Title: Group Mandala

Focus: Group Dynamics Exercise - Teamwork, Cooperation, Communication and Conflict

Time: 30-40 minutes

Objectives:

1. Allows symbolic exploration of group structure and dynamics, and revealing of personal feelings towards others

Materials needed:

- Each group member to select one personal object or an object from nature to represent themselves

Introduction:

This exercise has been adapted from an exercise facilitated by Chris Loynes at the 10th National Outdoor Education Conference, 1997, in Perth, Western Australia and subsequent personal advice. Chris attributes his learning of the learning to Roger Greenaway who provided me with some excellent information about a similar activity he calls “Stones” and a related activity called “Human Sculpture”.

Description:

- Each person is represented by an object they choose themselves; objects are then thrown like dice
- Each person then shares how he or she feels about the position in which his or her object has landed (uses psychoanalytic technique of "projection")
- Through various rounds, participants get to modify/adjust the position of their object until each individual is satisfied with where they sit in relation to the other objects (group members)
- Logistically, a simple activity; facilitation-wise, a potentially difficult and challenging activity; lots of potential for subtle and deep group work
- Group sizes of approximately 7 to 9 are ideal, but can be done with as few as 5 or as many as 12.

Directions:

Each of these steps should be revealed one by one. This helps to enhance the unknowns of the activity.

1. Participants in a group select a small object. The object can be anything, from anywhere: e.g., an object of personal significance or collected from the outdoors
2. Standing in a circle, ask a participant for their hat (or use some other container).
3. Place your object in the hat, and pass the hat on to the next person who does the same.
4. Caste the objects, with some care, some randomness (like rolling dice) (may use casting mat, e.g., a sarong or coat, particularly if using personally significant objects). Try to use the floor rather than a table.
5. Ask people to look at the objects and then take turns sharing how they feel about the place of their object in relation to the other objects in the group.

6. One-by-one then go around in a circle and have each person move his/her object to a new position, explaining to the group why it feels more comfortable for their object to be in this different place.

7. Ask the group to discuss and collective create (move/shift) their objects into an ideal arrangement.

**Discussion Questions:**

1. What do you think of this activity? Why?
2. What happened in this group during this activity from the perspective of the participants’ attitudes and behavior?