

123=12

Impact: Builds teamwork as the group attempts to solve a riddle; challenges participants to pay close attention while engaging in a physical activity

Risk: Medium (this activity can be frustrating)

Group Size: 8–20

Time Required: 15–45 minutes

Materials: Rope (about 20' long)

Directions:

- You will need a rope about 20' long to be used as a jump rope; space enough for the group to be able to move from one side of the room or area to the other; ceiling height to be able to have a jump rope turning
- Identify a person to join the facilitator in turning the rope.
- Ask the group to stand on one side of the jump rope. Tell them that their goal is to get the entire group to end up on the other side of the room, but to do so, they must solve the riddle of 123=12. The only way they will be able to get information about whether they are on the right track is by noticing the rope. If it continues to turn, they are on the right track. If the rope stops turning, they are not solving the riddle. When the rope does stop, they must all go back to the beginning and start again.
- Give the group time to ask questions, but most of the answers will be clarifying that the rope will tell them if they are right or not. Eventually they will get the idea and begin trying some solutions.
- Remind them that they will receive feedback in the following manner: Whenever the rope stops turning, they will know that they are solving the riddle incorrectly, and the group should return to the starting place and begin again. If they pay close attention to the moment when the rope stops turning and what the group was doing just prior to the rope stopping, they will gather important information that will assist them in solving the riddle.
- When the rope stops, the group should stop working and analyze what happened. The group should focus on what they are doing to discover what actions are solving the riddle and what actions cause the rope to stop. *The solution to the riddle is this: One person passes through the rope, then two people together, then three people together, then back to one, two then three (the pattern is repeated) until the rope has turned a total of 12 times.*

Option:

- Count the number of turns to yourself to make it more difficult, or out loud to make it noticeable. This can help a group figure out the 12 part of the riddle.
- Another way to make it more difficult is to drop the rope if they skip a beat (meaning that the solution involves someone going through every time the rope turns). It is easier to let the rope skip beats.
- Allow people to go back to the other side of the room behind you or under the rope, instead of trying to jump through the 'back door' of the jump rope while turning.

- End with everyone on the same side of the room.
- Vary the end number if the group is larger than 12 people...it can be 123=20, 30, 17 —you decide!

Discussion:

This can be a very frustrating activity. Process it accordingly.

- Review what happened during the activity. What role did people play? How many attempts did it take? How did people feel throughout?
- Did people want to give up at any point? How did they rally and persevere?
- How did the group arrive at the solution? How do they feel now that they have solved it?
- What can the group learn from this about working together? About sticking to a task that is challenging? About getting creative in their problem solving? About taking risks?

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