



Sportsmanship Group Activity 1: Helium Stick

Sportsmanship — Bring your best to all competition

- **BE COOPERATIVE:** Join your teammates & opponents in a mutual quest for excellence.
- **BE FAIR:** Perform skillfully, guided by the letter & spirit of the rules.
- **BE GRACIOUS:** Enjoy the challenge of a tough competitor & meet it with your finest performance, win or lose.
- **BE HONORABLE:** Respect the game & contributions made by opponents, teammates, coaches & officials.
- **BE HUMBLE:** Don't distract from great play with arrogant behavior.

Problem Solving: Sportsmanship

Summary: A deceptively simple but powerful exercise for learning how to work together and to learn how to follow the rules.

Time: 10 minutes total

Brief the group: 2 minutes

Exercise: 5 minutes

Reflection: 3 minutes

Rod Represents: Role on the Team, Opponents, Rules of the game, etc... Everybody that needs to come together in a season to help the team be "successful"

Directions:

- Line up in two rows which face each other
- Introduce the Helium Stick
- Ask participants to point their index fingers and hold their arms out.
- Lay the Helium Stick down on their fingers. Get the group to adjust their finger heights until the Helium stick is horizontal and everyone's index fingers are touching the stick.
- Explain to the group that the challenge is to lower the Helium Stick to the ground. Each person's fingers must be in contact with the Helium Stick at all times. If anyone's finger isn't touching the Helium Stick, the task should be restarted.

Facilitator Notes:

- Participants may be confused initially about the paradoxical behavior of the Helium Stick. The secret (keep it to yourself) is that the collective upwards pressure tends to be greater than the weight of the stick. Often the more a group tries, the more it "floats".
- If a group appears to be succeeding too fast, be particularly vigilant about fingers not touching the pole. Also make sure participants lower the pole all the way to the ground. Trick is to relax.

Processing the Ideas:

- Discuss the importance of sportsmanship: bring your best to all competition. How did this group do in demonstrating sportsmanship to all members of the team as they tried to lower the rod?
- How does this relate to a team setting? (following rules, encouragement, handling an unexpected tough situation, etc...)
- How will SPORTSMANSHIP look on your team? Identify 3. Refer to Sportsmanship checklist.
- One team member writes and reports later.