



Unit: Team Building
Skill 16: Listening Between the Line
Activity B: Hearing Hurdles

Activity Skills:

Small group interaction, listening and discussion.

Leadership Skills:

Being able to stay focused and listen attentively in the face of distractions.

Suggested Level:

Advanced

Time:

30 minutes

Supplies needed:

- 3 by 5 note cards or small pieces of paper.
- White board or flip chart (optional).

Do Ahead:

Write out cards with descriptions of distracting behaviors.

Source:

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BACKGROUND:

Many times, someone will be speaking to us and we'll want to listen, but we just can't seem to do it. While this may be caused by something internal to us, sometimes it is easy to say that it is caused by a distracting behavior exhibited by the person speaking to you. This is not the speaker's fault, because they probably do not have any idea that their behavior – whatever the behavior, trait, etc., which is distracting might be – is bothering you.

It is important to remember in a situation like this that what the speaker is doing is totally natural to them. If they speak while wildly gesticulating with their hands and it is distracting to you, it probably is not distracting to them – in fact it is probably a strong part of their personal communications ingrained in them by their background. It might be a common trait of their family, or they may have associated for so long with a group of friends who speak this way that it is totally natural to them. It is something to be respected, but it can't be let become something that is a problem.

WHAT TO DO:

Discuss the idea of "Hearing Hurdles" with the group. Ask the group if they have any thought of what kinds of behaviors might apply, and, if you wish and have the capability, record these ideas on a board or flip chart.

Next, split the participants into two groups and have them pair off with someone from the opposite group who they do not know well or at all. Explain that you are about to pass out to each person a card with a certain distracting behavior on it. These behaviors are to be kept to themselves so their partners don't know what they are. You can pass these out randomly or pick and choose which traits to give to which pair.

Here are some example traits:

- Wild hand gestures.
- Speaking while slowly spinning in a circle.
- Speaking while snapping ones fingers repeatedly and loudly.
- Making a silly noise after every few words.
- Speaking while hopping on one foot.
- Speaking quickly while standing very close by their partner.
- Covering ones mouth and looking down at the end of each sentence.
- Speaking only with one leg crossed over the other and arms stretched out horizontally, tilting 30-40 degrees every few seconds.

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Notes:

Once the cards are passed out and everyone knows what distracting behavior they are to exhibit, tell the participants they are going to get to know one another. Explain that they will each have 5 minutes to talk about themselves, speaking with their distracting behavior. After the first person has a chance to speak, the person who has been listening must repeat back as much about the other person as they can remember. Then the roles are reversed and the process repeated.

TALK IT OVER:

Reflect:

- Was it very difficult to concentrate on what the person was saying?
- Did you use any active listening techniques to remember what your partner said more easily?
- Why do you think these behaviors were so distracting?

Apply:

- When in the past have you been distracted while talking with someone? How did you handle the situation?
- In the future, do you think you'll be able to more easily deal with distraction?
- Is there any time when bringing a distracting behavior up is appropriate?

BEYOND THE BOX:

Optional Homework:

Pay attention to how people speak over the next couple of weeks. What kinds of behaviors seem to distract you the most? Record them on a piece of paper and try to come up with a solution as to how you can concentrate or eliminate these behaviors so you can listen with your full attention.

Resources and Web Links: