



## Sample Human Relations Day Lesson Plans



### LESSON: THE HUMAN KNOT

**Intention:** To extend the “getting to know you” process. To introduce the concept of “teamwork” and the metaphor of “we’re only as strong as our weakest link.” To cross the boundary of physically working together towards a team goal.

**Time:** 30 minutes (or more!)

Note to the teacher: This activity works best with groups of 10 to 14 people per group. You will need to stay close by to monitor if students stumble or need help in any way. It is important to notice the “leaders” in this activity.

#### Instructions:

- Break your students into two or three groups.
- Have the students stand in a circle with their group.
- Ask them to reach across the circle and take someone’s hand. Tell them to not let go.
- Tell them to now reach across the circle with their other hand and grab someone else’s hand.
- Once they are in this configuration, tell them that their job is to unwind the human knot and make a circle. They cannot let go of hands. They can rearrange their hand in the other person’s hand but only to rotate it for comfort.
- Go! Watch them and notice as they unwind and untangle their “knot.” As each team finishes the task, have them encourage the other teams. When they are finished, have them return to their seats.

#### Discussion:

What happened? • What did you notice? • Who emerged as a leader or leaders in this activity? Address that person as to why he or she did that. • Who allowed others to take the lead? Address that person as to why he or she did that. • Why is it important for some people to take the lead in various activities? • Can someone be a leader in one activity and follow in another? Why is that? • Why did we do this activity?

## LESSON: BOUNCING INFORMATION

**Intention:** To go beneath the surface and see that there is more to a person than what you see. To becoming more aware of our prejudices, make deeper connections within the team, build a sense of deep trust and commitment and understand that the team is a microcosm of the entire school

**Materials:** A large, soft ball that bounces easily

**Time:** 45 minutes

**Note to the teacher:** This game can become very serious and some Duties to Inform might emerge. If you are not comfortable dealing with difficult topics, I suggest you not do this activity. This is an activity that will quickly bond your team and show that there is more to a person than meets the eye. It is a mature activity and might be too much for your students. Make certain you have a good sense of what your students can handle before you choose to do this activity. Again, you can opt out.

### Instructions:

- Remind the students of their oath of confidentiality.
- Have students stand in a circle close to one another
- You stand in the middle of the circle with the ball and explain the rules of the game
- Say the rules:
  - Bounce the ball to a student. He or she will catch it, hold onto it and say “Something you don’t know by looking at me is...” and will complete the sentence.
  - Give an example: “I like the color purple” or “My favorite subject is Math.”
  - Then, he or she will bounce the ball back to you
  - If the student is slow to give an answer, he or she becomes the ball bouncer in the middle and the ball bouncer joins the circle. You will participate in this game.
- The idea is to go quickly so that someone gets “out” and goes to the middle. Eventually, the beginning of the sentence will drop off and students will state the end of the sentence instead of the entire sentence.
- Make certain that every student gets to say at least two or three things.
- Keep the game going until you sense you’re at the end.
- At that point, tell the students that you are changing the rules. Instead of saying things that are of a shallower nature, tell them that they are to say something about their relationships with others or with themselves, including their feelings about these relationships. See how they interpret this as the game goes along.
- Again, you start out in the middle, bouncing the ball to someone.

- Since this will get serious and focused very quickly, make certain that every person says something at least twice, including you. However, you should not be the person who is the first person to say something extremely intense. Let it be a student who shares that kind of information.
- Note all the Duties to Inform, if there are any, and at the end of the activity, make certain to touch base with each of those students. Report these to the appropriate person at the school.
- Let the rest of the team know that you are aware of the Duties to Inform and that you will address them.
- When you feel the game has run its course, have the team sit in a circle close together.

**Discussion:**

What happened? • What did you notice about the noise level when we went deeper? Why did that happen? • What surprised you? Why? • Who were the risk takers? Who gave you permission to share things on a deeper level? • What happens when you have the chance to share information on a deeper level? • How did this activity impact your thinking about the other members of the team? • What do our judgments and stereotyping do to a relationship? • What happens to a relationship when you go below the surface? • How do our judgments limit us? • What does this activity have to do with how we approach the world?