

Physical Movement

Misunderstanding Is Easy Exercise

Brief Description/Purpose

This is a fun activity to demonstrate the importance of being very clear in our communications to our colleagues, customers, etc. It demonstrates how difficult it is to communicate effectively, how we need to check for understanding.

Type

Group activity

Age Appropriate

Any age

Ideal Group Size

Any size

Time For Exercise

15 minutes, and can be used as an icebreaker.

Topic/Subject

Communication

Detailed Instructions If Needed

You will need a sportscoat or jacket. You can modify this exercise to involve any kind of visible physical activity that as a number of steps.

Have the group form a circle around you. You should have your sportscoat or jacket on at this time. Ask for a volunteer or select someone to participate in the activity with you.

Have the volunteer stay right where he or she is within the circle. Explain to the entire group that not only is it important for us to understand those around us, but that we increase our ability to be understood by others.

Focus on your participant and say:

“_____ (his or her name), all I want you to do, standing right where you are, is give me verbal directions and tell me how to put on my jacket.”

As you are saying this, take off your jacket, and as you are doing so, pull one of the sleeves inside out. Then, take your jacket, placing it in somewhat of a rolled up ball, and drop it on the floor.

Physical Movement

What follows is often very funny.

Be certain that you listen intently and do **exactly** (be very literal) what he or she says. Have fun with it.

If the volunteer says, pick up your coat—pick it up in a ball. Make him or her work for it. Don't assume anything. Should the volunteer tell you to take the jacket by the collar, do so, but with the inside of the jacket facing away from you.

If the volunteer says turn it around, do just what he or she has stated. Turn completely around with the jacket in the same position facing the other direction. Or, turn the jacket around and around in your hands until instructed to stop. Don't be too cooperative.

Continue with the activity (about 2 minutes) until the usually flustered participant has had enough or accomplishes the task (Some do!).

Show appreciation for that individual. Ask the group,

“What did we just do here? Sure, we had some fun, but the main point of all this is to say what you mean—mean what you say! Does your customer understand what you are saying to them?” Have participants return to their seats.

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