

TEAM BONDING

Team "bonding" is a very important process that will help to ensure a close-knit team. A strong cheer squad becomes one in purpose and desire, Encouragement is very important in team bonding. If team members try to motivate one another, everyone will try harder to accomplish team objectives. Teambuilding games are a fun way to develop cohesiveness. They tear down walls in communications, provide avenues that encourage discussion, and increase productivity. Team building takes time but the end results are well worth the extra time. It is an ongoing process that boosts commitment. Here are some games and exercises to do with your squad to build a unified group.

Relay Lock Race- Each person selects a partner. They stand back to back and lock arms by the elbows while holding their own stomach with their hands. The coach gives the instruction to get from one side of the gym to the other. Don't give them specific instructions on how to get to the finish line other than they can't let go of their stomachs. This causes creativity and laughter.

Truths and a Lie - Each team member writes 2 true facts and one lie on a card. The coach collects the cards and reads them aloud. The rest of the squad tries to guess who it is and which fact is the lie.

Sculpting - Give your squad different supplies such as newspaper, scissors, construction paper, glitter, straws, tape, string, etc. and tell them to create a sculpture that represents their school's spirit. Have them explain the significance. If the school's spirit is low, use this opportunity to discuss how they can improve their school's spirit.

Trust Fall- Cheerleaders sit in a close circle with their legs straight and arms out. One cheerleader stands in the center of the circle. She should have everyone's feet around her ankles. The girl in the center squeezes all her muscles and is very tight. She falls to the side and the other cheerleaders catch her and push her back and forth in the circle. Let all members be the one in the center.

To Be Or Knot To Be – You need an even number of students, ideally no larger than twelve. Form a circle facing each other (the difficulty of the activity increases, the greater the number of students in the group). Students close their eyes and reach across the circle with their right hand to grasp the right hand of another student. They should pretend that they are shaking hands - but hold on! With eyes open, have each student reach across the circle with their left hand and grasp the left hand of a different student. No student should be holding both hands of the same person. Now, without letting go, have the students untangle themselves. The result should be a circle of intertwined circles, or one large circle.

Cheerleader Tic-Tac-Toe- You need nine chairs set up in three rows. Divide the squad into X's and O's. Just like in regular tic-tac-toe, the X's and O's alternate, except they sit in the chairs instead of drawing it out on paper. Ask questions about the rules of football, basketball or any sport. The cheerleaders must raise her hand to answer. If she is right, then she sits in one of the chairs. The first team to get three in a row, diagonally, vertically or horizontally, wins.

Ball of String - While standing in a circle; pass a ball of string from one member to another. The rules are only the person with the string can talk. After everyone has had their turn to speak and share their feelings, there will be a web of string. This web illustrates the interconnected nature of group process. Everything they do and say affects the team. Now toss a balloon in the middle and have them try to keep it. They are not allowed to touch it. This symbolizes "teamwork".

Back to Back- Divide into partners with one person left over in the middle. You need one person to be the "caller". The call will yell directions telling the partners to line up "back to back", "foot to foot", "elbow to

elbow", "shoulder to shoulder" and so on. When the caller yells "people to people", everyone must find a new partner. The one left over is now in the middle. This is a form of people musical chairs.

Line Up - Divide the group into 2. Each team will compete against each other to see who can get the challenge done faster. Challenges could be "line up according to birthdays, alphabetically by first name or last name, age, etc. Try the same challenges without talking.

Machinery - Divide the group into teams (3 or more teams). Assign each group to build a certain machine with their own bodies such as a toaster, washing machine, vacuum cleaner, lawn mower, television, etc. Give them time to work it out. Then they build the machine and the other teams guess what it is.

Self-Disclosure Introductions (this is great for new teams) - Ask each team member to state her name and attach an adjective that not only describes a dominant characteristic but also starts with the person's first name. Examples: Serious Susie, Nice Natalie, and Loving Lauren.

Amnesia Game - A participant is identified as suffering from amnesia. That person needs to pretend not to know anything about the past. The rest of the group tells some things that help the amnesia victim to remember and to become the same person as before. The amnesia person can ask questions to gain more insight. Some questions could be "What would I do in a certain case", "What is my favorite saying"

PEER-O - Make up bingo cards with nothing in the squares. Hand out one to each cheerleader. Every person has a cheerleader sign in a square. Each person can only sign a cheerleader's card once unless you do not have enough cheerleaders to fill all the squares of one bingo card. You want to have a different name in each block. Put all the names in a container. The coach draws out a name and that cheerleader must stand up and tell something about himself or herself. The rest of the cheerleaders block out the name. The first cheerleader to get "bingo" or "peer-o" wins.

Name Crostics - Give a piece of paper to every cheerleader and ask them to write their name in the middle of the paper about a half an inch high. When given the signal, the cheerleaders should move around the room, attaching their names to their name if the letters fit (like a crossword puzzle). The person who is able to attach the most names is the winner.

Human Scavenger Hunt - Divide your cheerleaders into teams. Give each team a list of questions to answer. The first team to finish, wins. Examples of questions are

- Name 2 people on the cheer squad who has the same first and last initial.
- Name a group of people on the squad whose ages add up to 46.
- Who is the person on the squad that lives closest to the high school?
- Name group of three people who all have different colored eyes.
- Name 2 people who have a birthday in the same month.
- When is the coach's birthday?
- When is the AD's birthday?

All Aboard - Take a large sheet and spread it on the floor. Have all the students stand on the sheet together. Once they have done this fold the sheet to make it smaller. Again, have all the students get on the sheet. Continue this process. Eventually, the sheet will be so small that the students will need to use a great deal of cooperation, teamwork, and ingenuity to get the whole class on the sheet without anyone falling out/off the sheet.

Team Talk - Communication is another key to team unity. Part of communicating is getting to know your teammates, their opinions, concerns and aspirations for the team. Here is a great list of topics to use for

learning about each other. Sit in a circle and have a leader ask a question. Allow each team member to answer the question until everyone has participated. Then continue with the next question.

- When did you first know that you wanted to try out for this team?
- What do your parents say about you being on the team?
- Veteran members: What past team member did you most respect and why?
- New team members: What do you think your most important job is as a first year member?
- What is one or two words that students in your school use to describe your team? What words do you want them to use?
- What do you think you'll remember about your team 10 years from now?
- Veteran members: What one piece of advice would you give to the new members if they want to have the most positive team experience?
- New members: What help or encouragement do you need from the veterans to be a successful team member?
- What one thing can you do consistently to show your dedication to the team?

Minefield - Have group discuss things that are detrimental to functioning as a group. For each characteristic/action, throw an object into the playing space, the "minefield." Have group choose partners. One partner is blindfolded at one end of field. The non-blindfolded partners stand at the opposite end of the field and try to talk their partners through the minefield without running into any of the obstacles.

Human Dragon - Divide your team into 4 teams of 6-8 individuals. You can have odd numbers or vary the length of the "dragon" depending on the skill, size and ability of your athletes. Each team designates the "head" person and the "tail" section of the Human Dragon. All other team members fill in behind the head of the dragon by holding on to the person in front of them at the waist. The goal of the activity is to have the head of each dragon attempt to tag the tail of any other dragon team. Only heads of the dragon can do the tagging because all other team members must remain connected (with two hands) to their teammates. Players attempt to avoid having their team's tail be tagged and skillfully attempt to shield their tail from other dragons on the prowl.

Create A Monster- Make a monster that walks with both hands and feet on the ground. The monster must have one less arm than the number on the squad and one more foot. Once the monster is created, it has to move five feet and make a sound.

Encouragement- Have a piece of paper for every team member on the squad with one name on each page. The team sits in a circle. Everyone has 30 seconds to write one positive thing on each team member's sheet (30 seconds per sheet, then pass them). At the end, each girl goes home with a sheet with many encouraging statements. A variation of this game is to have each team member have her own paper taped to her back.

Human Letters -Divide the squad into groups of 4 to 5 people. The coach calls out a letter. Each group has to spell out the letter on the ground with their bodies. The group to get the letter the fastest, or the most accurate, wins. Keep score.

Rock-Paper-Scissors Tag – Form two groups. During each turn, a team must decide whether they are "rock, paper, or scissors". The teams face each other, and on the count of three shows either rock, paper, scissors. The one who wins chases the other team. If the chased team member gets caught before they reach a designated home base, she becomes part of the other team.

Pass the Body – Every lies on the floor in one straight line with heads together with legs and body extending out to the side. They extend their arms up and a person will lie on top of the hands. Group passes the body down the line.

Turn Over a New Leaf - you'll need a "magic carpet," or a single piece of tarp or small cloth 4' x 5', for a group of 8-12 participants. The object is to turn over the carpet without touching the ground surrounding it. This activity tests your team's ability to work physically close together while observing exactly what the problem is and work toward a solution as a group through a process of trial and error.

Activity to Try

Four Corners (15-20 minutes)

State a situation or dilemma, then ask students to go to one of four corners of the room, marked Strongly Agree, Agree, Strongly Disagree, Disagree. There student exchange their opinions or reasoning, and summarize their reasoning for presentation to the other three corners.

Bonding Quotes - Assign different cheerleaders to bring in bonding quote or word for each week. At the end of each practice, have each cheerleader explain how she applied that quote or word to practice.

Samples:

- All the talent in the world doesn't mean a thing without your teammates
- The only place success comes before work is in the dictionary,
- You have no control over what the other guy does. You only have control over what you do.
- The best inspiration is not to outdo others, but to outdo ourselves.
- Think big, believe big, act big, and the results will be big"

RECOMMENDED BOOKS

Developing a Successful Cheerleading Program, Pam Headridge, Nancy Garr, Coaches Choice, 2004

101 Exciting New Tips to Energize Your Cheerleaders, Gwen Holtsclaw, Old Mountain Press, Inc. 1998

Team Building Activities for Every Group, Alanna Jones, Rec Room Publishing, 1999

GameSkills, Stephanie Hanrahan & Teresa B. Carlson, Versa Press, 2000\

1001 Motivational Messages and Quotes for Athletes and Coaches, Bruce Eamon Brown, Coaches Choice, 2001

Big Book of Team Building Games, John Newstrom & Edward Scannell, McGraw Hill, 1998

Energizer and Ice Breakers, Book I, Elizabeth Sabrinsky Foster, Educational Media Corp, 1998

The Big Book of Motivational Games, Robert Epstein, McGraw Hill, 2001