

APRIL FOCUS: Audience Participation—Oh No!!



As a student activity adviser one is always in the situation of doing workshops and presentations for student leaders or attending workshops and conferences to learn leadership techniques. When presenting or being the one hearing the presentation there are two words that can strike fear and make people cringe- **audience participation.**

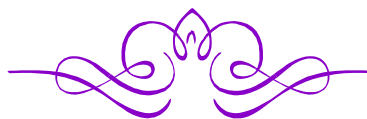
Most of the best speakers insist on getting audience volunteers, bringing them up on stage, breaking them up in small groups, forcing strangers to talk to one another, and forcing individuals to talk. This is done because it works!

Most people, especially the shy ones hate it, but getting people involved is often the best way to engage, inform, and persuade. When the audience is involved

in a meaningful way it is amazing what can happen. “Stand and deliver” speakers, especially the ones with the boring power point presentations, usually never connect with their audience.

Remember that many people are initially reluctant to participate in any activity that has even the smallest chance of causing them personal embarrassment. Therefore the first attempts to involve the audience should be non-threatening activities. Don't get too complex and fancy in the beginning. Always read your audience.

Audience participation can make a session more enriching and valuable for everyone involved. When students are involved be sure that everyone participates. Don't let those shy kids sit on the back row and be ignored.



Paper Chute

This is an activity to teach students to work together. Divide the group into pairs and give each pair 4 -8-1/2 x 11 pieces of paper and 6 paper clips. Ask each pair to construct an apparatus using all of the resources provided so when dropped from 8 feet will take the longest time to reach the ground. Give them 5 minutes to complete the task. When the time is up call time and have each group report to the drop zone. No more building or adaptations can take place in the drop zone. Stairs or a ladder will work for the drop. With a stop watch, time the drop from when it is released until it hits the ground.

After all drops are complete discuss the following:

- What was the most difficult part of this activity?
- Did you and your partner put any planning into your chute or just start to build?
- Which one of you took the leadership role? Did this help or hinder the process?
- Could each of you share ideas with the other?
- Was it easy to work with your partner?
- How did your chute float?
- What changes would you now make so that it would float longer?

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Paper Chute

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- How did each pair react to the chutes of the other pairs?
- What one resource beside paper and paper clips would you add to the activity to make it more successful?

This activity is similar to the egg drop but not nearly as messy.

Milling Around

Here is another way to divide people into any size group.

Tell the group that when you say "Mill Around" they are to walk around and shake hands and meet as many people as possible. When you say a number, they are to form a group of that number and sit in a circle. Then you will again say "Mill Around" and they are up and meeting people. Repeat this process several times until you get them into the size group desired. After several times they will start to leave their friends and actually meet new people.

Across The Great Divide

This activity will get the group to work together. Determine the size group that is needed and have each group line up side by side facing the same direction. Have them position their feet where the outside of each foot touches the outside of the foot on either side of them.

Explain the following: "When settlers traveled to the West they learned that they needed to work together. So to get the deed to a piece of land they must move the entire group from one point to another without breaking the contact of any of the feet." If contact is broken at any place the entire group must return to the starting point. Variations include blindfolds and no talking.

Representative Objects

Here is another opener to get people to think creatively. Divide participants into groups and be sure each person has paper and pencil. Ask them to consider what object best represents them and then draw it. After the drawings are finished ask each person to show their drawing to the group and complete the following phrases:

- **If I were an object I would be...**
- **I chose this object because of its strength in the areas of...**
- **However, there are also some weaknesses such as...**
- **And just like me, this object tends to be...**

As a variation ask them to think of an animal instead of an object.



"Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success."

~ Henry Ford

Personal Lifelines

This is an opener to help people get to know one another better. The best group size is 8 to 10 people. It requires paper and pen for all.

Ask each person to draw a line on a piece of paper (or several pieces of paper if necessary) representing their life. At the far end write the date of birth and mark the other end with the present date. Ask them to record important events in their life showing what brought them to where they are today. Then have each person explain their lifeline to their group. It may be necessary to set a time limit for each person. After each person has talked to their group, charts can be posted on the wall for others to see.

If you use this activity with a leadership class, posting them on the classroom wall is a great idea.

THINK SPRING !!

