

Process

- Have staff fill out preparation sheet
- They get partner and find the one issue about which they disagree with each other the most
- You explain the rules
- They discuss the issue
- Debriefing session identifies specific skills
- This serves as a transition, if desired, to other communication training

Placement in Schedule

- An active introduction to training segments on communication skills
- This is a high-energy, noisy activity that is therefore well-suited to perk up “slow” periods such as right after lunch or first thing in the morning

Time Notes

- About 30 minutes, plus any time you decide to spend on additional skills

How to Present the Activity

Have partners find an issue

1. Pass out the preparation sheets. You can use the one that follows these instructions or you can make up your own in the same format. Be sure to tell staff that if it takes them more than a few seconds to decide any one item they should skip it and go on to the others. They don't even need to go back to the skipped items. We're only looking for the ones about which they have deep, immediate feelings. Give them a few minutes to complete the sheet.
2. Thank them for doing the sheet. Smile. Pause. Now say: “OK, now I'd like to give you the correct answers.” This will get a very large laugh. If it doesn't, review the rules for the uses of anti-depressants at camp.
3. Ask them to get a partner that they don't know or know less well and sit next to them.

4. Ask them to find the one controversial proposition on the sheet that the two of them most disagree with each other about. Be sure to emphasize that they are looking for an issue on which they are on opposite sides. They are not looking for one that they both disagree with. If there are more than one that they strongly disagree with each other about, then you can tell them to just pick one of these. It doesn't matter which one.
5. Give them two minutes or less to find one that they disagree a lot about. You can check with them to see if they need more or less time.

On occasion, someone will say they agree with their partner on all the issues. Tell them to pick one on which they have any differences in ranking, even if they are on the same side of the issue.

Explain the rules

1. For the next seven minutes, they are going to have a discussion with their partner about the one issue that they chose.
2. One of them will be A and one of them will be D. A is the person who agrees that the proposition is true. D is the person who disagrees and believes it is not true. Give them an example. If they picked the issue about extraterrestrials visiting the Earth, then the person who believes that it is true is A, and the person who disagrees is D.
3. Person A must go first. A should quickly explain a little about why she or he believes it is true and then stop. A should not go on and on. D should just listen to A. Then when A is finished, D should briefly reply. Then A answers back, then D again, and so on. Tell them that they can't take any notes.
4. Pause. Smile. Now tell them that there is just one more rule: before D can reply with an opposing opinion to A, D must repeat 100% of what A said. Not word for word or in the same order. But it must be 100% of the content. If D gets the summary right, A nods. Then the two of them simultaneously shout "Perfect!" as loudly as they can. Have them practice shouting this. For a laugh, you can tell them they can add an optional "high-five" at their discretion.
5. After D gets his or her "perfect!" then D gives an opposing opinion to A. And before A can reply, A must repeat everything that D said. It's best to act this out briefly once so they see how it will work. You play both parts and just say "blah blah blah" for what is supposed to be said. It will sound like this:

Stress that they must stay on this one topic and should not change it, even if they end up agreeing.

The PDP (Chapter 14) follows us everywhere. The way we explain activities becomes a model of how staff should do so. Repeating and acting out instructions is a good example to set for staff.

“A goes first. A says, ‘I think extraterrestrials have visited the Earth because of blah, blah, blah.’ Now D wants to say, ‘That’s crazy!’ But D can’t. D has to repeat what A said. So D says, ‘OK, so you think extraterrestrials have visited the Earth because blah, blah, blah.’ Now if the summary is right, A nods at D, and the two of them say together in a loud voice, ‘Perfect!!’ Then D takes a breath and says what D wants to say. And again, before A can reply, A has to repeat what D said.”

6. Explain that if their partner leaves anything out of the summary, the other partner should say so. If the person can’t remember what she or he left out, the partner can tell them so she or he can repeat it on the spot.
7. Tell everyone that this is much harder to explain in words than it is to do. Actually, it’s simple. The rules can be summarized in just three sentences. “For the next seven minutes you and your partner will discuss this one topic—you can’t change which one, and you can’t take notes. The only rule is that before you can say what you want, you must repeat 100% of what the person said before you. Both of you shout ‘perfect’ each time you get it right.”
8. Start the activity. Be sure to stay up front and listen for the first “perfect” from a pair. *Very important:* they will most likely look up at you to see if you notice. Smile and nod at them and this will encourage continued responses. *After a little less than seven minutes,* call time. Thank them.

Remind staff to keep the “perfects!” loud and clear.

Lead the large group discussion

Say this positively, with a nod and a smile. Otherwise, some will be reluctant to raise their hands.

1. Ask them to look straight ahead and not consult their partners. Ask this question: “How many of you got closer to agreement by the end of the time period? Please raise your hand.”
2. Usually, a very large number of hands will go up. Ask them to discuss what they conclude from the number of hands in the air. You can tell them there are at least four reasons that make the number of hands up so impressive.
 - a) First, staff had no preparation time—they didn’t know they were going to do this.
 - b) Second, they didn’t do it with someone they had a long-standing problem-solving relationship with. In most instances they did it with someone they don’t know very well or at all.

c) Third, they considered many highly controversial propositions and, out of those picked, the one about which they most disagreed.

d) And fourth, you didn't give them the whole seven minutes. If they had been given more time, we'd expect even more hands to go up.

3. Now ask this question:

"So why did we do this activity? What's every possible thing that you believe someone could learn from doing it?" Lead a discussion in which these things are listed.

4. This activity is an active, high-energy springboard from which you can begin presenting the skills that you want staff to learn for communicating with campers and each other. These are a few of the big points that you can address:

- While most of us view persuasion as a process of talking, actually listening is even more important.
- Most of us have not really been trained to listen. What we do when we think we're listening is really not listening at all. What we're doing is thinking about what we're going to say when we get our turn to talk.
- One of the best ways to show people that we are listening is to tell them what we heard them say. This should not be done with repetitive, phony-sounding, workshoppy phrases, such as "I hear you saying blah, blah, blah." Those are good examples of words that have become a worn out and ineffective cliché. We should vary how we present our summaries.

Sometimes we can say, "OK, let me see if I've got what you're saying here." Or we can say, "So what you're telling me is..." Sometimes we can introduce it in the form of a question, such as "Is this what you're saying?" The important thing is not to use the same phrase over and over like a robot. It will sound insincere and manipulative even though that is not our intent.

- People love to know that they've been heard. Even when we don't get our way, we feel some satisfaction if we believe that we've been listened to and taken seriously. We may go away angry that we didn't get what we wanted but at least we can feel respect for the other person because we have seen them invest time and energy in trying to understand what we were