why not? Would it have helped to have more than two people attempting this at a time?

Records:

I had a team of two teenagers (Region Two FFA in Michigan) that reached an extension of eight feet before they stepped down.

Communication

Corporate Maze
Energy Circle / Combination Lock
Spider Web
Tire Pole
Toxic Peanut Butter Swamp
TP Shuffle / Birthday Log
Trolleys

Cooperation

A-Frame
All Aboard / Icebergs
Barrel Roll / Meat Grinder
Beam (Adjustable)
Cargo Net
Corporate T
Electric Fence / High-Low
Meuse / Raging River
Mohawk Walk
Nitro Crossing / Prouty's Landing
Porthole
Pyramid
Spider Web
Team Wall
Tire Pole / Giant's Finger
Toxic Peanut Butter Swamp
TP Shuffle / Birthday Log
Whale Watch
Whale Watch – Four Way
Wild Woozy

Caring/Trust

Maze
Mohawk Walk
Multivine Traverse
Nitro Crossing / Prouty's Landing
Porthole
Pyramid
Spider Web
Triangle Tension Traverse
Trust Dive
Trust Fall

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Final Notes

Fair Use

All activities described herein are attributed to their original authors, if known. All descriptions and accounts herein conform to “Fair Use” standards. If there is any disagreement with this statement, please email us at info@whatiftheresmore.com to discuss the matter.

Liability

Acedelmar Consulting, its Staff and Volunteers, is not liable for any injury or damage caused by the use / misuse of this manual and the Team’s Kit accompanying it. Groups are responsible for having their own insurance, safety protocols, training methods, check-out procedures, and more. While we will advise in these areas, as each program is different, we cannot set a “universal standard” to be used at all facilities.

Pictures

All pictures in this manual are from groups that we have worked with; or, in a few cases, are clip-art. All participants signed a waiver allowing the use of their photos for publication. No personally-identifiable information – including, but not limited to: location, age, name, group, etc. – has been included. If you would like either you or your group’s image removed from this manual, please email us at info@whatiftheresmore.com.

Project Adventure, Inc.

Since much of modern teambuilding is owed to the works of Karl Rohnke and Project Adventure, we include copies of three of their foundational books with each kit we sell: Cowstails and Cobras II, Quicksilver, and Silver Bullets. Acedelmar Consulting, LLC. is not affiliated with Project Adventure in any way. We would encourage you to check out their program for more information, resources, or additional training by visiting their website at www.pa.org.

Training

Teambuilding programs, by their very nature, can become inherently dangerous if they are facilitated incorrectly. We STRONGLY ENCOURAGE all prospective Facilitators to participate in a minimum of one (1) day, on-site training before leading any activities. Failure to do so may result in injury or death to participants.

All other questions and concerns should be directed to Acedelmar Consulting at:

www.whatiftheresmore.com.

Variations

The pages that follow include variations to game play for the Low Ropes Course that go beyond the “basic” ones. (E.g. blindfolds, removing the ability to speak, removing the use of a limb, etc.) Facilitators who play a game using a different set of standards will be required to submit that change to the Ropes Course Team for consideration prior to playing the variation.

If approved, please indicate the Low Ropes Element, the variation, and any additional spotting concerns that may arise as a result of playing it in that fashion. If necessary, additional pages can be appended to this manual.

Please note that this space is only reserved for significant variations which may affect spotting and/or participant safety. Lesser concerns (e.g. the number of people allowed in the Corporate Maze at one time) may be discussed without the need to amend this policy.