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# INTRODUCTION

Groups are constantly forming and reforming. In some cases, how these groups function is just as important as why these groups function. **IT'S IN THE BACKPACK** was created to develop positive group dynamics through a multitude of experiences. These experiences were specifically selected to provide a foundation for trust and communication - the cornerstone of any good group. With this pro-active approach to group dynamics, **IT'S IN THE BACKPACK** will increase group productivity; while providing a sense of community.

When choosing which specific experiences, please remember that not every activity is going to be suitable for every group. You should always consider the characteristics of the group you will be working with and how well they mesh with the games. Think of group size, age range, gender make up, and overall personality when deciding if an activity is appropriate. Never force someone to participate!

The instructions for some of these experiences are somewhat unspecific; this is done on purpose. For participants part of the fun of the activities (especially the challenges) is to find the unique "loopholes" imbedded in each. When facilitating, try to give the instructions as they are given in this packet. If you try to go too specific and over-instruct, you may inadvertently either close or give away a "loophole" or "trick." Similarly, if a group manages to follow all the rules and accomplish a task without finding a "trick" you know about, just leave it at that. Informing them of the trick they didn't find after they are finished may actually only take away from their victory.

Also, always remember safety first! While there is little chance of injury in these experiences, overly rough or enthusiastic players may prove hazardous in almost any situation. Be sure that the area you're using is clear of any dangerous obstacles or objects and always be on the watch for any potentially dangerous behavior. This is especially important anytime blindfolds are involved!

Many of these games have suggested variations. Feel free to use these at any time! Just always be sure to read your audience and make sure any variations or changes are safe and appropriate.

Finally, **ALWAYS** be sure to end each experience with a discussion or debriefing. This reflection time is critical so participants can process what happened and what was learned. You can use the discussion questions that have been included with each experience, or you can come up with your own. The participants may surprise you with answers you never even thought of! Go with the flow of the discussion, explore areas and ideas they uncover, and take advantage of teachable moments. Everyone will get something different out of each activity.

Enjoy!

# NO PROP GAMES

## AH SOH KOH

Everyone sits in a circle, and learns the 3 commands and their movements.

- 1) Ah – the person says “Ah” loudly, and takes their left or right arm across their chest, pointing at the person next to them
- 2) Soh - the person says “Soh” loudly, and takes their left or right arm above their head, pointing at the person next to them
- 3) Koh – the person puts both arms together in front of them and point to someone else, anywhere in the circle.

The phrases must always go in that order, and each phrase needs its correct hand motion. You go when you are pointed at by someone next to you using “ah” or “soh,” or by someone across from you using “koh.” When you are “koh”ed at by someone you can either start again with “Ah” or put your hands up and say “nooooooo.” If you say “nooooooo” then the person who said “koh” has to start again with “Ah.” If you mess up, you step out of the circle and walk around the outside trying to confuse people by shouting random words.

## CATCH ME IF YOU CAN

Players should be paired up. All players divide into two lines (facing in) shoulder to shoulder, with partners facing each other. Participants should be given approximately 30 seconds to look at their partners, taking in all details about the individual. The leader then instructs the two lines to turn and face away from the center. One or both lines has 15-20 seconds to change something about their appearance (i.e. change a watch to different wrist, unbutton a button, remove a belt, etc.). The change must be discrete, but visible to the partner. The players again turn in to face each other and have 30 seconds to discover the physical changes that have been made. Players get to interact with each other and have fun!

## CROCODILE RACE

Form teams of 4 - 10 players. Each team stands in a straight line. One person is the leader and all of the others on the team need to put their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. Then the team should crouch down, forming the crocodile. Races can be out to a point and back or whatever adventurous, but safe, idea you can come up with.

## **DRAGON RACE**

Form two equal lines with players in a single file line. Each player reaches his left hand through their legs and grabs the right hand of the person behind them. This forms the Dragon Chain. The object of the game is to have each Dragon run around a given point or person and back to a place without breaking. Any time a team breaks, the kids have to run back and start over.

## **FIVE THINGS IN COMMON**

Split the group up into pairs. Each pair will have 30 seconds to find 5 things they have in common. At the end of the 30 seconds, put two pairs together and give the foursome a minute to find something all 4 students have in common. Finally, each group can present the list of things they have in common. You can use this activity to form groups.

## **GIANTS, WIZARDS AND ELVES**

Split group up into 2 teams, designate 2 safety zones, one on each teams side, and designate a middle area. Each team then gets in a huddle and picks what they want to be as a team, a giant, a wizard or an elf. Giants put their hands up over their heads, wizards put their hands out straight in front of them wiggling their fingers, and elves make pointy ears on their head with their pointer fingers. Once the teams have decided their thing to be, they come up to the center spot and line up face to face, then on a count of 3, everyone does whatever action their team picked. Giants beat elves, elves beat wizards and wizards beat giants, so the team that beats the winning team chases the other and tries to tag as many members on the other team as possible before they reach the safety zone. The members from the team that get tagged become a part of the other team.

## **HA**

Ask the participants to form a circle. When they are ready explain that the object of this activity is for the participants, without laughing, to pass the word "ha" around the circle. Designate one participant to be the head of the circle. That participant begins by saying "ha". The person sitting to his or her right must repeat the "ha" and then say another "ha." The third person must say ha ha and then given an additional "ha." In this manner the "ha" continues around the circle. It ends when all of the participants, trying not to laugh (a virtual impossibility), have repeated the "ha's" that preceded them and then added their own "ha."

*Variations: Use another word in place of "ha." For example: "yuck," "har," or "tee hee." or ask all of the participants to repeat the "ha's" stopping only to let the person whose turn it is pipe in with his or her own. You can continue the exercise for five minutes regardless of how many times the "ha's" go around the circle.*

## HAND LAND

Have the group lie on their backs, with their heads together, ear-to-ear, like spokes in a wheel. If there are more than eight of you, this can be problematic. So make two groups or more even. Put your hands up. Now participants can observe the weirdness of all those hands in the air, apparently without owners. Let your hands get to know each other. Engage in profound dialogue.

## I SPY

One person says " I spy with my little eye, something that is ....(color)". Then others try to guess what the object is and the one who guesses it takes the next turn.

## IT COULD BE WORSE

Set up the group in a circle or in pairs. The starting player says something innocuous, like "I almost overslept." Next player says something like "It could've been worse. You could've been late." Then the next, or other, says something worse, like, "It could've been even worse than that. You could've been in your underwear." And then the next or other tries to find something worse than that. Or, the next person says "it could be better..." And so it goes.

## JEDI NUMBERS

Everyone stands in a circle, and everyone puts their heads down. They then need to count up to a certain number (usually just the number of people there are in the group, so everyone gets one number) one at a time without two people talking at once. If two people talk at once, the groups starts over at one.

## PEOPLE TO PEOPLE

Everyone stands in a circle with one person in the center. The person in the center yells, "people to people" and claps their hands together after each time they say people. They say "people," clap, "people," clap, twice and after the second time they will say 2 body parts. For example, they could say "head to foot." Then everyone including that person must try to find a partner and have a head touching a foot, whoever doesn't find a partner is then in the center.

## POINT MONSTER

Establish start and finish lines. Determine the number of points of contact using the following equation. (# of people divided by 2+1 = points of contact. The group will go through a transformation and become a Point Monster. Point Monsters must travel using only a selected number of points of contact. For example, a person standing on two feet uses two points of contact while a person laying on the ground only uses one.

**STAND BY ME**

Have everyone in your group stand around you in some ridiculous pose. Have them freeze and memorize exactly how they are standing. Instruct them that every time you say, "Stand by me" you want them to get in this exact pose. You will be timing them and doing other things to make it fun and interesting (like saying, "Stand by me" during flag raising").

**THIS IS A SHOE**

Players sit in a circle. The leader has an object in his or her hand (for example, a shoe) and explains how the game is played, going forwards and backwards, one person at a time. S/he passes the object on to the next in line, saying, "This is a shoe."

The next person asks, "A what?" The first person again answers, "A shoe."

Now the leader repeats, "This is a shoe" and the second player repeats to the next in line: "A shoe."

The third player now asks "A what?" and passes this question back down the line to the leader who answers, "A shoe."

This word is passed on down the line until the fourth person is reached, who also now asks the question, "A what?" is passed back again to the leader.

The game continues in this way until everyone has participated.

**TRIANGLE TAG**

Have participants get into groups of four. In the group of four, three people should join hands making a triangle. The person who is not part of the triangle is IT. The person furthest away for the "IT" is the "TARGET". "IT" will have one minute to tag the "TARGET" person...while the other members of the triangle act as blockers. After a minute "SWITCH" is called and a new triangle is formed. Four multiple groups of four, at any time in the exercise "CHANGE" may be called. At this time participants must get into a new group of four.

**TRUTH, TRUTH, WHOPPER**

Give the group some time to write down two things about themselves that are true, and one thing that is a "WHOPPER." Each group member will then share these facts about themselves and the rest of the group has to figure out which "fact" is actually a "WHOPPER."

## WOOSH

Have everyone in your group make a circle. The leader pulls an invisible 'woosh' ball from their pocket. They explain that the woosh ball is very light and it just sort of floats there in their hand. When passing the woosh ball it actually makes the noise "woosh." So when passing, either to the right or left, it makes the "woosh" sound. The person receiving the woosh ball has many options. They can receive the woosh and pass it along. They can say "Wao" and put their hands up to refuse the woosh, in which case the person trying to pass the woosh ball must turn to their other side to pass it. Sometimes when a person gets the woosh ball they get so excited and the energy of the woosh ball takes over their soul and they go "freakalistic," which in turn makes the entire group go "freakalistic." Everyone must dance around in the circle and find a new place to stand. The object of the "freakalistic" is to get as silly as possible. If someone in the circle falters when they get passed the woosh, or messes up the flow, they must "boing." A "boing" is a physical admission that they messed up the flow of the woosh. They put their hands together above their head and bend at the knees and say, "boing."

# BALL GAMES

## BANANA

Equipment needed: A sock, small ball or real banana. Form a circle with all players sitting on the floor. It is important for the players to sit close together with their knees up and their hands tucked under their legs. The person in the middle has to figure out where the banana is as the people in the circle are passing the "banana" under their legs secretly.

## GROUP JUGGLING

Have the group stand in a circle. Start things off by throwing a ball to someone across the group and say his/her name. That person then throws it to someone else, saying that person's name. Keep going until everyone has caught and thrown the ball. Everyone needs to remember the name of the person he/she threw it to.

Practice! Send the ball around at least once more, always throwing it to the same person and saying his/her name before throwing. Also remember who is throwing balls to you! Add additional balls or objects to the game. The idea is to try to keep everything aloft and off the ground. Time how long it takes for one object to make it around. Count the number of drops and try to improve as a whole group. For an extra bit of confusion, reverse direction.

## HUMAN PINBALL

All players except one stand in a circle, facing outwards. Spread your legs as wide as comfortable until your feet are touching your neighbors on either side. Everyone bend down and swing your arms between your legs. (flippers) The one person left over enters the circle as the moveable target. The flippers try to hit him by knocking a ball back and forth across the circle. If the target is hit, the person who hit him goes in the circle and becomes the new target.

## KEEP IT GOING

Start by having all participants sit. The object is to count every time the beach ball is hit by a hand (or head). If the beach ball at anytime rolls flat (no bouncing) on the floor the count starts over again at 1. The ball can bounce off the walls, tables, floor, ceiling etc., but just cannot roll flat. The final goal is to see if the team can break their own record.

Added Rules:

- No one is allowed to stand up as long as the ball is in play.
- No kicking, spiking
- No monopolizing the ball only 2 hits in a row by same person count
- Not allowed to have just a small group pass back and forth.

## SPUD

Throw the beach ball up in the air and call a number. Ask number 1 is called, if the player catches the beach ball he/she calls another number. (Each player has been given his own number.) If the player does not catch the ball he/she calls "FREEZE" and takes three giant steps and tries to hit a person with the ball below the waist. If he hits the person then they get a point against them and get to call a new number. If the player misses the person then he/she gets a point against them and has to throw the ball up.

# GAMES WITH BLINDFOLDS

## HUG A TREE

Start in a forested area. Divide group into pairs of two (one is blindfolded and the other is not). The blindfolded person is to be the tree-hugger. The tree-hugger is lead through the trees and then placed next to a special tree. The tree-hugger touches the tree and tries to memorize its size, shape, location, texture, etc. The tree-hugger person is lead back to the starting point, takes his/her blindfold off and tries to locate his/her tree.

Swap. Usually participants like to have a couple of turns at being blindfolded and trying to find a tree. ***Do a demonstration and watch out for careless guiding!***



## HUMAN KNOT

Everyone should stand close together in a circle. If you are using attachers, give each person one. Simultaneously, everybody should reach up and grab the hands of two other people (if using attachers, each person should grab one with their free hand) Be sure you are holding on to two different people! Attempt to unravel the knot so everyone is again standing in one big circle without breaking grips. If a grip is broken the group must start over. \*NOTE: you can have youth connect using blindfolds instead of hold hands.

*Variations: You can "handicap" some members by blindfolding or muting them. Another option is, if the group is having a lot of trouble, they can perform a "surgery" by deciding on one set of hands to break and rejoin at any place. The group cannot move, however, until they are reconnected.*

## STALKER

Establish rough boundaries (about 50 feet by 50 feet). Break your group in half. One half gets blindfolds and poker chips. Those who have blindfolds and poker chips spread out within the boundaries, place the poker chip between their feet (not touching them) and put their blindfolds on. The other half begins to stalk the blindfolded players in an effort to obtain a poker chip. In an attempt to pinpoint a stalker, the blindfolded players may point at a sound. If a stalker is there, the two players switch positions.

# GAMES WITH ROPE

## ELECTRIC FENCE

Tie the rope between two trees, chairs, or any other sturdy and stable items (you can also have two people hold the rope, but they have to be able to keep it at a consistent height). The rope should be an inch or two higher than the top of the leg of the shortest person. Everyone should connect together by linking arms, holding hands, or holding on to an "attacher" such as a piece of fabric or a sock. The entire team must try to cross over the rope without touching it. If a team member touches the rope, everyone must start over again.

*Variations: If you have a younger group, you might want to make it a bit easier by not having everyone link together. Another fun alternative is lowering the rope to the height of the tallest person's knee and having everyone go under the rope. In this variation, no one can touch the rope or the ground around the rope (usually the space of about one to two feet on either side. Be sure to mark the "off limits" area with masking tape or chalk).*

## HELICOPTER

Have the group form a circle and have one member stand in the center with the rope. This person is called the "spinner". Have the spinner turn in a circle while holding one end of the rope (Group Jump Rope). As group members hit the rope they are asked to leave the circle and sit down. The next "spinner" will be the last person standing.

## HOOP PASS

Have the group form a circle holding hands (or connected with "attachers" like a piece of fabric or a sock). Have two people break their grip and rejoin through the center of a hoop. At "Go" the group must pass the hoop around the circle as fast as they can without breaking their grips until the hoop is back where it started. Time how long it takes and try to break your own record. If anyone breaks their grip, you must start over again.

*Variations: Add a second hoop on the opposite side of the circle. Have a hoop race with both hoops coming toward each other. The hoop that makes it back to its starting place first wins. You may also add a few blindfolded people to the group. You can also have the group set a goal of how long it will take to pass the hoop(s) around.*

## ISLAND

Take the rope and tie it into a circle. Lay it on the ground and have your entire group try to get inside the circle without having any parts touching outside the circle. Once the group has completed this task have the group leave the circle and make it smaller. See how small your group can go! For larger groups begin by tying two ropes together. Remember safety first on this one!

## LIMBO

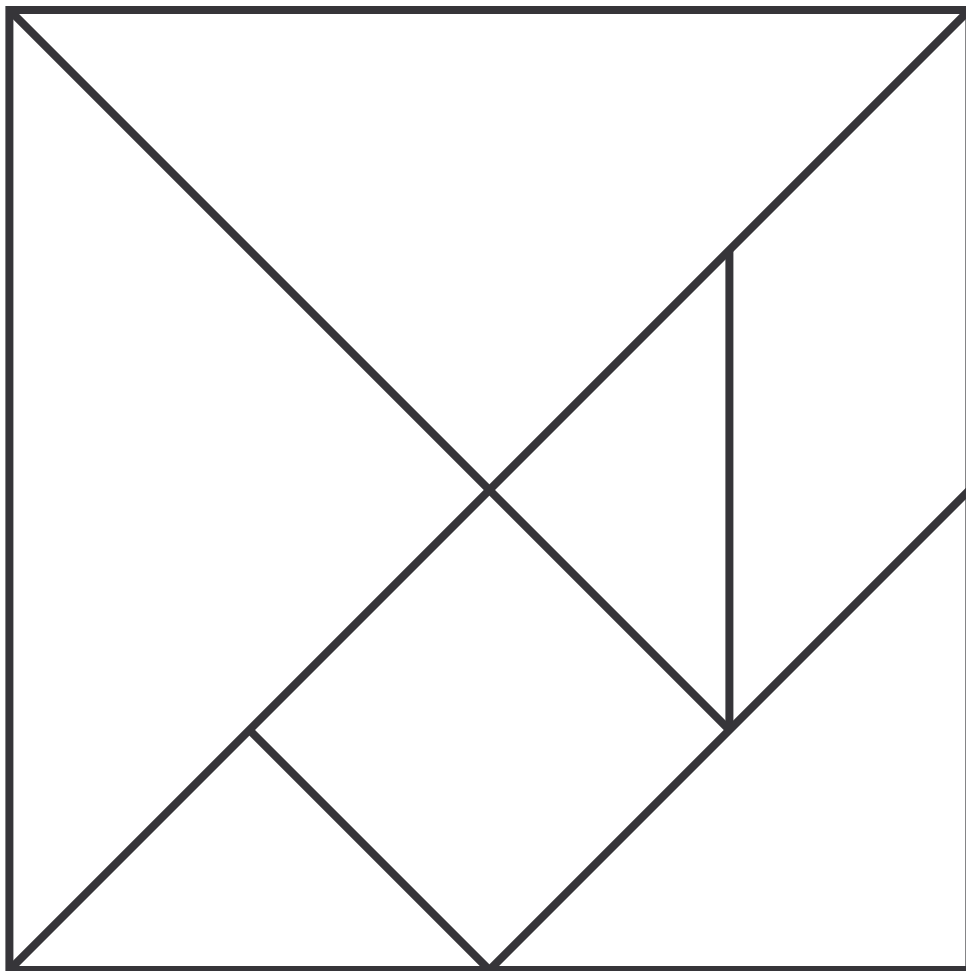
Have two people hold the rope on each end about 5 feet off the ground. Have each person try to go under the rope without touching it. If a person touches it they are out for the rest of the game. After everyone has attempted at the first height, the rope should be lowered and have the entire group try again. The last two people to limbo become the new rope holders.

## MAGIC DOOR

Have two group members, "The Posts" begin swinging the rope like a group jump roping exercise. Once a consistent rhythm has been established have the entire group go through the "Magic Door" one at a time. The rules of the Magic Door are simple... each member must go through in order as the rope strikes the ground. If one person from the group misses the entire group needs to try again. (The trick to this one is that the groups can cross through the door anywhere between the two posts)

# TANGRAMS

Here is a TANGRAM pattern. Photocopy this pattern on card stock, cut out and place into a plastic bag. Make many TANGRAM sets so you can have people work in small groups.



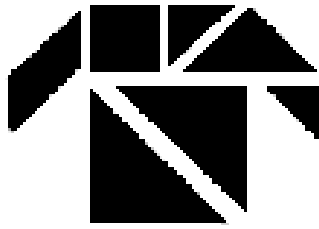
# TANGRAMS



### ANSWERS TO TANGRAMS



**CHAIR**



**SHIRT**



**BOOT**



**ROOSTER**



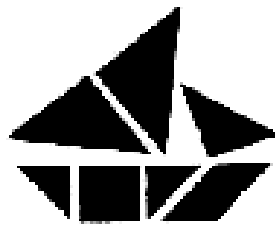
**KANGAROO**



**HORSE**



**CANDLE**



**SAILBOAT**



**WATERING CAN**

## MATERIALS LIST

As mentioned in the introduction, these games were selected in part because of the relatively low number and excellent portability of supplies. You might also have noticed that many of the materials required appear repeatedly in several different games (this was also done on purpose; aren't we clever!). Here is a list of all of the materials required for the games. If you want you can substitute items as long as they are safe and appropriate.

**Beach Balls**—4 small, 2 large

**Rubber Kickball/Playground Ball**

**Rope**— 2 ropes approximately 5 -6 feet length

**Blindfolds**—10 (can double as "attachers" for games where hand holding is required)

**Tangrams**— 3-4 sets

Good luck!

## RESOURCES

Fluegelman, Andrew. *The New Games Book*, Dolphin/Doubleday. New York, New York. 1976.

Jones, Alanna. *More Team-Building Activities For Every Group*, Rec Room Publishing. Richland, Washington. 2002.

Nicholson, Don; LeAnn Million. *Havin' Fun Ain't For Sissies: Expanded Resource Packet*, 2003.

Rohnke, Karl. *Silver Bullets: A Guide to Initiative Problems, Adventure Games, and Trust Activities*, Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company. Dubuque, Iowa. 1984.

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