

Lily Pads

Impact: Requires decision making, planning, communication, and helping others as they share a physical activity

Risk: Medium

Group Size: 8 or more

Time Required: 30–60 minutes

Materials: Cardboard, paper

Directions:

- The goal of the activity is for all team members to cross a marked area designated as the river using only the lily pads. Lily pads can be pieces of cardboard or paper, etc.
- Participants must stay in contact with the lily pads at all times, or the lily pads will be swept away down the river (i.e. the facilitator will remove them). If a participant steps off the lily pad into the river at any time after leaving the river bank s/he will have to pay the consequences; and either the individual or the entire team will have to return to the river bank (the facilitator's choice). A successful team will get everyone across the river in as short a time as possible.
- Here are the rules:
 1. All participants must cross from one side of the river to the other.
 2. Once participants leave the riverbank, they are only allowed to step on the lily pads. Anyone who touches the river in any way will have to pay the consequences.
 3. Lily pads must remain in contact with a team member at all times, or they will be swept down the river and taken away.
 4. No running, jumping, or diving.
- The facilitator should time the group.

Discussion:

- There are numerous ways to process this, depending on which option you choose and if and how the group succeeds.
 - What components were necessary for success? Communication, careful planning, teamwork, one person acting as a coordinator, ideas from many people, practice before entering the river, thinking about those who needed more help to succeed. Explain. Give examples.
 - Which of these was most difficult for the group? Why?
 - Which of these contributed most to the success of the group? Why?
 - How could the group have completed the task more efficiently?
 - How is this activity similar to situations people have faced at this organization, in this program or elsewhere?
 - What learning can you take away from this?
 - For groups that used role plays: how did the personalities that players assumed affect the performance of the group? Which personalities worked well in the

group? Which didn't? Which would work better in situations where a person had to solve a problem alone? How did it feel to be treated a certain way? Did people feel safe, misunderstood, frustrated? What does this say about problem solving in diverse communities?

Hint:

Do not make the river so wide that the task becomes impossible given the number of players and lily pads. Players must be able to step from one pad to another, although they can pass them forward once everyone is in the river if there are extra lily pads.

Option:

This is a great activity to manipulate.

- Consequences for those who touch the river can vary from the entire team having to return to only those members who step off the lily pads having to return.
- Divide the group into two teams, and ask the two groups to stand on opposite sides of the river and switch places. This adds competition to the challenge.
- Prior to the activity have all members of the group identify a list of characteristics or qualities that are important for success (leadership, a team that is working well together, etc.). Write these words or phrases on pieces of tape and place a piece of tape on the bottom of each lily pad. Use these words, especially those that washed away, during the processing.
- Give challenges to a few group members, such as a blindfold or tell them that they can't talk.
- Give each participant a card with a character trait on it such as bossy, shy, mistrustful, mute, encouraging etc. Ask them to keep the cards to themselves and to role play these traits as they do the activity.
- Tape a card to each participant's back, without showing them the card, that lets the other participants know how they should be treated. These can include "ignore what I say", "follow all my suggestions", "ask me to help you", or "I need constant encouragement", "you can't understand my accent".
- Once you have tried the activity once and debriefed, challenge the group to take what they have learned and get across the river more quickly.

Want More?

For more **team building activities**, please see our book *Growing Together* at thefoodproject.org/books.

Want to learn more about how we create youth leadership development models in the context of farming, our social justice curriculum, and our food access initiatives? Attend one of our Institutes! More info at thefoodproject.org/institute.

