

SHIFTING RHYTHMS

THE MARSHMALLOW CHALLENGE & TEAM DYNAMICS

(For Ages 7 - 11)

Teacher's Guide

Time Estimate: 1 hour and 30 minutes

[Accompanying Slides](#)



Competencies: Entrepreneurial Mindset, Community Building, Peer Support,
Perception

Note: The videos proposed for this curriculum may not resonate with your students. Please adjust as needed.

Tags: Entrepreneurship

LEARNING OBJECTIVES Entrepreneurs typically work within teams. However, team dynamics can sometimes be difficult to navigate through. By placing the students in a time sensitive environment where they have to solve a complex problem, we will learn about why teams are important and how to solve conflicts within a team.

GOALS In this session, students will:

1. Ideate great team dynamics and different careers that require teamwork.
2. Complete the Marshmallow Challenge.
3. Express the strengths and weaknesses of their team dynamics.

COMPETENCIES This session adheres to the following Shifting Rhythms competencies:

1. **COMMUNITY BUILDING** This competency seeks to understand how students are building relationships with their instructors and peers.
2. **PEER SUPPORT** This competency seeks to measure and understand if students feel encouraged by their peers to complete activities. This competency will also help us understand how Shifting Rhythms is developing a welcoming learning environment for its students.
3. **PERCEPTION** This competency seeks to understand how students are developing perceptions of their future lives and careers through their participation in the Shifting Rhythms program.

MATERIALS

1. Spaghetti
2. Jumbo Marshmallows
3. Masking Tape
4. Scissors
5. String
6. Three Large Sheets of Paper
7. Marker

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INSTRUCTIONS

PART ONE Observing and Critiquing Team Dynamics (Estimated Time: 10 - 15 Minutes)

1. Show the students this [video](#). You may have to show the video twice. After watching the video, ask the students what they observed about the team's dynamic; what went wrong within the team? As the students ideate, you should write the students' statements on a big piece of paper. Some examples of statements you may hear:

The smaller birds were mocking the bigger bird or the outsider of the group.

The smaller birds moved away from the bigger bird, and excluded it from the group.

The smaller birds did not communicate their discomfort with the bigger bird in a nice way.

The bigger bird did not acknowledge the smaller birds' discomfort with its presence on the line.

Rather than verbally expressing their frustrations, the smaller birds began to attack the bigger bird.

Once the bigger bird landed on the rope, the smaller birds did not acknowledge the role of the bigger bird. Their refusal to include the bigger bird caused their entire team to lose its feathers.

The two small birds in the middle did not recognize their failures until it was too late.

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When the small birds lost their feathers, the bigger bird laughed at the smaller birds.

2. Show the students this [video](#). You may have to show the video twice. After watching the video, ask the students what they observed about the team's dynamic; what worked well for the team? As the students ideate, you should write the students' statements on a big piece of paper. Here are some examples of statements you may hear:

When Peter noticed that Maria was having trouble, he approached her to ask how he could help.

Maria was willing to try Peter's idea.

When Maria was thinking about placing the last block on the top of the structure, she realized that she wasn't tall enough and did not act impulsively to ruin the structure that her and Peter had built together.

Before Dee began participating in the activity, she asked Peter and Maria for their permission or consent to join the team.

Before Dee began suggesting her own ideas, she asked Peter and Maria for their insight into how she could help.

Dee offered to support Maria so that she could achieve her goal of placing the block at the top of the structure.

All team members had the opportunity to express their excitement and approval of the structure.

Maria thanked Dee and Peter for helping her complete the structure.

All the team members were given credit for the work they did to complete the structure.

They all wanted to work together again.

3. Ask the students to decide which team dynamic was best. Have a couple of students justify their choices. It is most likely that the students will decide

that the second video displayed the best team dynamic. If there are students who disagree, ask them to explain how they would feel if they had to work in a team similar to the one conveyed in the first video.

4. Inform the students that they will now be doing the Marshmallow Challenge. Remind them to remember what good and bad working teams look like.

PART TWO The Marshmallow Challenge (Estimated Time: 20 Minutes)

1. Count the students off into groups.
2. Once the students are settled in their small groups, each group will be given 20 pieces of spaghetti, 5 strips of tape, 1 pair of scissors, and 1 marshmallow.
3. Inform the students that their goal is to build the tallest tower with the materials they have been given. However, remind the students that they have to follow these rules:
 - a. The entire marshmallow has to be used.
 - b. They cannot cut the marshmallow into pieces.
 - c. The tower will be measured from the tabletop to the top of the marshmallow
 - d. The students can break the spaghetti and rip the tape.
 - e. The students will have 15 minutes.
 - f. Remember to be creative, have fun, and do not eat the marshmallow!
4. Ideally, because the students will be navigating through their own team dynamics, none of the groups will be able to finish their marshmallow tower on time. As students are working on building their marshmallow towers, you should walk around the room and take notes on the different types of team dynamics that you observe. What works well? What is not working well?
5. Once the time is up, ask the students to stop working on their marshmallow towers.

PART THREE What makes for a great team? (Estimated Time: 10 Minutes)

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1. As a large group discussion, ask the students to express their thoughts on how they believe the marshmallow challenge went. All students do not have to participate.
2. Instruct the students to reflect on the first two videos they watched. Then, ask them this question: *What are the qualities of a great team?* You should record their thoughts on a large piece of paper.
3. Once the students have finished sharing, ask them to personally reflect on whether or not their teams for the marshmallow challenge demonstrated the qualities they listed.

PART FOUR Self-Reflection (Estimated Time: 10 Minutes)

1. Instruct the students to self-reflect in their journals. They should answer this prompt: *What were the strengths and weaknesses of your team? What could have been done differently? Why is it important that we learn how to work in teams? What are some careers in which people have to work in teams?*
2. Ask a few volunteers to share with the class why they believe it's important to work in teams. Ask a few volunteers to share what types of careers require that people work in teams.

PART FIVE Takeaway (Estimated Time: 5 Minutes)

1. Take the students through what they completed in this session. Remind them about you all discussed today about the best practices for team work. You should also remind that, as they continue to work in teams, they will need to continue adhering to these best practices.