TEAMBUILDING BASICS

Purpose: To encourage bonding between members of a team. It's not how fast the challenge is completed, it's about *how the team works together* to complete it, and the lessons that can be taken away from the activities.

Goals:

- Identify a variety of skills and personalities in the group
- Allow a chance for natural leaders to listen, or for followers to lead
- Learn and observe different communication types
- Each exercise can *have a lesson or message for group reflection and discussion*

Tips:
- Always have a mediator who explains the rules and can stop the activity if it gets out of hand
- Find an auxiliary role for people who've already done the same exercise to avoid "spoilers"
- Encourage everyone to participate, but don't force anyone out of their comfort zone.
- Use the resources available, and a variety of challenge types. Not all teambuilding has to be physical. Assess the risks before you start!
- Don't let competitive teams become a clique. Switch pairs regularly, or combine teams later.
- Don't punish those who find loopholes, even if it messes up your expected outcome. Remember, people who can think outside the box are more useful to your team in everyday instances.
- Party games for large groups can be used as teambuilding in a pinch, or when you have a large block of time to fill.

Types of Teambuilding

Ice Breakers	Mental Exercises
- Short exercises that help introduce one another and establish commonalities - Can be pair-share or whole group - Should be 10 min. max (10-15% time) - The point is to feel free to share- don't get competitive with ice breakers!	- Can be done entirely with pencil and paper - Allows physically limited or non-athletic types to show their strengths - Great for limited or restricted spaces - Usually done in small break-out groups - Can compete against other groups, or the moderator - Can run 10-40 minutes, plan accordingly!
Physical/ Physical Strategy	Obstacle Based
- Uses body movement and sometimes strategy, but no extra props or accessories - Examples include "Human Knot," "Trust Falls," "Linked Arm Stand," etc. - Plan ahead: do you need similar body style pairs? Is there a *graceful* way to do this? - Can be competitive or completion-based - Can be easily adapted, altered for redoing - Usually short 2-10 minutes - Minimize risk with spotters, correct environment, and pre-planning	- Uses strategy, movement, and communication to complete a task using props, accessories, and/or tools - Can be competitive with smaller groups or whole group strategy based - Requires set up and pre-planning - Can be adapted or altered to limit "bosses" in the group - Focuses on communication skills and teamwork - Can run up to 35 minutes, with setup

Basic Modifications to Exercises:
- Remember, don't make any task seem "impossible" to the participants!
- Repeat the activity with the goal of doing it *faster* as a group until everyone agrees it cannot be done faster. This works best for whole group activities that are partially or wholly strategy based.
- Remove one of the five senses or a mode of communication. Blindfold a few people, or everyone. Try it with your hands behind your back, without talking, or without being able to move your feet from where they are planted right… now!
  - o If a leader is becoming bossy, or already knows the key to an activity from past experience, make them a silent participant.
- Increase difficulty by adding more obstacles or objects, more distance, making a task timed, or adding more rules.
  - o In some tasks, combining pairs into larger groups will also lead to more communication challenges, making it harder to complete. Example: in the mine field, what if you had 4 people giving commands to the one blinded person?

Discussion and Reflection for Team Building:
- Keep questions simple to allow more time for answers: "What went well?" "What was the biggest challenge here?"
- Moderator should keep conversation constructive and positive, stepping in when necessary to refocus the discussion.
- Moderator can also point out moments from the exercise, or things they noticed. Ex: "It was interesting how Mark encouraged you all to try Lisa's suggestion, but nobody else was really on board the first two times she said it."
- Moderator should have "the final word," a take away lesson about the length of a slogan, ready in mind to end the discussion.

Resources:
- https://wheniwork.com/blog/team-building-games/#game_grid
- http://www.wilderdom.com/games/InitiativeGames.html
- https://www.wrike.com/blog/ultimate-guide-team-building-activities/

SAMPLE ACTIVITY 1: STRING WEB

Activity type: Ice Breaker   Materials: 1 roll of yarn or twine   Group size: 5-50   Time: 5-10 minutes (depending on group size)

With the whole group sitting or standing in a circle, the moderator should introduce the rules: Hold one end of the string while you state your name, and your role within Student Council, then toss the rest of the roll to somebody you've worked with or who got you involved in an event recently. As you pass the string, keep tension on it with your fingers so that it doesn't sag in the middle.

After the string has been passed to all participants, pass it back to the person who started, completing the web. Tell participants to look at the web and how it represents all the connections they make by working with others. As a team, we can cover so much more…literally.

Then ask all participants to drop their string when they hear a statement about something they've neglected recently, regarding their position or responsibilities within the team. Look through your by-laws to find statements for dropping the string. Examples:

- Drop if your string if you've ever missed a meeting without telling someone you couldn't make it
- Drop your string if you didn't support the last fundraiser we did
- Drop your string if you've put off homework or family responsibilities to do Student Council stuff instead

Stop when all strings have been dropped, or when less than three people remain holding the string.

Point out that everyone has things they forget to do or responsibilities they let drop sometimes. Explain that the strings now represent what happens, however, when too many people slack off or continually neglect their duties. The string that had been an intricate web of connections between us, now only includes a few people, trying to "pick up all the slack" that other people have let in. If people keep doing this, it will eventually wind up a tangled mess, with everyone else sitting or standing by and watching a few do all the work. Discuss why teamwork is important, what they can learn from this, or how it changes their view of their role within Student Council.

*If you have the space, as people let go of their strings, remind the remaining holders to keep tension by moving farther apart. Then during the discussion part, you can even explain that when others have to pick up the slack, it keeps us from being a "close knit" team.

SAMPLE ACTIVITY 2: Xs VS Os

Activity Type: Mental Strategy   Materials: Pencil and paper for each pair   Group size: pairs   Time: 2-5 minutes

Hand each group a paper and pencil. Instruct groups to do the following: Draw a hashtag on the paper. Fill in the hashtag by drawing either Xs or Os, with each partner taking alternating turns until all boxes are filled. Only one symbol may be drawn in each box. The pair who gets the most Xs or the most Os in their hashtag wins.

Have teams keep practicing until a team gets 9 Xs or 9 Os by both drawing the same symbol. Lessons to be learned: 1. always listen to the exact rules, don't assume what you aren't told; 2. we accomplish more when we work with each other, not against each other.