

Islands

"Islands" is a problem-solving activity that is suited well to a class-size group.

Materials

You will need one "Island" for each member of the group. I use either tied rope loops about 18 inches in diameter, or spots (i.e.: poly spots like the gym teacher has).

Procedure

Start by handing an island to each member of the group. If you are using rope loops, give safety instructions *prior* to handing them out (i.e.: Hold this in one hand at your side. Do not swing your island around...) Instruct the group to find a space in the room and place the island they were given on the floor. Tell them, "Put two feet on an island." The specific wording is important. Say, "When I yell SWITCH, put your feet on another island. When I yell SWITCH you may touch the ground outside of an island as you move around the room." Then yell SWITCH a couple of times allowing them to move easily between islands. Always wait until everyone has two feet on an island before yelling SWITCH again. The third time you yell SWITCH, discreetly (hopefully with no one looking) pick up an island and hide it in your pocket or somewhere else. Wait until the person left with no island figures out that he/she can share an island with someone else. Continue yelling SWITCH and taking away islands. By the time you are down to just a few islands, someone in the group usually figures out that you did not say they could not touch the ground with other parts of their bodies while putting two feet on an island, and they figure out that they can all sit or lay on the ground on a circle putting their feet in the middle over an island.

This provides a good opportunity to not only debrief the group problem-solving process, but to talk about rules we put on ourselves and how limiting that can be for our success.

Safety Notes

- If you are using rope loops, give safety instructions *prior* to handing them out (i.e.: Hold this in one hand at your side. Do not swing your island around...)
- As the participants cluster into larger and larger groups trying to get both feet on an island, continually remind them to be safe.
- With some groups I will continue to remove islands until they are down to one. With other groups I may stop the process when they are down to three or four. Once they get to the point that they are sitting or lying down, they have the point. It can be fun for the group to end up as one, but it is not worth the safety risk if it is too large or too rambunctious of a group.