

ACTIVITY: THE BLOCK GAME

Understanding group members’ different approaches to collective work will help you work more effectively together. Roca introduced this activity to the KLCC II family as a great way for participants to engage in a different type of learning about themselves and one another. We’ve found that this activity works best when group members have developed initial rapport.

OVERVIEW

This activity increases the ability of group members to deepen their relationships and understand how different perspectives add to the wholeness of the group – even if these differences are sometimes frustrating. It also provides an opportunity for individuals to get feedback about how their actions affect others.

OBJECTIVES

- To build trust among your group’s members
- To explore how people in your group work together and how each member contributes a different style to collective work

TIME REQUIRED

About 2 hours, depending on the size of your group. The opportunity to add context to the experience and bring out insights happens during the game’s debriefing. Allow at least 45–60 minutes after the game for participants to think about and discuss what they’ve learned.

SUPPLIES

You’ll need a box of blocks – about 100 pieces in different colors, shapes, and sizes (we like wooden building blocks).

| WHAT | TIME | HOW | MATERIALS |
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| Step 1: Setting the context | 5 min | This activity requires very little context. In fact, the minimal directions and explanation are essential to the process. Have participants sit in a circle. Dump the blocks in a pile on the floor, leaving the container somewhere in the circle. Tell your group, “This is a game that will help us think about how our group works collectively. We’ll go around the circle and take turns moving the blocks. There are two rules: move only one block at a time, and no one talks.” | Blocks |
| Step 2: Moving blocks | At least 30 min | As the facilitator, begin the game by going to the center of the circle and moving a single block – then sit down in silence. Model being present with the game and keeping silent. Play continues around the circle, allowing each participant a turn to move a single block. There is no end in itself to moving the blocks. The group isn’t necessarily aiming to build a tower or any sort of structure, and you’re not working to clear all the blocks from the center. The action of moving the blocks according to so few directions is a means to examine how your group works together. | |

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| WHAT | TIME | HOW | MATERIALS |
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| Step 3: Breaking the rules | 5–10 min | <p>Eventually, someone in the group will want to make the game more interesting; moving a single block can get boring pretty quickly. This person will do any number of things to break or bend the rules – moving multiple blocks, going out of turn, knocking over a block someone else has moved, etc.</p> <p>Having someone break the rules is essential to your end reflection. If, after four or five rounds, all participants are still abiding by the rules, you should introduce rule breaking yourself.</p> | |
| Step 4: Ending the game | Will vary for each group | Play continues until someone finds a way to create an ending or you end the game yourself because of time constraints. | |
| Step 5: Debriefing | At least 45 min | <p>After the game has ended, continue in the pattern of the circle for the debriefing. Tell your group, “That game may have seemed simple, but I’ll bet you have some feelings about it that you’d like to share. We’ll have three rounds of questions, and everyone will have a chance to speak during each round. Please listen deeply to everyone’s reflection and hold your comments until it’s your turn to speak. If you don’t want to speak when it’s your turn, you can pass. At the end of each round of sharing, I’ll ask those who passed if they’ve changed their mind about speaking, but it’s okay to pass then, too.”</p> <p>You may choose to use a talking piece to reinforce that this debriefing is a time for every person to be heard rather than a free-for-all dialogue.</p> | |
| Step 6: Debriefing – Round 1 | | <p>Tell your group, “Whenever a group works together, it’s looking for the wholeness of the group – what will make the overall work come together. The root of ‘justice’ is two words: one means ‘sacred formula,’ and the other means ‘rightness.’ ‘Sacred’ is also related to sacrifice, so one definition of justice is letting go of something to make things right. Sometimes, a person needs to let go of something for the group to be able to do its work – to be whole. When you reflect on this experience, what did you learn that you needed to let go of or give up to support the wholeness of the group?”</p> <p>Start the discussion with a personal example, such as: “I had to give up my judgment of others” or “I had to give up my certainty about how the structure was supposed to look” or “I had to give up my perception about how this game was supposed to be played.” The most powerful example is one that has genuinely come up from your experience of the game.</p> | |

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| WHAT | TIME | HOW | MATERIALS |
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| <p>Step 7: Debriefing – Round 2</p> | | <p>Say to the group, “This game reflects a lot of what it’s like to work in community. People work together, but they all have a different idea about what they’re building and how to value previous contributions. Someone with a different idea comes along and tears down what’s been built together. Then you start again, without a clear sense of when you’re finished or when the game will be done. So, consider this question: What does your experience of this game tell you about what you need to do to stay in the game of working in your community? What helps you stay connected to and caring about the work?”</p> <p>Again, begin the discussion with a personal example, such as: “I love seeing the creativity of how people respond to change” or “I was curious to see what would happen next” or “I was totally frustrated but I stayed because I wanted to be part of this group.”</p> | |
| <p>Step 8: Debriefing – Round 3</p> | | <p>Say to the group, “Remember that this game is a reflection of working together in community, and there were many different energy flows – people coming together, competing visions, destructive forces, adaptation. So, think about what happened throughout the flow of the game and your relationship to all of those forces and to the other players. Now, what did you learn about how you play off others and how you see and respond to what others need? What did you see about how others helped the group move toward wholeness? What is your contribution to wholeness?”</p> <p>Begin the round with your own example, such as: “I found that I was very patient with what others needed and could easily wait my turn” or “I found myself getting anxious about how others would feel whenever someone knocked over a structure” or “I tried to make a connection with the person knocking blocks over so he would stop.”</p> | |
| <p>Step 9: Dialogue</p> | <p>10 min</p> | <p>After you’ve completed these three rounds, you may open up the conversation for a general reflection about the participants’ experiences – what they learned about themselves and about the group.</p> | |