

The Wall

3. The Big Picture

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required

Activity Type: Object lesson

Grades: 5-12

Group Size: 2 or more

Time: 15-20 minutes

Introduction: When we look beyond the obvious, we are able to see the big picture. As students learn to view this challenge in a different way, they will find the solution.

Materials:

- 1 pad of paper or sticky note
- 1 pencil/pen
- 10 additional pencils (You may also use a group of other similar objects, such as toothpicks, Popsicle sticks, or pens.)

Activity:

You will teach the secret of this activity to an assistant beforehand. The goal is to make it appear that there is an actual pattern in the pencils, when in reality, the pencils are only a distraction from the clue you will be giving your assistant with your hands. (See the secret below.)

Place the ten pencils randomly on a table in front of you. Tell the group that the pencils are actually arranged in a secret pattern, which reveals a number that you have the ability to communicate. Ask for a volunteer, and select your assistant. Tell the group that the pattern is revealing a number between one and ten. Tell them that if they discover the pattern, they must keep it a secret. Write the number on a piece of paper out of sight from the group, then have your assistant reveal the interpretation of the pattern. Reveal the piece of paper so the group can see that your number matches the one your assistant said.

Repeat this activity several more times, rearranging the pattern and asking the participants to watch carefully to see the pattern. If someone catches on, ask him/her to be your assistant until a few more catch on. If no one can figure out the pattern, encourage the group to look at the "big picture."

The secret: As soon as an elaborate pattern is formed, the person making the pattern puts his/her hands on the table with the number of fingers in view. A clenched fist indicates zero. If the answer was four, the person's first hand would be a clenched fist and the other hand would show four fingers.

Processing the Experience:

- Where was your attention during this activity? Why was it so difficult to understand the trick?
- Focusing on the pencils became a distraction for us in this activity. What happens in life when we focus our attention only on our challenges?
- Why is it important to take our focus off immediate challenges and look to the future?
- Why do some people fail to see the big picture?
- How can we escape from the limited view?
- As you overcome your challenges, hurdles, and obstacles in life, what kind of opportunities will unfold?