

## THE POWER OF TEAM BUILDING

Team Building has become an important part of learning to work together as a performance group. Over the past few years, directors have noted the positive effects of using team building activities to increase the chemistry, bonding, and overall functioning of the group. Many of the games presented in this section have proven to be real “favorites” of students at camp over the past few years along with new activities that should be well-received by members of your team. Look over the games in this section and be careful not to underestimate their power/value because of their simplicity. Before you implement these activities, be aware of some guidelines you should follow to ensure a successful outcome.

1. **Make it Safe...** The idea of participating in a game sounds like great fun to some while sounding terrorizing to others. Many students have some painful experiences of having been picked last to participate on a team or have been made look foolish during a game. Be sure to create an atmosphere that is supportive and ensures that no one is hurt either physically or emotionally.
2. **Make it Clear and Relevant...** Study the game/games you are planning to play ahead of time and rehearse out loud the instructions you are going to give the participants. The last thing you want is to be unclear so that the people playing will look like “deer caught in the headlights” after your instructions. It is hard to derive a meaning from the activity if you do not understand the instructions.
3. **Value all Feedback...** Most team building games are designed for the participants to provide feedback about their experience. To encourage open communication and complete participation by team members, value all the feedback given and thank each person for his/her contribution (even if the contribution is something with which you disagree).
4. **Get Everyone’s Feedback...** One way to help facilitate a good discussion is to take a ball and toss it to someone in the group and say, “If you’ve got the ball, share an idea and then toss the ball to someone else. We’ll give our undivided attention to whoever has the ball.” This technique works well for getting people to participate who might otherwise have remained silent. A nerf ball may serve your purpose well as it is colorful and physically safe.

**SING DOWN:** Teams are created of anywhere from three to ten in a group. The leader will give the groups a word (i.e. love, boy, dance, etc.), and give the teams one minute to think of as many songs as they can with that word in it. Once the minute has passed, one team begins by singing a part of a song with that word in it. All team members must sing it together. The other team then responds with their song. **NO SONGS MAY BE REPEATED.** The team, who can name the most songs containing a particular word and can sing a few bars of each song together, wins. The process then can be repeated with another word.

**MOTION NAME GAME:** Have everyone stand in a circle or form several circles depending upon the size of the group. Anyone can begin the game by saying his/her

name and demonstrating a [physical] motion to go with it like smacking their lips, clapping their hands, or making a fist, etc. When that person is done, the entire group repeats his/her name and the physical motion. Then, the second person (on either side of the first) introduces him/herself and does a different motion. The entire group repeats that name/motion and then repeats the first name/motion. This will continue until each person has given his/her name and done their motion, and the entire group has repeated everyone's name and motions.

**CROWS AND CRANES:** Players are divided into two teams. Mark two safety/ goal lines not more than 40 feet from center. Midway between the safety/goal lines, form players in two teams facing the leader. The lines of players are about 5 feet apart. One line is “crows,” the other is “cranes.” When the leader calls “Crows,” the crows run for their goal/safety line, attempting to reach it before the cranes can tag them. If the leader calls “crawfish,” no one runs. The leader should use deception and precede his call with a “crr” sound, so players will not know what is going on. The cranes team receives a point for every member of the crows team tagged before that team reaches the goal/safety line. Each team loses a point for every one of its people running in the wrong direction or running on the call “crawfish.” The crows receive a point for each of its members who reach the safety/goal line before being tagged by a member of the cranes. You can play several rounds of this and then begin again with the crows becoming cranes and vice versa.

**INDIAN CHIEF:** The group/groups (10-20 members) sit in a circle formation and chooses a leader. One group member is asked to leave the circle and to close his/her eyes and block his/her ears. At this time, the leader will select a “Chief.” The Chief will establish a rhythm of clapping, stomping, etc. The rest of the group will follow, carefully not giving away the Chief. The Chief is the only one allowed to initiate changes in the rhythm. The person asked to leave will return to the middle of the circle where they will try to guess the Chief. The person is granted three chances to guess. If the original Chief is successful in hiding his/her identity, they will be asked to leave the circle. If the Chief is successfully chosen, a new guesser and Chief are chosen.

**SHIPS AND SAILORS:** Everyone begins spread out over the entire floor. A leader is selected who is in charge of calling out different commands such as **bunk beds** (everyone finds a partner, one lies on the floor face up, the other partner faces the opposite direction and is balanced above that person—they grab each others ankles so they look like bunk beds, another command is **mermaids** (each person forms a mermaid by lifting and folding one leg back and grabbing that leg's ankle. This makes the shape of a mermaid), another command is “**man overboard**” (each person finds a partner. One person lies on his/her stomach while the other partner places a foot on his/her back and pretends to look for someone who has been lost at sea), another command is **3 man rowing** (get in groups of three and sit on the floor in a file while using your arms to pretend like you are rowing

a boat), another command is **4 man eating** (sit in groups of 4 on the floor and pretend to eat). There are a million different commands you can invent. Mix them up with commands each person performs individually and others that are performed in various group sizes. The object is to eliminate the slowest groups responding to the commands. It is much like a drill down. The value is learning to taking directions and working together in small groups. You will find groups making alliances with one another so that no one has to get eliminated when you command 4 men eating followed by 3 men rowing, for example. Who is going to be the odd man out? This is a very popular game with students.

**BIRDIE ON A PERCH:** Form two concentric circles (an outer and inner circle) and make sure each person in a circle is partnered with the person directly across from him/her in the other circle. Everyone is standing in their circles rather than sitting. One circle should be labeled the **birdie** while the other circle is labeled the **perch**. Play music and have the circles begin to move in opposite directions, i.e., one circle begins to rotate clockwise while the other circle moves counterclockwise. When the music stops, each person has 3 seconds to find his/her partner. Then, the person who is the **perch** needs to kneel down on one knee while the person labeled the **birdie** needs to sit on the perch's opposite knee. This is much like musical chairs and the slowest couples are eliminated. Several rounds of this should produce a winning pair.

**5-5-5 GAME:** (Great camp game or, with slight modifications great game for same team) Tell students they have 5 minutes to meet 5 new friends from 5 different schools. Tell them they must find out the new friend's name, school, and at least one interesting thing about him/.her. (For the same team, think of something that could easily replace the "from 5 different schools" part. This might be find 5 new friends and name their #1 goal for the team and one other interesting thing about him/her.) Everyone should be prepared to introduce their new friends to the entire camp/team. Give the participants a "two minute warning" before stopping the activity at five minutes. After the activity, encourage students to talk to their new friends each day, cheer for each other, maybe eat lunch together, and introduce them to other members on the team, etc.

**TEAM TALK ACTIVITY:** While in team talk circles, use these questions as ice breakers, conversation starters and discussion topics:

- \*What are you most looking forward to this week at camp?
- \*What are you unsure about or afraid of coming in to camp?
- \*What do you personally want to achieve while at camp?
- \*What has been the most fun part of camp for you personally?
- \*What has been the most challenging?

\*What has been the most positive thing to happen to you at camp?

\*Think of two words to describe your team (before you came to camp and after you've been at camp).

\*What is the most important lesson you

What are you looking forward to when school starts this fall?

\*Say something positive about the person on your right, the about the person on your team who has most influenced you this week at camp.

\*What did you personally do to make camp a success for your team?

\*What did you learn from your director during camp?

\*What did you learn from your Big Sister/Brother during camp?

\*The things to change and improve are.....

\*What will you commit to doing to make sure that what you learned and achieved here is not lost?

### **PERSONAL QUESTIONS:**

\*What is your favorite (movie, food, store, animal, book, song, etc?)

\*If you could have any theme park ride in your back yard, what would it be?

\*What was your childhood nickname?

\*What is your earliest memory?

\*What is the worst chore you've ever done?

\*What is your middle name-or what do you think it should have been?

