

Initiative Games

Concepts:

1. Any collection of people has the potential to work together effectively as a group toward common goals.
2. Taking risks and facing challenges alone or with a group can increase personal confidence.
3. Communication, cooperation, trust, and problem solving skills allow a group to accomplish goals and overcome challenges.
4. The ability to work well with a group must be practiced, but is a life skill that offers many benefits.

Outline:

I. Preparation Before Activity (30 min.)

II. Instructor Information About Group Initiatives

- A. Goals for Initiative Game Presentation
- B. Steps for Presenting Group Initiative Problems

III. Safety

- A. Sequencing
- B. Challenge By Choice
- C. Spotting

IV. Processing the Experience

- A. The What?
- B. The So What?
- C. The Now What?

V. Activity Introduction (10 min.)

- A. Greeting, Grabbing, and Purpose
- B. Names and Introductions
- C. Activity Description
- D. Behavior Guidelines
- E. Task Analysis/Learner Assessment

VI. The Core Concepts (5 min.)

VII. Initiative Games (5 min.)

VIII. Warm Ups (15 min.)

- A. "No One Of Us Is As Smart As All Of Us"
- B. Hoop Pass
- C. Skin the Snake
- D. Moonball

IX. Problem Solving (15 min.)

- A. Pyramid

- B. Traffic Jam
- C. Line Up By...

X. Cooperation and Communication (15 min.)

- A. Favorite Colors
- B. Silent Geometry
- C. Human Knots
- D. Pass the Can
- E. Duo Group Sit
- F. Toxic Waste
- G. Rope Knots

XI. Trust (15 min.)

- A. Spotting Drill
- B. Wind in the Willows
- C. Cookie Machine
- D. Lap Sit
- E. Yurt Circle
- F. Blind Trust Walk

XII. Conclusion (10 min.)

XIII. Optional Activities

- A. Ultimate Moonball
- B. Everybody's It
- C. Smaug's Jewels

XIV. Clean Up (10 min.)

XV. Appendix

- A. Equipment
- B. Glossary
- C. Activity and Safety Management
- D. References/Resources

Initiative Games

I. Preparation Before Activity

Read over the Initiative Games lesson plan thoroughly and well in advance of leading the activity. Your group's liaison will be able to answer any questions. Obtain the Initiative Games activity kit from your liaison, or, the equipment will be left in the room scheduled for the activity. Once you have read the lesson plan, develop a sequence for the activities the group will participate in. Set out all of the needed equipment and designate an area for each activity (inside or out). **Determine if this group has had the day class "Group Challenges." If so, make sure to choose initiative games that the students have not already done.** Set up the meeting room and prepare the Greeting, Grabbing, and Purpose activity.

Sections II, III, and IV of the lesson plan provide information that will allow instructors to plan and facilitate initiative activities safely and effectively. Next, the activity introduction is explained followed by directions for each initiative. Finally, share the conclusion with the group to summarize and debrief the experience.

II. Instructor Information About Group Initiatives

The presentation of group initiatives and the ability to lead a group through them in a meaningful way is a challenge for many instructors (even those who make it their profession.) However, some basic information about the goals and delivery of these initiatives can be very helpful. Keep debriefing simple and straightforward. Also, share personal experiences and remember that, as an adult, teacher, or parent, you have a wealth of knowledge and experience to draw from. Often, the mood of the instructor will set the tone for the entire group. Enthusiasm is contagious and must be maintained by instructors for the activity to be successful.

A. Goals for Initiative Game Presentation. Initiative games are an extremely useful teaching tool in many situations. They can be used to: improve teamwork skills, break down barriers and stereotypes, improve the confidence of participants, and provide a physical or mental challenge. When presenting these activities for students at Eagle Bluff, instructors should attempt to make the experience as relevant to students as possible.

The ultimate goal of initiative activities should be to have participants feel good about themselves and have the skills and confidence needed to work together well with others. This is a lofty goal and cannot be completely accomplished in two hours. However, the group should be introduced to these ideas and have a model upon which they can work from. If a student learns to work well with their group here at Eagle Bluff, and feels good about their skills and ability to work with others, they will be able to apply what they learned to situations in their home, school, and personal lives when their Eagle Bluff experience is over.

A few specific goals for the group should be:

- Break down the barriers that may exist between students such as race, sex, background, and social status.

- Encourage participation from everyone at all times. Stress the idea that everyone has different strengths and abilities to offer the group and that none are better than any other.
- Build morale and camaraderie within the group. The more comfortable the group members are with one another, the more fun they will have during the remainder of their stay at Eagle Bluff, and there is an opportunity to build lasting relationships.
- When discussing the groups' experiences, focus the group on setting goals beyond the scope of the Initiative Games activities.
- Allow the group to have fun! Do not be too serious. As long as the group is being positive and respectful, allow them to joke, laugh, and play.

B. Steps for Presenting Group Initiative Problems. For Initiative activities to be more than just fun games, and become a memorable and meaningful experience for students, they must be presented using certain guiding principles. In his book Silver Bullets, Karl Rohnke presents the following sequence for presenting games and problems that will allow a group to get the most out of their experience.

1. Select a game or problem that is suited to the group's age and abilities.
2. Find a safe and convenient location to set up the problem.
3. Make all the rules and procedures clear to the participants before they attempt the problem. Avoid too many rules.
4. Present the situation and rules, then step back and allow the group to work (and sometimes stumble) through the problem. While the instructor sets up the problem, and probably knows the best way to solve it, little good will come from interrupting the problem solving process by giving hints or indication to the participants a more efficient or "right" way. Interaction is the important process which takes place during an Initiative problem, and not necessarily how well the participants are performing physically under the established guidelines.
5. Initiative problems can be presented in an unlimited variety of ways. Present the problems in a way that makes you comfortable. Some leaders present the group with a highly fanciful situation, while others will present the situation just as it is. Neither way is more or less correct.
6. During a game or problem, the situation usually arises where a rule is broken. The severity of a penalty can range from a warning or time penalty to starting the entire challenge over. Be strict in administering the rules of the game. If a group suspects that you do not care about following the rules, the problem will quickly dissolve into horseplay and become functionally meaningless.
7. For variety, Initiative problems may occasionally be presented as a timed competitive exercise in order to increase interest and individual effort. Such competition usually takes two forms: having the group members compete against themselves to improve upon a previous record, or setting up competition against other groups or a time limit (can be a fictional time limit set by another school or group).
8. After a group has completed (or tried to complete) a problem, the details should be discussed by all who were involved. Refer to section IV, Processing the Experience, for further information.

III. Safety

Read over the safety information carefully. Use the concept of sequencing to prepare a list of appropriate activities for your group. The idea of challenge by choice is important to convey to the students in your group. It should be clear to the students that physical participation in each activity is optional. Spotting is a critical safety consideration for several of the initiatives and specific instructions are included for some activities.

A. Sequencing. The concept of sequencing means selecting appropriate activities that become more and more challenging, with each one building upon a lesson learned in the previous. In many cases, more complex games and challenges involve greater risk of injury. A group should only be allowed to attempt a new problem that they have earned the right to try. Be flexible as the

facilitator. Select the activities carefully. Assess the ability and maturity level of students after each game. Use processing questions to determine students' comprehension. Attempt only the events that the group will be able to complete safely. Select challenges that a group has the ability to succeed in. Focus on activities that help a group work on their weaknesses. Do not be afraid to interrupt an activity and move on to something more within a group's abilities.

B. Challenge by Choice. All of the activities are challenges by choice. No one should be forced to participate in an activity, especially if it is beyond his/her comfort level. State this clearly at the beginning of each activity and insist that anyone's wish not to participate be respected. Students not actively participating in the event should help spot or remain active in some way.

C. Spotting. During some of the trust activities as well as other events, spotting becomes essential. Although spotters need to be in a position to catch a participant in the event of a fall, it is dangerous to literally catch a falling body from even a short height. Spotters and participants need to understand that catching means to support the upper body and head during a fall so these vital areas are protected.

Proper technique for spotting includes: balanced and centered body weight, knees flexed, hands up, eyes constantly on participant, proper positioning within group, and general attentiveness. Emphasize spotting throughout the whole class and supervise the group closely. Some activities give specific directions for spotting techniques.

IV. Processing the Experience

Participating in the Initiative Games activities will be a fun experience for students, but, the lessons that the challenges teach may not always be obvious to them. Some groups will want to share their opinions about a particular event. More often, students will find it difficult to put their feelings into words. If they do not talk about their experience, or process it, it will be less meaningful and effective.

Do not overlook the importance of processing. Trying to discuss feelings and emotions can be very intimidating. However, processing is an integral part of every challenge. Occasionally, it may be beneficial to stop and debrief mid-challenge to help the participants' process information and regroup. Watch the group carefully; store up scenarios, interactions, and problems that you observed. Use your observations during the debriefing.

Consider the following guidelines when processing each activity:

- **Everyone participates.** Structure the debriefing so that everyone can comfortably participate. Many will not openly offer their input without encouragement. Use methods where everyone must share a thought or idea. For example, a simple show of hands may allow everyone to participate.
- **Respect for everyone is essential.** Stress the concept that everyone has different strengths and weaknesses. Each person is as important to the group as everyone else. If a student says something disrespectful about themselves or someone else, do not let it slide. Confront the situation immediately. Have the person apologize and rephrase what they said in a positive manner.
- **Use the idea of "Guided Discovery."** The group should not be told what they learned, they should be led to discover on their own what lessons they learned during a challenge or activity. Good questioning techniques are essential for effective processing. Questions should focus the group's attention on a specific idea, direct

the group to determine why the idea is important to them, and finally, evoke the groups' feelings about the idea.

The biggest question people have regarding processing is, "How do I start?" Terry Borton, in Clifford Knapp's *The Art and Science of Processing Experience*, answers this question by establishing a sequence for debriefing an activity. She identifies three layers for debriefing: the What?, the So What?, and the Now What? Frequently, we jump to the heart of matters and get little response from the participants. By following this sequence, it becomes easier to focus the group on a specific experience and encourage them to think about and share how it made them feel.

A. The What? Begin debriefing by addressing a specific experience. The idea is to make each individual begin to recall what happened to them and how it made them feel. Also, what was the overall feeling of the group? Use questions and techniques to encourage the group to review previous activities and bring up situations that may have been forgotten. Invite the group to start talking with a manageable and non-threatening form of discussion, reviewing what the group did. Some techniques are as follows:

1. **The Go Around:** Everyone in the groups contributes a descriptive word or sentence about the challenge.
2. **Peer Observer:** Appoint one or two student as the observer for the activity. The observer can offer advice during the activity or simply give a summation at the end. Remind the observer to offer positive comments and constructive criticism. Select a volunteer that will take their responsibility seriously and offer the group positive feedback.
3. **The Memory Game:** One person starts describing the challenge. Everyone else listens. If they missed something or someone else wants to add a comment, they should yell out "Hold it!" and then they continue with the explanation. Let the group continue in this manner until the challenge has been fully described.
4. **Definitions:** Ask the students for definitions of teamwork, spotting, leadership, etc...
5. **Talking Stick:** Use a "talking stick" as a reminder and a facilitator. Only the person who holds the talking stick is allowed to talk. As a facilitator, use the talking stick while giving instructions, asking questions, and later, pass to students for answers.
6. **Polaroid Photos:** Before the challenge starts, tell the group that when you yell "Cheese!" they must take a mental picture of the situation they are in, in order to describe it later. When you start processing, use these mental photographs to review the challenge.

B. The So What? Once the group recalls the events of a specific activity, the next step, which we all do naturally, is to evaluate how the activity made us feel. Many participants will be resistant to sharing their feelings or may have a difficult time verbalizing them. However, this is a critical step in making a challenge meaningful. The following techniques can be used to help break down barriers and allow the group to begin discussing their feelings about an experience:

1. Use the Go Around and have each student describe a feeling experienced during the challenge.
2. Have the students define key concepts that the challenge focused on (spotting, fear, leadership, etc) and how they experienced them in the challenge.
3. Try the "Whip". Each person contributes a positive non-threatening sentence starting with "I'm glad that I..." or a sentence of your choice.
4. If your group set goals at the start of the class, ask questions that evaluate if the group achieved their goals.
5. Develop a rating system for how well the group works together (i.e. a scale from 1-10). Each student rates the group success and must explain why they gave that rating.

C. The Now What? The "Now What?" takes the lessons learned and discussed by the group in the "So What?" and begins to reapply them to other situations. This is a time to set goals for your

next challenge and apply the knowledge gained to a new situation. A group's discussions, as well as their performance during a challenge, can be used to assess what they have learned and the feelings they have. Listen carefully. Try to transfer the concepts from the challenges to "real life" situations. Encourage students to set goals for the future, beyond the scope of Initiative Games.

The debriefing process can be a safe time where the group considers its activities. The leader's confidence in the importance of the debriefing helps the process become a meaningful experience for the group. Carefully balance discussion and activity. They are equally important. For each of the activities described in this lesson plan, determine debriefing topics before the group begins. However, it is critical to discuss impromptu issues and events specific to each group's experience.

V. Activity Introduction

When the students arrive and it is time for the activity to begin, the group should be engaged immediately in their first challenge. This will get the group excited about the rest of the initiatives and set the tone for the rest of the activity. Also, get to know the students if you do not already and give them an overview of the next two hours. Finally, use the Task Analysis/Learner Assessment to get a feel for the group and how they work together.

Assessment: Any collection of people has the potential to work together effectively as a group toward common goals.

- During the greeting/grabber activity and warm-up activity, pay close attention to the group. Watch for signs that barriers are being broken down. Are they encouraging one another? Do any students have reservations about participating? Does the group celebrate their success?

A. Greeting, Grabbing, and Purpose. The Ball Toss activity is a good way to involve the students immediately and to begin learning names.

Ball Toss

Equipment: Balls of various sizes

Instructions: Circle the group and have them spread apart by an arm length. Begin by tossing a ball to a student. Say the name of the student as you throw the ball. When they catch the ball, the second person then throws the ball to a third person and also states their name. Each student must catch and pass the ball only once, until everyone has touched the ball. The ball must be returned to the instructor to complete the circle.

Practice this order a few times to ensure everyone knows where he/she is throwing. Once the ball has traveled the complete circle, start it around again, with the option of adding another ball. As the group improves, challenge them to pass the ball around the circle as quickly as possible.

Options:

- There are many options for this activity. It can range from trying to throw the ball once around the circle without dropping it to a goal of several balls in a certain number of seconds.

Instructor Tips:

- After each attempt at the ball toss, give the group time to discuss ways to be more successful and reduce their time.
- Many times, groups will devise the solution of changing their order so they can simply pass the balls from one person to the next.
- If this is the group's first challenge, it is especially important to celebrate and congratulate the group on each success, this will set the tone for the remainder of the class.

B. Names and Introductions. Introduce yourself and then go around and the group and become familiar with each student. (Be creative: learn names all at once or a few at a time. Use a method that suits your style). Explain that you will be teaching the group and the other adult chaperones may be assisting at times. A warm up activity can be used to facilitate introductions. Or, use the puzzle by having each student share their name and the importance of the word found on one of the puzzle pieces.

C. Activity Description. The Initiative Games activities will last for about an hour and a half. Each activity will challenge the group to work together to accomplish goals. To be successful, the group will need to use skills such as communication, cooperation, problem solving, and trust. A group that works together well can accomplish goals that no person can accomplish alone. During Initiative Games, the group will be practicing skills that will be needed throughout life to be successful.

D. Behavior Guidelines. Discuss clearly and specifically which behaviors you expect from your students during class. Explain the need for respect: for you, for each other, ideas, the equipment, and for Eagle Bluff itself. Also, not everyone is required to complete each event. However, group participation in one form or another is required.

E. Task Analysis/Learner Assessment. During the puzzle activity closely monitor the group to observe how well they work together and what specific areas they need to work on. Does everyone participate? Do any students emerge as leaders? What is the overall tone of the group, positive or negative?

VI. The Core Concepts

Challenges come in an infinite number of shapes and forms. Everyone in this class will face challenges and even hardships in their lifetime. Achieving goals like success, health, and happiness do not come easy; they must be worked toward and earned. Achieving goals and overcoming challenges requires certain skills. For some people, these abilities come naturally, for others they must be practiced. However, everyone has the ability to improve their skill in facing challenge, and with determination, achieve their goals. There are four core concepts essential to surmounting nearly any challenge. Discuss the importance of each of these concepts with students. Share specific, relevant examples of how these skills are important to students and how they will apply to their lives in the future. Encourage students to share their ideas.

1. **Problem Solving:** The process of using your brain, creativity, logic, and foresight to succeed at a given task.
2. **Communication:** The act of conveying (verbally or non verbally) information to others. Communication is a two way street. Not only do you need to express your ideas but you must also listen to others as they explain their ideas.

3. **Cooperation:** Working together while respecting and utilizing each other's ideas.
4. **Trust:** Placing your faith in a person, or a group of people, knowing they are keeping you safe in some manner, whether it is physical or emotional safety.

VII. Initiative Games

After the introduction and a discussion of the core concepts of teamwork, begin the Initiative Game activities. Activities are divided into four separate categories: warm ups, problem solving, cooperation and communication, and trust. Also, several optional games are described. Some activities include options to change the rules and/or an instructor tips section.

The activities are divided into sections according to the primary skill needed to succeed in the activity. However, many of the challenges incorporate several or all of the core concepts as well as other components of teamwork. During debriefing and processing, it is critical not to focus only on the concept under which the activity is categorized.

Assessment: Taking risks and facing challenges alone or with a group can increase personal confidence.

- As the group progresses through the activities, carefully observe students that appear to lack confidence. Do students gradually increase their level of participation?
- During debriefing, note which students are offering input. Use methods which encourage everyone to participate in some way. Does the group become more comfortable with sharing their ideas and feelings as they work together?

VIII. Warm Ups

Warm up activities are designed to prepare the group both mentally and physically for the initiative problems that lie ahead of them. Warm ups will encourage the group to work together towards a common goal and will tend to get the group relaxed, having fun, and thinking of themselves as a team.

A. “No One Of Us Is As Smart As All Of Us.”

Equipment: “No One...” cards (11)

Instructions: Hand out the cards with the words from the sentence above. If there are more students than cards, pair the students up and blindfold one of the pair. Give the blindfolded student the card. Once the students have the card in their possession, they can not talk. The challenge is to arrange the cards into a sentence that makes sense. The sighted partners will need to maneuver their blindfolded partners safely into the correct position in the sentence. The group should signal the instructor when they feel they have put the sentence together correctly. It should read “No One Of Us Is As Smart As All Of Us.”

B. Hoop Pass

Equipment: Hula hoop

Instructions: Have the students form a large circle and join hands. Break the circle and place a hula hoop between two people in the circle. Without releasing hands, the group must pass the hoop around the circle and end at the starting point.

C. Skin the Snake.

Equipment: None

Instructions: Line up the students one behind the other, all facing the same direction with their legs spread apart shoulder width. Each student puts his/her right hand back through his/her legs. Their left hand goes forward to grab the right hand of the person ahead of them. The students are now ready for the challenge. They must untangle themselves without breaking hands or lifting their legs over their clasped hands. If they break hands, have them start over again. When they complete the challenge, they should be standing in a line, holding hands.

Instructor Tips:

- One solution involves the student in the back of the line beginning a slow crawl through the “tunnel” of their classmates’ legs. The entire group will slowly crawl from the back to the front of the line without releasing hands.
- Another solution involves the participant in the front of the line straddling and walking backwards over the other participants heads without releasing hands.

D. Moonball

Equipment: Moonball

Instructions: Take the group outside to a large, open space free of obstacles. The objective of Moonball is simple, to hit the ball into the air as many times as possible without it touching the ground.

Options:

- Alter the activity to suit the ability level of the group; it should be a challenge. For example, one group may be able to use only their right hand and foot, hop on one leg, feet only, etc.
- Use a point system where hands count for one, feet two, and heads three.

Instructor Tips:

- Be enthusiastic and celebrate each new record with the group.

IX. Problem Solving

Problem solving initiatives encourage students to use logical thinking and creativity. Most initiatives require some degree of problem solving ability. These, however, focus the group on the process of individual and group problem solving skills. In some cases, one individual will devise the solution independently. Other times, the solution will arise as a result of shared ideas. In either case, initiatives force a group not only to develop a solution, but to implement it as well.

A. Pyramid

Equipment: None

Instructions: Give the students fifteen seconds to make a pyramid. If students decide to make a “vertical” pyramid, there must be spotters and they may not attempt to build the pyramid more than four levels high.

Instructor Tips:

- After fifteen seconds, ask the group if their solution was the only possible solution to the problem. Was it the easiest? Was it the safest? Can the group brainstorm other ideas to build a pyramid?

B. Traffic Jam

Equipment: Traffic Jam squares

Instructions: Place the traffic jam squares on the ground in a line so that there are as many squares as students in the group. Place the “free space” card in the exact middle of all the squares. The arrows on the squares of both halves should point toward the middle of the line. All the students should then stand on the squares facing toward the middle and must face the same direction for the entire challenge. The object is to have two groups exchange places on a line of squares, while remaining faced in the same direction.

Movement is only allowed into an empty square ahead of you or around one person heading the opposite direction, and then into an open square.

Instructor Tips:

- A “U-shaped” line allows everyone to see what is going on.
- This is a difficult challenge and can be confusing for students. To help avoid confusion, have the students beginning on one side of the free space square (all the students facing one of the two directions) wear a bandanna to separate them from the other students.
- **Solution:** For the purpose of explanation the two teams will be called red and blue. First the blue side will have a student step forward onto the free space. Next, a red student will step around the blue student on the free space and stand on the open square. The next red student (behind the one that just moved) will step forward one space.

The next step is for three blue students to move forward, one at a time, into the open square ahead of them. Then, four red students will move forward, one at a time, to the open squares ahead of them. Continue to follow this pattern, with each side taking turns, until the two groups have changed places.

C. Line Up By...

Equipment: Blindfolds

Instructions: There are many variations on the “Line Up By....” challenges. The basic idea is to have the group line up in a straight line according to some specific criteria and with some type of restriction on their actions. Here are some ideas that can be altered to meet your group's needs. Give specific guidelines before beginning.

1. **Line up by height:** Blindfold all the students. Make sure they agree to specific safety rules such as no pushing, moving slowly, stopping when the instructor says stop, etc. Once the students are blindfolded tell them they must line up according to height, with the shortest person in the front, the tallest in the back.
2. **Line up by birthday:** Without talking or making any vocal sounds the students must line up according to birthday, January 1 at the front and December 31 at the back.

X. Cooperation and Communication

Each person facing the challenges today is part of the group. In order to complete any of the challenges, students must work together. Cooperation is usually the most efficient way to accomplish a task. It involves understanding strengths and weaknesses of everyone involved.

Once a group plan is created, it must be related to the rest of the group. Communication involves talking and listening in both verbal and non-verbal manners.

A. Favorite Colors

Equipment: None

Instructions: Use this short exercise with a group that is having a hard time communicating. Group the students together and tell them that you would like to get to know them better. On the count of three have them all yell their favorite color, as loud as they can. After you have done this, ask a few students if they could tell you the favorite color of another student in the class. Most likely they will not be able to. Address the issue of WHY they do not know that student's favorite color. This is a quick way to get the point across that we need to listen and talk in turn if we want to communicate effectively.

B. Silent Geometry

Equipment: 50 ft. rope circle

Instructions: Have everyone in the group hold on to the rope. The group should be evenly spaced out along the length of the rope. The objective of Silent Geometry is for the group to form a shape with the rope without using any verbal communication. The instructor will call out the name of each shape.

Options:

- This activity can be changed to focus on specific areas of teamwork. For example, allow one student to act as a leader and talk to direct the rest of the group. Or, allow the entire group to talk to illustrate the need for leadership and planning.

Instructor Tips:

- Make the shapes more and more complex each time. Possible options include; circle, rectangle, square, parallelogram, pentagon, etc.

C. Human Knots

Equipment: None

Instructions: Divide the large group into teams of 6 to 10 students (must be an even number). Have each group form a circle and grab the right hand of the person directly across from them. Then, have them grab someone else's left hand. Without letting go of hands, the group needs to untangle themselves. Students will need to twist and turn so they may shift grips while still holding on. When they finish, they should be standing in a circle, holding hands. On occasion the solution will be two linked rings.

D. Pass the Can

Equipment: Tin can

Instructions: The group must form a circle, with each person spread about a foot apart. The challenge is for the group to pass the can around the circle without using their hands or dropping the can.

Options:

- For an extra challenge, bind each participant's hands together with a bandanna.

Instructor Tips:

- The group will be more excited and engaged if there is an imaginary content of the can that will spill out if it is dropped. Ideas include: toxic waste, flesh-eating insects, an angry badger, etc.

E. Duo-Sit/Group Sit

Equipment: None

Instructions: For this challenge, the students will work in pairs. Each group must stand back to back and link arms. From this position, the pair will attempt to sit down and stand back up without unlocking arms. When a pair succeeds, they should join with another pair and attempt the challenge with four people. Eventually, the class should work towards being able to complete the challenge with the entire group.

F. Toxic Waste

Equipment: Toxic Waste cans and inner tube

Instructions: Place the toxic waste storage can at one end of the room. The smaller, toxic waste container should be placed at least 20 feet away from the larger storage can. Students must use the removal equipment (inner tube with ropes) to properly dispose of the toxic waste. Any spilled waste will mean disaster for the group. The object is to move the smaller can from its original spot and place it in the larger can without touching either can, or the inner tube, with their hands. All students must be involved with the transport of the can.

Options:

- The difficulty of this challenge can be modified by changing the distance over which the group must transport the can. Also, obstacles such as chairs or tables can be set up to challenge the group further.
- Fill the can with water if the group attempts this challenge outside. If the challenge is attempted inside, place small objects in the can that will spill out if it is tipped. This will increase the group's motivation and excitement.

Instructor Tips:

- The inner tube's circumference is larger than the circumference of the smaller can. Because of this, when the inner tube is placed around the can, it cannot be picked up easily. Students must all move their ropes to two opposing points across the can and pull. This stretches the inner tube into an oval, which will pick up the can.

G. Rope Knots

Equipment: 50ft. rope

Instructions: As the students are working on another challenge, tie 4-6 **loose** overhand knots, well spaced along the section of rope. Have the students space themselves out evenly and grasp the rope with their left hands, avoiding the knots. Once they have grabbed the rope, their hand is fixed in place and students can not even slide their hand along rope. The group must now untie all the knots that are in the rope.

XI. Trust

During the Initiative Games activities, students will need to depend upon one another in order to be safe. Some activities require students to act as spotters for their classmates. Spotting means being in a position to stop or break the fall of another person.

To be successful, the group will need to place trust in each other. This can be difficult for many students. When we trust another person, we expose ourselves to be hurt physically and emotionally. When our trust is broken, it becomes difficult to trust others again. However, there are times when we must trust others and when putting our trust in others is extremely important.

By participating in trust initiatives, students can begin to build relationships of trust with their classmates.

A. Spotting Drill.

Equipment: None

Instructions: Introduce the group to the concept of spotting. Demonstrate a proper spotting stance for the group. Have the class imitate your actions as you display each step. First, stand with your feet shoulder width apart to provide stability. Then stagger your feet one in front of the other to give you even greater stability. Place your hands up in front of you, about shoulder height, palms facing away from your body. Your elbows and knees should be bent. This is the correct spotting stance.

After the spotting stance has been practiced, have the students test out their new skill. Divide the students into groups of three people that are similar in height and size. Two people should stand facing each other (about three feet apart) while the third person stands in between them. The middle person should fold their arms across their chest and stand as stiff as a board. Their feet should also be planted firmly on the ground. The two partners in the spotting stance will gently catch the middle person as he/she leans slightly forward and backward. If the fall and spotting went well, the pair can move apart a half step and try again. Switch roles.

Stress safety during the spotting drill, as it can be a dangerous activity if improperly done. Emphasize the importance of listening to, and following directions. Any students not adhering to the rules or not paying attention should not be allowed to participate. Have groups use the following sequence of commands to make sure everyone is ready to fulfill their responsibilities during the activity.

Faller:

1. Spotters ready?
2. Falling!

Spotter:

- Ready!
Fall Away!

B. Wind in the Willows.

Equipment: None

Instructions: Circle the entire group, or split into two smaller groups. The circle must be very tight, shoulder to shoulder and must not be larger than five feet in diameter. One volunteer steps in the center of the circle, stands stiff as a board, plants their feet, and goes through the safety commands. Once everybody is ready and attentive, the volunteer falls slowly backwards into someone's arms and is gently passed around the circle from spotter to spotter. The volunteer **MUST** stay stiff and keep their feet planted or the activity will not work. Allow each student that wishes to participate a turn.

C. Cookie Machine

Equipment: None

Instructions: Form two lines of at least six students facing each other. The students in line should:

1. Use a proper spotters stance with feet spread apart shoulders width and feet staggered.
2. Stand closely together, shoulder to shoulder.
3. Outstretch their bent arms with palms up. The students forearms and hands will form a flat, level surface.
4. Alternate their arms, and the tips of one student's hands must be even with the next students elbow (should look like a zipper.)

5. Keep heads and torsos back away from the middle of the line.

Once the line is positioned and all students understand their responsibilities, choose one volunteer to be the “cookie.” The cookie will announce what type of cookie he/she would like to be, and go through the falling commands. The cookie will stand at one end of the “cookie machine” (the line of students) and dive head first onto the groups’ outstretched arms. The students then pass the cookie down the line by gently moving their arms up and down. At this time, the students chant the cookie type the cookie would like to be (i.e. they might chant “chocolate chip, chocolate chip”). When the cookie reaches the end, an adult should help the cookie to his/her feet.

It is critical that the students are very close to each other to prevent the Cookie from falling through their arms. The front two pairs of students should lean back a little to prevent being hit by the cookie as they jump into their arms. Cookies should remove all large belt buckles, jewelry, and watches that might harm the spotters and be sure to dive with their arms stretched straight above their heads. Bouncing the cookie too high can also be dangerous. Keep the height to a minimum. Be very clear and concise with directions. No one should jump into the cookie machine until the instructor gives the final “OK.”

Options:

- A group that has displayed responsible spotting may be allowed to have the cookies take a running start from fifteen feet away and then jump into the cookie machine.

Instructor Tips:

- This activity should be done outside if possible.
- Regroup the “cookie machine” before each dive and make sure they are focused on their responsibilities.

D. Lap Sit

Equipment: None

Instructions: Have the students form a circle and stand shoulder to shoulder. Instruct everyone to turn to their right and move three steps towards the center. Everyone’s left foot should be lined up heel to toe. Everyone should then place their hands on the shoulders of the person in front of them. On the count of three, the group should sit down on the lap of the person behind them.

Instructor Tips:

- This activity requires fairly precise alignment of the circle. Make sure all are lined up heel to toe.
- Challenge the students to stay seated for 5, 10, or 30 seconds.
- Begin by dividing the class into two groups for practice. Set a goal for the whole class to succeed at the activity.

E. Yurt Circle

Equipment: None

Instructions: Students should stand in a circle, facing inward and holding hands. Then, step backwards until everyone is stretched out but still able to have a firm grip on the two people whose hands they are holding. Everyone needs to keep their feet planted and lean back as far as they can. They must use the group to maintain their balance. Once they have done this, number off the group into 1s and 2s, alternating around the circle. Then, have the 1s lean in and the 2s lean out at the same time. Each person should be able to lean in or out while being held up by their neighbors.

Options:

- Once a group has perfected the Yurt Circle, have each participant switch positions upon command.

Instructor Tips:

- Choose a clear, open area for this activity. Students are likely to fall forward and backwards.

F. Blind Trust Walk

Equipment: Blindfolds.

Instructions: Divide the group into pairs. Give each pair a blindfold. The objective of the Blind Trust Walk is for one blindfolded student to be led on a short hike by their partner. The student that can see is responsible for the safety of their blindfolded partner. Partners will change places.

Options:

- This activity can be done inside or outside.
- Design an obstacle course outside or around the room that the students must follow.

Assessment: Communication, cooperation, trust, and problem solving skills allow a group to accomplish goals and overcome challenges.

- Carefully observe the group as they progress through the activities. Are they successful? During debriefing, can the group give examples of how using the “core concepts” led to their success?
- Does the group have the ability to evaluate their own performance and set specific goals for improvement?
- If attempting a culminating challenge, evaluate the group’s strengths and weaknesses. If there is an area of weakness, is the group aware of it? Have the group set a goal of improvement for the next challenge. Do they succeed?

XII. Conclusion

Eagle Bluff’s Initiative Games activity offers students a unique opportunity to work together closely with their peers towards common goals in a controlled environment. The challenges faced by students forced them to examine what makes a team effective and how each person must have a role within a group. Most importantly, students become aware of their own strengths and weaknesses, fears, and abilities. These controlled activities built upon one another so that the group was forced to learn from their mistakes and successes to meet the next challenge. However, the challenges do not end with the completion of the activities, they only begin. The real challenge is to apply the lessons learned by participating in the activities to the situations that we encounter in our daily lives. Having the skills to work well with others provides a lifetime of benefits and the tools to achieve personal goals.

Assessment: The ability to work well with a group must be practiced, but is a life skill that offers many benefits.

- Ask the group to compare their teamwork skills at the beginning of class to the end. Do they see an improvement? Ask them to describe how they improved?
- Have the each student share ways that they can use the skills they practiced today in their own life. Do they list specific examples? Does the group understand that these skills are applicable to many aspects of daily life?

XIII. Optional Activities

A. Ultimate Moonball

Instructions: The concept is the same as Moonball, to score the highest possible number of hits without the ball touching the ground. However, the counting method changes. To score one point, the entire group must hit the ball and then group counts ONE!" After each person hits the ball, they kneel to show who hit the ball and who has not. When the entire group has hit the ball, and counted it, they all stand up and work towards their next number.

B. Everybody's It

Instructions: Everybody is it. All participants can tag anyone. If you are tagged you must kneel down. Anyone can free a tagged person by jumping over them. It is the participant's choice to either tag people, free people, or do a combination of both.

C. Smaug's Jewels

Instructions: Circle up the students, about an arm's length apart. In the center, place a blindfold and stand near the blindfold. Explain that you are the horrible dragon Smaug and the blindfold is your treasure. What you are going to do is call out a description (i.e. color of shoes, born in November, have a pet dog, etc.) and any student that meets that description can try to steal Smaug's Jewels. Smaug cannot stand on the blindfold. If Smaug tags you, whether you have the jewels or not, you must go back to the circle. If you grab the jewels and make it back to the circle without Smaug tagging you, you become Smaug and try to protect your treasure.

XIV. Clean Up

Inventory all equipment using the list from the Appendix. Count and untie blindfolds, set out to dry if necessary. Check initial meeting area and outside play areas for balls and other equipment. Untie any knots in the rope. Organize kit neatly. Report broken or damaged equipment to liaison.

XV. Appendix

A. Equipment

- Blindfolds (22)
- Balls of various sizes
- "Pass the can" can
- Toxic waste materials
- Puzzle (20 pieces, not in kit)
- "No one..." cards
- 50 ft. rope
- Moonball
- Hoola hoop (not in kit)
- Traffic Jam squares
- Spider's web markers

B. Glossary

Communication: Exchanging information and opinions.

Cooperation: The ability to work together.

Debriefing: To receive information about a recent mission or to discuss the impact an experience has upon its participants.

Initiative: 1: An introductory step. **2:** Energy or aptitude displayed in initiation of action. **3:** Used interchangeably with initiative activity or game.

Logical Thinking: Thought based on previous experience and what is expected by the working of cause and effect.

Processing: Debriefing.

Sequencing: Choosing the appropriate activities and their order that will best benefit a group.

Trust: Assured reliance on character, truth, or strength of someone or something.

C. Class and Safety Management. Instructors must adhere strictly to all safety guidelines.

Assess the group's ability constantly. Do not attempt any activity that the group can not complete safely. Maintain constant supervision. Adjust activities with different age groups or groups with special needs. Use additional adult supervisors as spotters if necessary. Check students for proper clothing before going outside. Stop any challenge immediately if unsafe conditions arise.

D. References/Resources

"Group Challenges" Forest Resource Center. Lanesboro, MN. 1997.

"Initiative Games" Wolf Ridge ELC lesson plan. Finland, MN. February, 1996.

Rohnke, Karl. Cowstails and Cobras II. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt, 1989.