

Activity Title: The Bridge

Goals: 1. To increase the participant's sense of personal responsibility in career planning, goal setting and decision making skills in terms of choosing appropriate supports to help reach goals.

Diversity Relatedness: Intercultural and educationally diversified learning group.

Participant Characteristics:

- a) Third Grade and up.
- b) Mixed group of gender & academic abilities.

Potential Stage/Sessions: School classroom or large impact counseling group. This activity can accommodate from 10 to 30 participants.

Estimated Duration: 40 minutes.

Materials: Group Facilitator: (Optional) Building Tool Props: Hammer, Level, Drill, Saw, etc. Required: Roll of Toilet Paper & List of 10 Questions (see under directions.)

Group Participants: Pencil & Paper.

1. **General Directions:** Group facilitator (GF) announces the group will be doing a

~GF: Have the two volunteers stand 20-30 feet apart. Connect the two people with one continuous strand (20-30 feet) of the building material. Both volunteers should be holding onto their respective ends.

~GF: Again, take turns commanding the two volunteers to fulfill the following requests (make sure everyone in the group hears what you're asking):

(Sample requests based on age of participants)

- Choose three people to come up to **support* the bridge by saying: "(Names) I need your support, would you please help me?"
- Choose two people who would make great friends to come up to support the bridge by saying "(Names) I need your support, would you please help me?"
- Of the people supporting your bridge, choose the one person most likely not to keep a promise to sit back down in their seat by saying "(Name) Thank you, but I don't need your support anymore."
- Of the people that haven't been chosen yet, choose one person most likely to graduate with honors to come up and support the bridge "(Name) I need your support, would you please help me?"
- Of the people that haven't been chosen, choose a person to come up and take the place of someone that's not doing a great job of supporting the bridge. For example, that person may be holding the bridge too high, too low, has wiped his

- or her nose on it, or is being careless with his or her responsibilities in supporting the bridge. Replace by saying “(Name) I need you to please take (name’s) place.
- Of the supports in place, sit down a good friend who may not have the same goals as you by saying, “(Name) Thank you, but I don’t need that kind of support right now.”
 - Of the people supporting the bridge, sit down the person most likely not to help you study for a test by saying “(Name) Thanks for all you’ve done and I still like you but I don’t need your support anymore.”

~ GF should “sit down” the middle person supporting the bridge for “whatever reason” and not replace that person.

- Choose someone that you don’t know very well to come up and support the bridge by saying “(Name) I could really use your support, would you please help me?”
- Choose two people who one day could become great coaches (parents, step-parents, or foster parents) to come and support the bridge by saying “(Names) I could really use your support, would you please help me?”
- Of the people supporting the bridge, sit down three people who might be thinking that they are the one’s actually in charge of the bridge.
- Please sit down one of two supports that aren’t necessarily working very well together. Be sure to thank that person.

(*Support in this case implies gently placing both the open palms of your hands under the section of building material you’ve been assigned)

(Spend approximately 10-15 minutes having people coming and going. The GF may also take the liberty of inserting or replacing seldom chosen people with ones who are chosen frequently)

~The GF should bring closure to this part of the activity by sitting down all of the support people either one at a time or in pairs. Leave the two end people in place with the bridge sagging between them for visual effect. Ask for a round of applause for everyone who participated=)

Processing Questions:

~With everyone except the two initial volunteers back in their seats, the GF should now review the 10 questions that were answered at the beginning of the activity.

The GF should call on and listen to various participant answers however the answers the GF wants to identify or highlight are the following:

1. The purpose of a bridge is to connect two points.
2. Any bridge is a good bridge.
3. Any bridge that connects two points will work.

4. Any bridge that can get you from where you are now to where you want to be.
5. Any strong, reliable, and dependable material.
6. Any strong, reliable, and consistent material.
7. Any strong, reliable, and supportive material.
8. Your destination can be ANY place you want to get to or any goals you hope to achieved.
9. Walking distance will vary with destination, however regardless of the distance involved, it will take one day at a time to reach the destination. Smaller goals met and achieved as part of a larger goal process.
10. ANY job, car, or place of residence is the OTHER connecting point from where you are NOW (see question#1.)

~The GF needs to demonstrate the following points using the two original volunteers and the bridge as continued props.

Stand in the middle of the bridge supporting the entire length of bridge and ask the group:

- “Have you ever counted on someone for support but then felt like that person let you down (for added effect, allow the bridge to fall)?
- “Has anyone here ever been surprised by someone in your life who turned out to be a great support?
- “Have anyone here ever lost someone to death, imprisonment, or disappearance?”
- “Who is this room has ever had a step mom or step dad become a support?”
- “Have you ever needed to tell a friend to “go home” mostly because he or she wasn’t doing what was in your best interest?”
- “Have you ever asked a teacher, coach, neighbor, or other family member for support?”
- “Have you ever wanted to tell a uncle, aunt, mom, step dad or other family member something like: “No thanks....that’s not helping me right now?”
- “Have you ever had someone intentionally or unintentionally ruin a bridge you were trying to build or a goal you were trying to reach?”
- “Has it ever felt that in the absence of a very special support someone, finishing the bridge felt useless?” “How did you move forward in that person’s absence?”

~GF sits down the original two bridge builders and brings closure to the activity by stressing the following “take home” messages:

- The most important bridge in the world...your world is the one you create for yourself.
- Most worthwhile bridges take years to build and all bridges are built one day at a time.
- Where you are now may be a beginning point. Where you want to be one day in your thirties, forties, or fifties and all you hope to accomplish can be an end point.
- Each of us has the responsibility to seek out and ask potential supports for help regardless of our race, color, religion, or cultural beliefs.

- We also have the responsibility to “sit down” supports that appear to be destructive and or antagonistic toward other supporters and may no longer have our best interests in mind.
- Remember that supports come and go along the way. Teachers, friends, jobs, education, and family are some of those supports. Choose supports that are strong, dependable, and reliable. Realize some supports can never be replaced however know that this “void” can be reserved as a place or memorial of special meaning.
- Counseling can help bridge builders figure out not only a starting point but an ending point in achieving personal, educational, and career goals. Counseling helps bridge builders learn to choose strong, reliable, and dependable supports and can provide encouragement and other supportive resources when building has been reconsidered, stalled, or sabotaged.

Cautions:

GF should be mindful that the bridge is subject to tears, rips, and complete breaks with so many people coming and going. If a break occurs, have the two initial volunteers choose a support person that both feel can “keep the bridge together” by holding the two severed ends. This cautionary tale has a great lesson to be learned for all bridge builders.

References:

The reflection of this activity is found in a counseling activity book called: Fifty Steps Closer; Group Counseling Guide in Reflections of School-Aged Boys & Girls written by Nicholas G. Minardi, Ph.D. This is a detailed lesson plan for the activity.

About the Author:

Dr. Nicholas G. Minardi is a licensed clinical psychologist and credentialed school counselor of twenty years. The bulk of his experience involves group work with school-aged children. He has recently written a book called: Fifty Steps Closer; Group Counseling Guide in Reflections of School-Aged Boys & Girls. For more information go to www.fiftystepscloser.com