

Empathy Games



A collection of games to help understand the life and situations that people experience within your community.



Empathy

Empathy is a deep appreciation for another's situation and point of view.

Empathy is Action

Empathy begins with awareness, understanding, feeling, caring, perceiving a similarity of experience, and compassion. But the difficult part of empathy is taking action that truly helps another.

Increasing Empathy

Empathy is present in most people, and certain activities can increase empathy, or at least cooperation, between people. One key to empathy is understanding first in yourself, then in others.

Feeling Empathy for people we might dislike

We all know people who are generally difficult to like. How can you have empathy for such people? The answer is that you don't have to like someone to want the best for them. You may feel sad they are like this and you can want them to: become more aware of how they annoy others, take steps to improve themselves, become more responsible, care more for others, and take other steps to become more satisfied and peaceful.

Acting with empathy can be very difficult. Here is an example of a situation where it may be difficult to know what is the right thing to do:

Patrick receives a pay check each Friday. He quickly spends it on tobacco, alcohol, and gambling. By Monday he is getting hungry and asks you to lend him \$50 for food. What is the empathic response?

Follow these general steps for acting with empathy:

- Preserve dignity and avoid humiliation.
- Engage in a dialogue to understand his point of view and to determine his specific needs.

Throughout the dialogue keep in mind:

- What he asks for may not be what he needs. Continue the dialogue until you both understand his needs.
- Every person always has needs for autonomy, competency, and relatedness but is unlikely to express these. This may lead to mixed feelings about change.
- Help him to meet his needs to the extent you are willing and able to.

Keep in mind:

- You are responsible for your choices and actions.
- He is responsible for his choices and actions.
- You can change some things but not others.

This game resource will help your Scouts to understand the issues that might present themselves within a community.

You can choose the games that best suit the situation you want to explore.

These games are fun to play but also have a serious message. When the game is played it is important that some form of group discussion takes place. This discussion will help to identify what has been learned by playing the game and the issues that needs to be considered.

The content of all the games can be or may need to be adapted to suit your own situation or need.

The collection of games has been compiled from many different countries so adaptation of game content and situations will be required to suit your culture or perspective.



The Exclusion Game

Aim

To enable participants to experience exclusion and domination in a safe environment encouraging empathy and solidarity with others

Time- 30 minutes

Materials

Sheets of sticky dots in three different colours

What to do

Divide participants into three groups. Place a dot on the forehead of each participant: Red for one group, Green for another and Blue for the third.

Tell participants that Greens are all in their 30's and 40's years of age and that they have all the power. Give them chairs to sit on and sweets. Tell the Reds that they are all over 65 years old and to stand together with their noses touching one wall and not to look around or talk.

Tell Blues that they are all under 18 years of age and that they must do exactly what the Greens say. You can give Greens some suggestions for instruction such as hop on one leg, do press ups, make animal noises, pretend to be elephants.

Repeat with Blues being in their 30's and 40's years of age and having all the power, Reds being under 18 years old and following Blues instructions and Greens being over 65 years old with the noses against a wall.

Repeat with Reds being in their 30's and 40's years of age and having all the power, Greens being under 18 years old, following their instructions and Blues being over 65 years old with noses against the wall.

Bring the group back together in a circle. Ask all participants to remove the dots from their head and to shake out their arms and legs taking deep breaths.

It is important to ensure participants shake out any anger built up in the game and have the opportunity to discuss how the game made them feel.



Discussion Questions

How did each participant feel at each stage of the game?

Does this game reflect how people of different ages are treated in your community? How are young people treated? How are old people treated?

What other groups in your community experience exclusion?

Where do you think exclusion and oppression like this happens around the world?

Goal

Participants will discover the various things they have in common with others, regardless of background, race, or culture.

Time: 20–30 minutes.

Materials:

Enough pipe cleaners so that each participant has four. Long pipe cleaners are best, although the shorter variety may be used. Provide a variety of colors.

Procedure:

Place the pipe cleaners on a central table and ask each person to select four pipe cleaners in the colors of their choice.

Step 1.

Tell participants that their task is to shape the pipe cleaners to represent something that is very important in their life or something that is an important goal in their life. Allow about five to seven minutes. The trainer should circulate around the room to observe the creations that participants make.

Step 2.

Working with the person next to them, ask participants to try to guess what each other's creations represent.



Step 3.

As a total group, ask participants to stand if their creation represents the concept that you name. For example, say, "If your creation represents something to do with *religion*, please stand."

Note the number of people who are standing. Once they are seated, call on those to stand whose creation represents another concept. Concepts may include religion, family, friends, money, education, health, or others that you notice.

When most people have had a chance to identify with one of the groups standing, ask those who have not yet stood to raise their hands. Ask one of the people with a raised hand to share what his or her creation represents. Then ask if anyone else made a creation that represents another member of the group.

Common Ground

Props: Enough chairs for all participants, minus one.

Purpose: Icebreaker



Procedure:

Group sits in a circle of chairs with one person standing in the middle (no empty chairs). The person in the middle says "I seek common ground with... people who were born east of the Paris!" Anyone who was, including the person asking the question, must get up and run across the circle to find a new seat. You can't take the seat of the person next to you! There will be one person left in the middle who must ask the next question. Possibilities include: people who... wear glasses! Likes vanilla ice cream better than chocolate!

You can also guide the questions a little deeper... "I seek common ground with people who have... worked with the homeless."

The facilitator may choose to ask the first few questions to get the game going and set the tone.



Human Knot

Props: None

Purpose: Team building, bending the personal space bubble, Communication

Procedure: Get the group in a tight circle. Have the members of the group reach in with their tight hands and grasp one of the right hands available. Repeat with left hands. Then ask them to unravel the knot. People may not let go. The circle of hands is to remain unbroken. However, it may be necessary to change grips due to the angle of arms and bodies. One variation is for the group to stay silent during the entire activity. You can easily use this activity as a metaphor for community activism that illustrates an opportunity for broad perspectives to work together towards a common goal.



Spider Web

Props: A ball of string

Purpose: Reflection, closing activity

Procedure: Participants form a circle, with the facilitator in the circle holding a ball of string. Start by tossing the ball to a participant, holding onto the end of the string as you throw it. State something you appreciate about that person participating in your shared work. The appreciation can be about something that recently happened or about the other person in general. The ball then travels across the circle to each player with everyone holding onto a piece of the string once the ball is tossed. Once everyone is holding onto the string and it is crisscrosses throughout the circle the facilitator, uses scissors to cut through the string, saying "As we cut the ties to the games we've played (or activity we've finished), we leave each person a piece of string in their hand to remind them of the renewed community and new connections they have made."

Touch The Can

Props: A tin can

Purpose: Teamwork, communication, planning and touching

Procedure: Get the group around the can. Tell the group they all must be touching the can at once, with their... (finger, toe, knee, elbow, shoulder...). Variations: Depending on the size of the group, use larger AND smaller items, and gradually get the group to come closer and closer together physically. Facilitator may have the group transport the object to a different area with a bizarre matching of body parts (imagine a group of 10 people carrying a plastic throwing disc across the room on their knees).





If we slept for 100 years

If we slept for 100 years, what would the world look like and what would we do? Individuals or groups can dream, draw, write, act, discuss, etc. possible scenarios. Such activities help people to envisage new possibilities for more sustainable relations with nature.



The Lifeboat

Purpose: Scouts work together to overcome a challenge.

Tell Scouts that they are involved in a shipwreck. Twelve of them managed to get into a lifeboat. However, after a short time everyone realizes that there are too many people on board. The boat will capsize and everyone will drown unless three people are thrown out. Which three will be the unlucky ones? Nobody can swim and there are no life jackets!

In mixed patrols, decide who leaves the lifeboat.

- A sailor with a broken arm;
- A doctor who is a drug addict;
- A young mother;
- Her small child;
- A grandmother who has organised an gained a national reputation for a meals-on-wheels service for the whole country;
- A youth club leader who is a homosexual;
- A successful business man who employs 250 people but who pays them an unjust wage;
- The leader of a country;
- A young nurse;
- A twelve year old mentally retarded child, the only son of a widow aged 40;
- A blind teenage girl who is a famous musician;
- A 70 year old missionary.



How did Scouts feel when dealing with this activity?

What criteria did they use?

What problems or issues did they face?

Disability Awareness

Purpose: Scouts begin to challenge personal prejudices and stereotypes in relation to disability issues.

Try out at least three of the following activities. After each, discuss Scouts feelings and the difficulties they encountered:

- **Visually Impaired** - equipment needed: jug, water, cup, blind fold.

Place the blindfold on the Scout and ask them to make a cup of tea (show them where the sink, cup and jug are). Remember to use cold water so that they will not burn themselves. It is not as easy as they might think.

- **Hearing Impaired** – equipment needed: ear muffs.

Place the ear muffs on one of the Scouts and ensure that they cannot hear anything. Take them back to their patrol with other Scouts who can hear perfectly. Stand with your back slightly away from the person with the ear muffs. Give the patrol a set of instructions to follow. The Scout wearing the ear muffs will find that they cannot follow the instructions.

- **Physically disabled** – equipment needed: wheelchair.

Take the Scouts outside with the wheelchair. Scouts should each have a turn at sitting in the wheelchair and trying to get back into the building. Most buildings (due to their age) are not wheelchair accessible and disabled people cannot get into buildings that do not have ramps, wide doorways or doors that open inwards.

- **Mentally disabled** – ask a Scout to volunteer.

Take (s)he away from the rest of the Troop and explain that they cannot speak and have the mental ability of a one year old child. Their task is to try and tell the other Scouts that they want a drink or that they have a pain (without speaking). The rest of the Scouts must decide what the person is asking for. Try this out with other volunteers.



- **Disabled due to an illness** – ask a Scout to sit in a chair in the middle of the room.

Explain to them that they are a Stroke victim and no longer able to move or speak. However their brain is still functioning properly. They have to tell the rest of the Troop that they want something. The rest of the group must decide what it is.

In each of the above cases how did the Scouts feel about not being able to do simple everyday tasks?



A World of Diversity

Purpose: Scouts explore and celebrate diversity on a global scale.

Imagine the entire population of the world was shrunk to precisely 100 and everyone lived on an island.

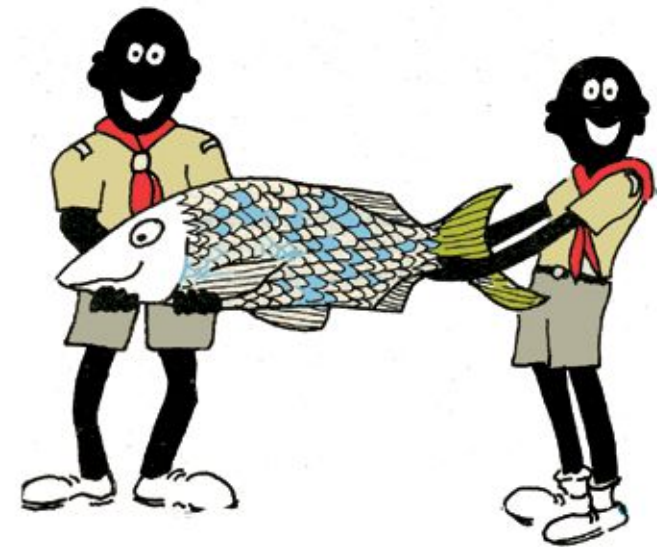
Ask patrols to consider how they think the population would be split between:

- Male and female? • Different cultures? • Wealth? • Education? • Health?
- White and non-white? • Christian and non-Christian?

Answers

- 58 Asians, 15 Europeans, 16 from the Western Hemisphere, both north and south, 11 Africans;
- 52 would be female, 48 would be male;
- 70 would be non-white, 30 would be white;
- 70 would be non-Christian, 30 would be Christian;
- 89 would be heterosexual, 11 would be homosexual;
- 6 people would possess 59% of the entire world's wealth and all 6 would be from the United States;
- 80 would live in substandard housing;
- 70 would be unable to read;
- 50 would suffer from malnutrition;
- 1 would be near death, 1 would be near birth;
- 1 would have a college education;
- 1 would own a computer.

(Adapted from 'Award Journal', Spring 2000)



Were you surprised by any of your answers?

How accurate were you in your estimations?

The Value we place on human life

Purpose: Scouts celebrate their own personal values and beliefs.

As we explore our own identity, one of the issues that often strikes us is how little time we seem to have to give to the things we enjoy. How much value do we really place on the opportunities and benefits modern western society allows us? The traditional Scout method of enjoying the out of doors helps us understand ourselves better in this light. Try out the following activity with your Group:

Scouts, at an overnight camp may take part in this activity, based around the following ideas:

- a) Leaders should remove all kitchen utensils, except for one coffee-pot and one saucepan.
- b) Prepare a camp meal along the following lines:
 - **Breakfast – a cup of coffee and bread (no butter or jam);**
 - **Lunch – a few potatoes, onions or peas and a piece of bread;**
 - **Nothing left for supper. Supper will therefore consist of what the Venture Scouts can find in the surrounding area (NB it is strictly forbidden to trespass on private property, to collect fruit or to buy anything from a local shop.)**
- c) Announce that the water is strictly rationed. Each scout tent will receive five liters per day. This will be used for drinking, making tea and coffee, for cleaning teeth, washing up etc.
- d) Toilet facilities are no longer available – no soap or toilet paper.
- e) Collect all newspapers, magazines and books and put them in a locked cupboard. Also collect all radios and leave only one for the whole camp.
- f) Act out a situation where there has been an accident at camp and three Scouts are seriously injured. They have to be taken to hospital. The nearest hospital is 20 km away. There is only one car to transport them in, but there may not be enough petrol in it to travel 20 km. There is no petrol station! How should they organise themselves?
- g) Divide the camp into small sub-camps or areas. Each one represents a given country. No one may leave his or her area without a passport. Only 5 passports will be made available per area and they will be given to those who can give a valid reason for going to a different area.

This is the general outline for the camp. Please note that the concern for Venture Scouts safety should be paramount. Drinking from dirty cups or polluted water should be avoided. The activity should be continued only for a short time so that the Venture Scouts begin to experience only some of the discomfort that others face.

Evaluation:

Scouts will be able to experience the feelings of frustration, anxiety and hopelessness experienced by someone living in conditions of extreme poverty. The activity should spark a few thoughts on how much value we place on human life.



Disability Awareness

Purpose: Scouts examine how their own bias can impact on their understanding of disability issues.

Time: 30 minutes

Give each Scout a card labelled as follows:

DEAF
AMPUTEE
SEVERE SPEECH IMPEDIMENT
WHEELCHAIR USER
FULLY ABLE BODIED

Add incidents as appropriate

Scouts should line up at one end of the room. Each Scout must not show their card to anyone else. The leader asks the questions that follow. If a Scout feels she/he can do this, they take a small pace forward. If they cannot, they stand still.

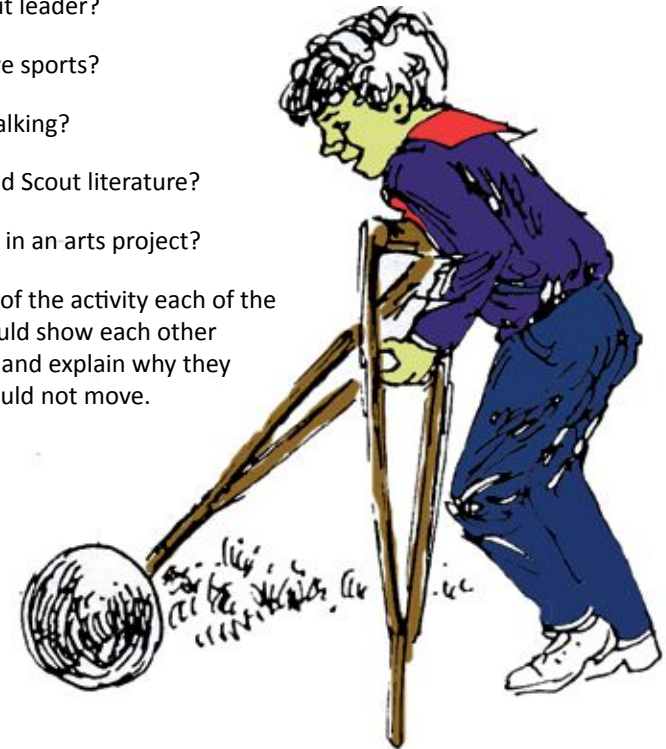
Can you.....

- Access the community library?
- Communicate with other people in your school?
- Travel into town on public transport?
- Gain entry to shops, restaurants, discos etc?
- Use toilets in public buildings?
- Join Scouting and use all its facilities/events?
- Take part in your Scouts summer camp?
- Meet freely with people and form friendships?



- Move freely without assistance?
- Be a Scout leader?
- Play active sports?
- Go hill walking?
- Easily read Scout literature?
- Take part in an arts project?

At the end of the activity each of the Scouts should show each other their cards and explain why they could or could not move.



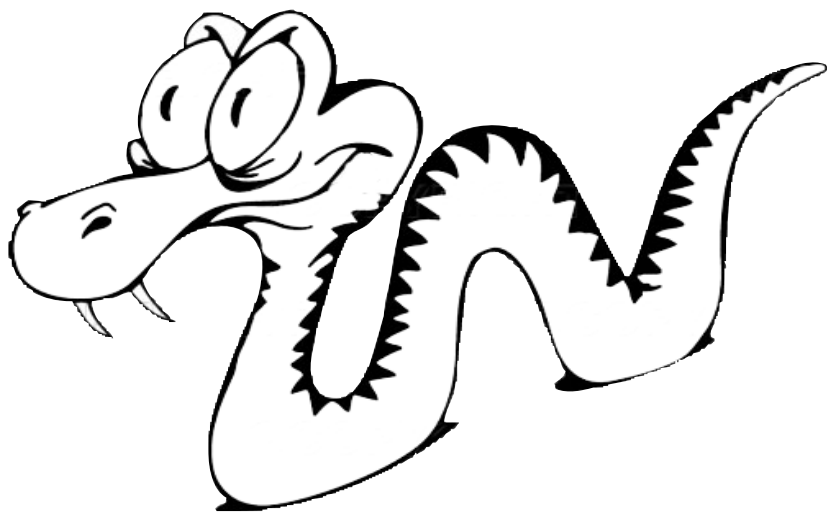
Follow up this activity with either:

- a) Helping a local disabled club or society with a project or fund-raising;
- b) Inviting a representative from a disability organization to talk to your Scout Troop/Group.

Human Boa

This is a game from Ghana. Make an area about ten feet square on the ground, indoors or outdoors. This is the Home of the Snake. Ask a young person to volunteer to be the snake. Everyone then sits down. Staying in this sitting position the snake tries to move around and catch the others. It is a good idea to have an area which the others cannot go outside, perhaps a larger square, to give the snake a chance. The snake tries to tag the others using his/her hands. When someone is caught they join onto the snake with their arms on the snake's shoulders or around his/her waist. The game continues until one person is left to be caught. He or she has survived the snake attack!

This is simple game to introduce development issues to young people of any age. The young people will experience, at a small level, what it is like to be chased and persecuted like refugees or minority groups, when they are chased by the ever-lengthening human boa. Those who are caught then form part of the boa will get a chance to experience the importance of cooperation and teamwork as they try to catch the others. On a much greater level, we all need to cooperate to tackle the big development issues like trade justice, HIV/AIDS and safe drinking water.



The Snakes

This game was played by the Bemba tribe from Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. This is an excellent outdoor game for all Scouts. Choose an area that can be used as an obstacle course with lots of rocks and bushes. For younger age sections it may be better to create an obstacle course using toys, pillows, boxes and so on. The players divide into equal sized groups. Each group becomes a snake by the players sitting one behind the other on the ground, legs spread and hands placed on the shoulders of the player in front or around the waist. Each snake moves forward and races each other to the finish line while trying to negotiate the obstacle course. The people making up the snake must remain connected to each other.

The game symbolizes the cooperation needed to tackle many community issues. This game can also be played with one snake. There may be no competition but the game becomes one of cooperation and 'follow the leader'. It is a lot of fun if there is a snake is long enough for players at the front to be dealing with the new obstacle while those at the tail of the snake deal with the previous one.

Choices Choices

Have two Scouters stand at the top of the room or away from the larger group. Each young person in turn goes up to the Scouters and makes a choice between what each of the two leaders represent. It is best to make the choice between two things young people most probably like. Maybe one Scouter could represent burgers and the other fries for example. When the young person picks he or she goes in line behind the Scouter that represents their choice. After all children have chosen have a game of tug of war.

This traditional game for Uganda can be used to help the young people understand the choices people in the Third World have to make. These are often unfair choices such as, there is only so much aid for a particular village so the villagers have to decide between a safe drinking water system or a new school building. In the scheme of things deciding between burger or fries is no big deal but it will probably seem unfair to the young person at the time as they are used to the two together. It helps the young person realise that some people have to make these unfair choices on life or death matters everyday.



Under Pressure

This game may be familiar to you already. It is originally from Zimbabwe. Players sit in a circle. Place a bowl of marbles in the centre. The first player takes a marble and tosses it in the air. S/he then tries to pluck as many marbles as s/he can before catching the tossed marbles. The players take turns and when all the marbles have been collected, the person with the most is the winner.

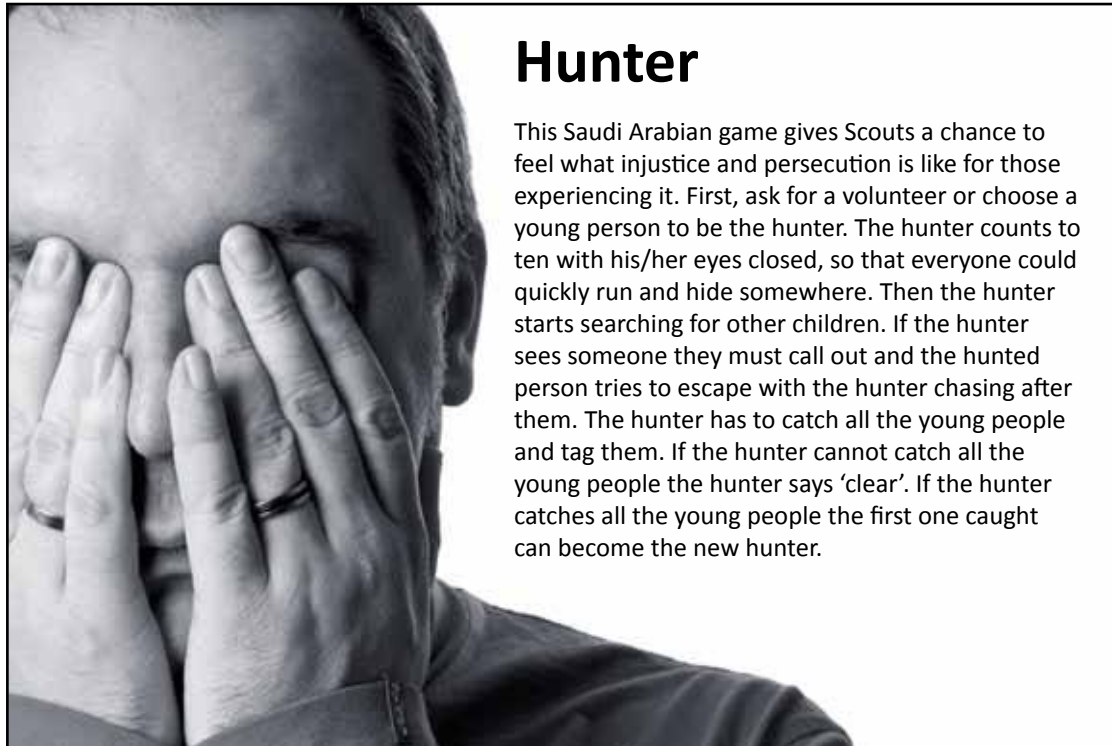
Perhaps the Scouter could explain that having to juggle all these tasks (get marble, toss in the air, pick out other marbles, catch marble) is a little similar to people in developing countries trying to juggle tasks. These are often much harder than marbles however. A woman in Africa may have to walk many miles for water, carry the heavy load back, wash clothes with no protection from bleach, house keep, look after children and prepare the meals.



The Loot

Players form a circle. One person is chosen or volunteers to be the thief. The thief stands in the middle of the circle with a valuable object or something which represents a valuable item on a table or the floor. The thief calls a person's name. Both the thief and the person called try to grab the valuable item. The player who gets the item then tries to reach the place in the circle that the person called vacated. The person who did not get the item tries to tag the runner. The thief for the next round is the person who either successfully makes it back to the place in the circle without being tagged or the one who successfully tagged the other player.

This game simulates the mad dash for food or other resources when survival is critical



Hunter

This Saudi Arabian game gives Scouts a chance to feel what injustice and persecution is like for those experiencing it. First, ask for a volunteer or choose a young person to be the hunter. The hunter counts to ten with his/her eyes closed, so that everyone could quickly run and hide somewhere. Then the hunter starts searching for other children. If the hunter sees someone they must call out and the hunted person tries to escape with the hunter chasing after them. The hunter has to catch all the young people and tag them. If the hunter cannot catch all the young people the hunter says 'clear'. If the hunter catches all the young people the first one caught can become the new hunter.

Mamba

A mamba is a large poisonous South African snake that either kills or eats everything in its wake.

The snake can be used in the context to symbolise Western greed, eating up all the earth's resources and eventually there will be very little left for everyone. One person is chosen to be the mamba. Mark off an area to play the game in. Everyone must stay within the area but away from the mamba. The snake tries to catch the players. When a player is caught the player joins the snake by holding hands or connecting to each other in some way. Each new catch becomes another part of the snake's body. The snake is eating and gets bigger and bigger. Only the head of the snake can catch new people. The game ends when the last player is caught.



Lions



All players form a circle. Two players start the game. One is a lion; the other is an antelope/deer/impala. Blindfold both young people and spin them around. The other young people sit in their circle and chant 'Lion, lion, lion'. The closer the antelope/deer/impala gets to the lion the faster the chanting becomes. If the lion is far away, the calling decreases. The lion has a minute to catch the antelope/deer/antelope. If the lion catches her/him a new antelope/deer/impala is chosen.

In this game young people in the role of antelope/deer/impala experiences the tension of being pursued and being an outsider, much like a refugee or a member of a minority group in a particular society. This game is usually played by the Zulus in South Africa.

Multiplication

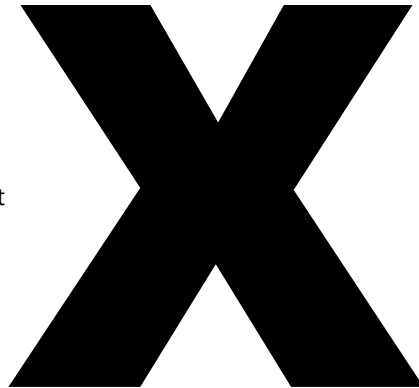
A quick activity designed to show that quick or snap decisions might not always be the best

Advise the scouts that they are going to be offered a job that will take a month (31 days) to complete. If they take the job they have a choice of how they will be paid.

Explain the choices available. They can elect to be paid \$ 10,000 per day for each day they work or they can be paid 1 cent for the first day and have their pay doubled every day until the job is done.

Take a quick vote of which method people will choose....the majority will normally choose the \$10,000 a day option. The Leader can then advise them that if they had chosen the other option the out come would have been different than they might have thought.

$10,000 \times 31 = 310,000$ 1 cent doubled every day for 31 days = 21,474,836.47



Thumbs

This quick exercise shows scouts how a new way of doing something may feel uncomfortable.

Goal:

To allow participants to see that old ways are generally more comfortable. To discuss how a new way of doing things can become a habit.

Procedure

Ask the scouts in the group to clasp their hands together. Now ask them to look at how they have clasped their hands together. If they have their left thumb on top of the right, they are to unclasp their thumbs and fingers and interlace them the opposite way. This would mean that their right thumb is now on top and all of the fingers have changed as well. Ask the group if that feels as comfortable as the other way around. Most people will say that it feels uncomfortable. The last point to make is that when we are placed under pressure we often revert to the old ways because they tend to be quicker. We must avoid this as old habits will never die if we keep using them.



Rope Knots Game

Objective:

For each person to contribute to the overall success of the group by doing his/her individual part and by helping others when they need it.

Group Size: 8 to 20 is ideal

Materials: One long climbing rope

Description:

This is a fun variation to the popular game Knots, where people grab each other's hands and try to get untangled. In this game there is less human contact, so it is less threatening but still a challenge.

Tie one overhand knot in the rope for each person that is in the group. Space the knots about two feet apart. Instruct group members to select a knot on the rope and stand by it on either side of the rope. Then tell them to grab the rope on either side of the knot with one hand. Some people will grab further out from their knot than others, but that is OK. Now challenge the group to untie all of the knots without anyone letting go of the rope or without moving the hand that is on the rope. Participants may use only their free hand to untie knots.

You may set this activity up by having the group think of things that are "knots" for the group that need to be "untied," or have the knots represent problems for the group that need to be straightened out.

Discussion Prompts:

1. How many different groups were working on this challenge at once?
2. When your side of the rope was untied, did you help the others on your team in any way, or did you just hang out? Why?
3. Are you ever on a team where two or more different groups are working separate of each other?
4. Is this a positive thing for the team?
5. Are there any "knots" on your team that need to be untangled?

