

Jumping Your Hurdles

3. Cooperative Construction

Spatial Requirements: Classroom with moderate space required

Activity Type: Movement/group

Grades: 3-12

Group Size: 6 or more

Time: 15 minutes

Introduction: When trying to overcome our hurdles or challenges, we often have to be creative and willing to change our tactics. Having a supportive network can also help us resolve our problems. As students work on this activity, they will develop these skills and gain a better understanding of their importance. This activity can also be applied to “Plugging In.”

Materials:

- Timer
- 75 toothpicks per team
- 75 marshmallows per team
- 1 bag per team, filled with toothpicks and marshmallows
- 1 ruler

Activity:

Divide the group into teams of three and distribute a bag to each team. Note that marshmallows work best when they have been removed from their bag and allowed to stale slightly so as not be sticky.

The objective is for each team to build the tallest freestanding tower in the time allowed. They may only use the marshmallows and the toothpicks.

Assign numbers to each team member. Before starting round one, give each team 60 seconds to discuss a plan. Everyone may talk, but no building is to start yet.

Start round one, giving the teams three minutes to build. During this round, Player 1 is the only one allowed to talk. Player 1 cannot participate in the actual building of the tower; he or she can only talk. Players 2 and 3 are not allowed to talk, and may only use one hand each to build the tower. The other hand must be behind the back.

At the end of the first three-minute round, give the teams 30 seconds to discuss their tower. They may not, however, do any building during this time. Then rotate the team members, giving Player 2 the responsibility of talking and not building for the next three-minute round. When this round begins, Players 1 and 3 must continue to build the tower – again with only one arm each.

Repeat until everyone has a chance to fulfill each role.

When all three rounds are complete, the tower must stand alone for 15 seconds before the players measure their own towers. Have everyone take a minute to look at the other teams’ towers to see what approaches the other teams took.

Processing the Experience:

- How did your strategy change throughout the activity?
- What frustrated you in this activity?
- What motivated you to keep trying?
- Did you feel each team member played an important role in completing this activity? Why or why not?

- How important was creativity in this activity?
- Why do we sometimes need to be creative or change our tactics when we're trying to jump hurdles?
- How can working with others help us solve problems?
- Why is it important to believe in yourself when working to overcome challenges in life?