



A Guide for Facilitators

2004 Internet Edition

Teamwork & Teamplay

The Adventure-Based Training Company

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Background

Following the success of the first two Raccoon Circle Internet guides (which were downloaded over 10,000 times in more than two dozen different countries around the world), the 2003 Internet Edition, and the immensely popular Book on Raccoon Circles; the 2004 Internet Edition of Raccoon Circle activities is now available to download from the Teamwork & Teamplay website, at:

www.teamworkandteamplay.com/raccooncircles.html

We hope you enjoy this newest collection of 40+ Raccoon Circle activities, ideas, stories and resources, including some that have never been published before (these are marked with an asterisk * on the contents page). If you would like to contribute your own experiences with the Raccoon Circle (activities, initiatives, challenges, games, stories, ideas, etc.) you can send your thoughts to: jimcain@teamworkandteamplay.com

The Book on Raccoon Circles

In November of 2002, The BOOK on Raccoon Circles was published. This 272 page publication is the essential Raccoon Circle document, filled with historical information, rituals and ceremony, more than 100 activities, stories of the circle, and an extensive list of references and resources. All the information you need to make the Raccoon Circle a wonderful part of your program. This book is available from the folks at Learning Unlimited, Phone 1-888-622-4203 or visit their website at: www.learningunlimited.com

In addition to this now classic text, you will continue to find the most recent activities and ideas on using Raccoon Circles and webbing annually posted to the Teamwork & Teamplay website, at:

www.teamworkandteamplay.com

If you would like your counselors, teachers, students, staff, co-workers, group or club to experience Raccoon Circles for themselves, please contact Jim Cain at the address shown below for expert facilitation, train-the-trainer workshops, conference sessions and customized training. This field of Raccoon Circle training provides hundreds of activities, adventure-based learning opportunities, teachable moments and facilitated learning, using a simple, and inexpensive prop. It is the perfect resource for day and resident camp counselors, playground teachers, recreational therapists, group work and teamwork specialists, wilderness trip leaders, wilderness youth-at-risk programs, corporate trainers, and rope course facilitators. For those trainers and facilitators backpacking or traveling by airlines these days, Raccoon Circles are a lightweight alternative to the typical props and adventure-based equipment often used, and a cost-effective one at that.

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“Invented is a strange word. I tied a knot in a piece of webbing”

Tom Smith, on the creation of the first Raccoon Circle.

“Tom Smith has been fooling around with tied loops of webbing for years.”

Karl Rohnke

Raccoon Circles have become the “world wide webbing.”

Jim Cain

Teamwork & Teamplay, by Jim Cain, was awarded the Karl Rohnke Creativity Award by the Association for Experiential Education. You can obtain a copy of this award winning adventure-based book directly from the publisher, Kendall/Hunt, at 1-800-228-0810, or at www.kendallhunt.com

The Book on Raccoon Circles, a 272 page publication by Tom Smith and Jim Cain, is available from Learning Unlimited at 1-888-622-4203 or www.learningunlimited.com.

You can purchase teambuilding equipment, including Raccoon Circles and Teambuilding books, from Adventure Hardware at www.adventurehardware.com or by calling 1-800-706-0064.

Raccoon Circles Activities 2004 Internet Edition

1. The Basics

The Raccoon Circle consists of a single piece of tubular nylon climbing webbing, which can typically be purchased in a variety of colors from outdoor sporting goods stores, and specifically those outdoor stores that carry climbing gear and supplies. While a variety of other belt materials and even rope can be substituted, tubular climbing webbing is recommended. Tubular webbing is extremely strong, comfortable to hold, colorful, and can be easily washed when necessary. Tubular climbing webbing also does not stretch, which makes it a good choice for many of the activities listed here.

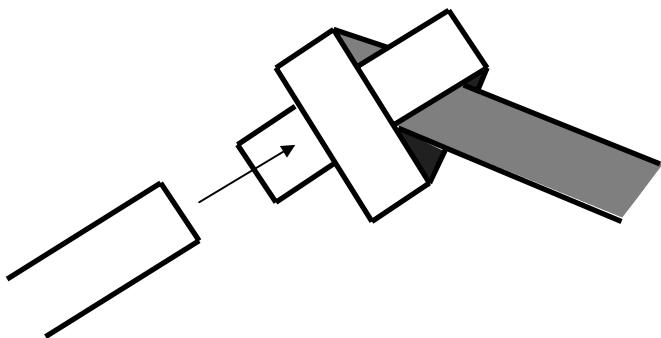
The activities listed here are performed with a Raccoon Circle that is 15 feet (4.6 meters) long. If you wish to accommodate larger groups, you can either join a few Raccoon Circles together with a water knot, or use a single, long Raccoon Circle. For most circular activities, you'll need about 13 inches (about 1/3 meter) of length for each person. Many of the activities in this publication use a Raccoon Circle with no knot (untied), simply as a straight line. For those other activities that need a true circle, the following section illustrates how to tie an important knot, the water knot.

2. Water Knot Tying

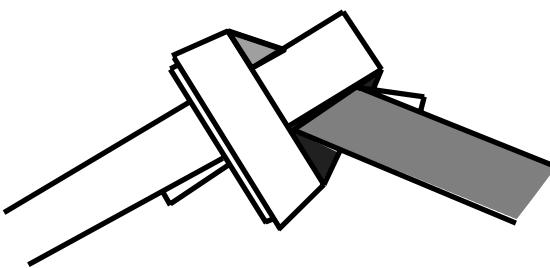
While a variety of knots can be used to tie flat webbing together, the water knot is one of the strongest and best. The "water knot" is so named because river rafting guides use such a knot with flat webbing, so that even when wet, the knot can easily be removed.

My favorite explanation of how to tie a water knot comes from fellow facilitator, friend, and most recently co-author of a new book on corporate adventure-based learning, Kirk Weisler of Utah. See the illustration below for details. Start by tying a simple (but loose) overhand knot in one end of the Raccoon Circle webbing, with a short tail (less than 2 inches is fine). Because of the flat webbing, this overhand knot will remain very flat. This first knot is the "teacher" or "mentor" knot.

Next travel the length of the webbing, unwinding and untwisting the webbing as you go, and hold the opposite end of the webbing. This end is the "student" end of the webbing. The student does everything the teacher does, they just happen to do it backwards. This means that (first), the student looks directly at the teacher (each tail end of the webbing nearly touches). Next, the student "doubles" the teacher by following the same path as the teacher backwards. This involves following the webbing, and finally tucking the student end of the webbing into the teacher knot, leaving about a 1 or 2 inch long tail. Now simply pull the opposite sides of the knot to secure it.



The Student and Teacher Approach



The Finished Water Knot

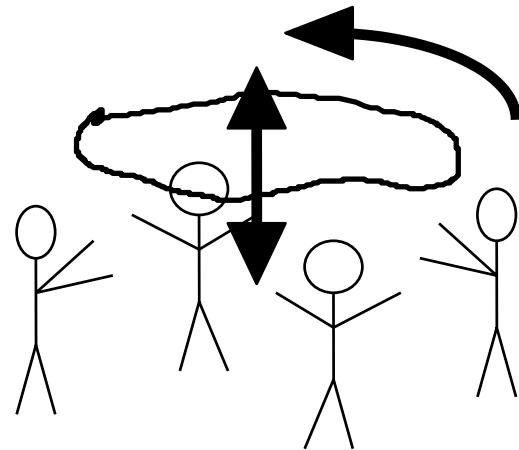
3. W.A.M.F.

W.A.M.F. stands for Wrapped Around My Finger, and pretty much explains this entire activity. Begin with an unknotted segment of webbing. One person in the group begins wrapping the webbing around their index finger, and while doing so, provides the group with some information about themselves (where they were born, family members, school experiences, childhood pets, dreams, goals, favorite foods, etc.) The goal is for this person to continue talking until the webbing is completely wrapped around their finger. When they reach the end, they can allow the webbing to unwind, and pass it along to the next person in the group.

This particular technique allows a bit more time for folks to talk about themselves, and also provides a kinesthetic activity coupled with a verbal activity for exploring some of the multiple intelligence opportunities, and whole brain learning possibilities. There is also a popular theory that for folks that may be a bit shy about speaking to even a small group in public, the activity of wrapping the webbing around their finger occupies that portion of the brain which creates inhibition. By wrapping and rapping at the same time, the speech center becomes less inhibited, and more information is typically shared!

4. Tossing the Pizza

This activity definitely fits into the “harder than it looks” category. Begin with a group of 5-8 participants holding onto a knotted Raccoon Circle, hands upward, elbows straight, with no slack in the circle. The challenge is for the group to toss this Raccoon Circle pizza into the air, at least to the height of their heads, and then for everyone in the group to catch the circle as it drops back down, without anyone moving their feet. After a few unsuccessful attempts, encourage the group to plan their task, brainstorm new ideas, and try them. A good pizza flipping team can toss their Raccoon Circle pizza in the air three times without anyone in the group dropping it.



For a higher level challenge, the ultimate pizza chefs can spin their pizza dough in the air. For the Raccoon Circle pizza, this means tossing the pizza into the air, and having the knot come back down at least one person to the right or left of where it was when it was launched. A little ‘spin action’ can actually improve the team’s performance. This simple problem solving activity is a fun way to begin the ‘working as a team’ portion of your program.

5. The Missing Link

This consensus building and group problem solving activity is designed to assist groups in building life skills. The goal is for the group to decide if the two Raccoon Circles are linked or connected (like links of a chain), or unlinked, without touching them. A visual activity, and one that requires consensus building, teamwork and problem solving skills. While the actual solution may be simple or complex, the real value of this activity comes from a group working together to achieve a group consensus, listening to each other, and learning the skills that it takes to get everyone on the same page. I like to begin this activity by a process called ‘pairing and sharing’ which involves everyone working with a partner, to first convince one other person, before trying to convince the entire group.



6. The Flip Side

This is one of the simplest group problem solving activities for the Raccoon Circle, but it leaves the door open for some serious discussion about team consensus and group problem solving. Begin by drawing a large letter A on one end of the webbing (on the side with no black thread stripe). Next, place another symbol on the far end of the webbing, on the same side (such as the number 1). Then twist the webbing, and drop it on the ground. The task for the group is to decide whether the letter A is on the same side as the number 1, or not.



Note: some tubular climbing webbing is manufactured with a black thread on one side (similar to the dashed white line down the middle of most roads). You can elect to tell the participants about this information, or allow them to discover it for themselves. As in many problem solving activities, 'discovering' useful information is part of the process. As a second, higher level version of this activity, try using a piece of tubular climbing webbing that does not have a black thread.

7. Wind Up Challenge

In the Walt Disney Movie, Lady and the Tramp, there is a great scene in which the two main character dogs are sharing a bowl of spaghetti. At one point, both dogs begin slurping on the end of a long strand of spaghetti, only to find that they are in fact eating the same strand of pasta, and ultimately end up in one of the classic cartoon kissing scenes in motion picture history. The Wind Up Challenge has a lot less contact than this now classic scene.

This activity originated with two participants simultaneously performing the W.A.M.F. activity when time was running out. You can include talking, or simply make this a wind up challenge activity.

Begin by making a clearly visible line at the midpoint of an untied Raccoon Circle (on both sides of the webbing). Next, hand each end of the webbing to a person, and instruct them that on the count of three, they are to begin winding the webbing around their index finger as quickly as they can, and to keep on winding the webbing until they have reached the center point. First one to reach the center line wins, but only if there is no twisting of the webbing between them and the other challenger. A twisted webbing disqualifies both challengers. So now we have a bit of problem solving along with the challenge. Get to the center without creating a twist in the webbing.

8. Both Sides of the Story

Here is an activity for the story tellers in your group. Take a light colored Raccoon Circle and clearly print a variety of words along both sides, using a permanent marker. Knot the Raccoon Circle, have your group connect up, and then begin the story telling process with each person using the word nearest their position. For contrast, you can place words of opposite meaning on opposite sides of the webbing (happy / sad, winter / summer, etc.) Another technique is to have one person begin a story, again using the word nearest them, for one sentence. The person next to them continues the story, using their word, for the second sentence, and so on.

9. The Elevator

Here is a variation of the powerful Inside-Out Raccoon Circle Activity. The challenge is for a group of 8 to 10 people, standing inside a Raccoon Circle, to pass the circle upward over their heads, without touching each other in the process. For this activity, it is OK to use your arms, hands, or whatever body part is most useful (head, feet, etc.) but participants cannot touch each other while lifting the raccoon circle over their heads. This is an activity that sounds easier than it is. It is also a great chance to have the group self-analyze their efforts, and call out any mistakes they make. There are no penalties for mistakes, just invite the group to try again.

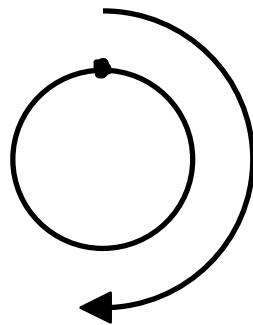
As an additional challenge, you can begin with any group size, by tying the webbing into a circle around their waists, while they stand closely together. Then ask them to perform the elevator challenge. If you perform this activity with multiple groups at the same time, have each group share their best ideas for completing the task successfully, and then see if all groups can complete the task within a reasonable time limit (15 seconds or less).

10. Rock Around the Clock

This activity begins with a group of participants standing around the perimeter of a Raccoon Circle that has been placed on the ground. While facing inward, each participant's feet should be in contact with the person's feet on each side of them. The person standing near the knot is asked to rotate clockwise around the circle to the opposite side (i.e. from the 12 o'clock position to the 6 o'clock position), moving everyone else in the process, with everyone keeping their feet in contact at all times.

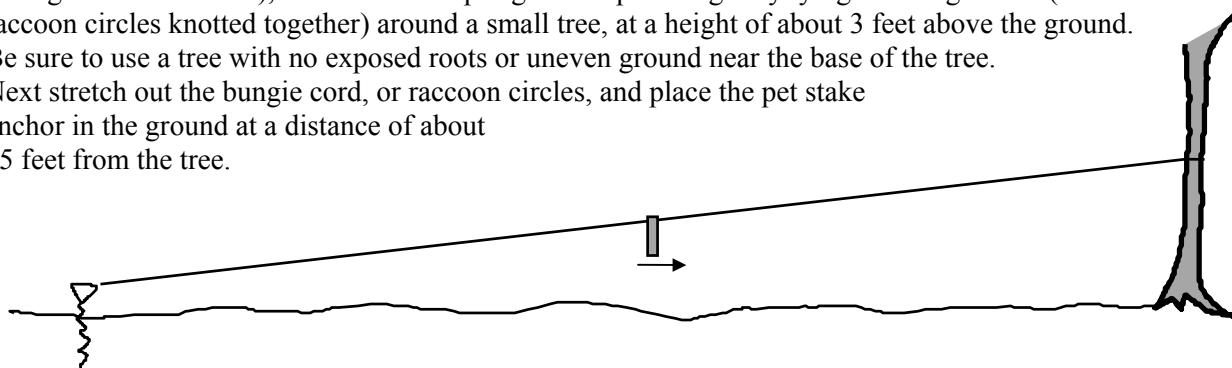
Keeping other parts in contact is optional, but a good problem solving idea (such as holding hands, shoulder-to-shoulder, etc.). This is one of those 'easy to explain, difficult to perform' challenges. If the group is having a difficult time, ask them to have a seat on the floor, then place their feet in contact with each neighbor, and now try to complete the challenge. It is sometimes easier to have everyone scootch around the circle, than while standing.

A good debriefing question includes: Why didn't the group consider this solution earlier? It is also interesting to process the group's own quality control analysis (i.e. did they call out their own mistakes, or try to hide them?)



11. The Clothes Line

Here is an activity that works with two Raccoon Circles, but even better with a piece of 1/8 inch diameter bungee cord. You'll also need a pet stake anchor (available in most pet stores, or large discount stores), and a wooden spring clothespin. Begin by tying the bungee cord (or two raccoon circles knotted together) around a small tree, at a height of about 3 feet above the ground. Be sure to use a tree with no exposed roots or uneven ground near the base of the tree. Next stretch out the bungee cord, or raccoon circles, and place the pet stake anchor in the ground at a distance of about 15 feet from the tree.

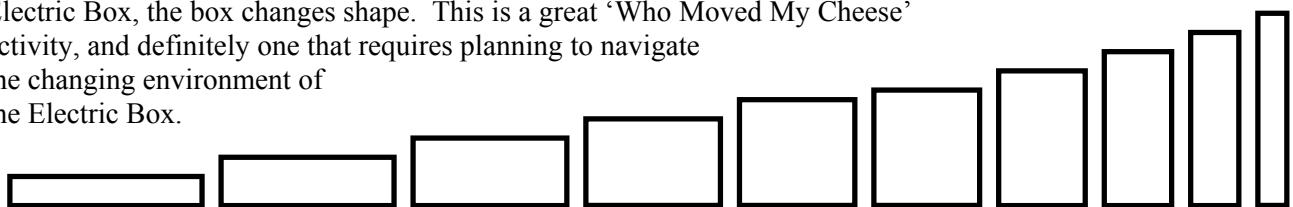


The challenge of this activity is to have the entire group cross over the line, without touching it, one at a time, but with the assistance of the other members of the team. The first person over can cross at any point they choose, but each person after them can only cross the line to the right of this position. Each time a person crosses the line, the clothespin is moved to the right, limiting the remaining space available for the rest of the team. Encourage the team to plan in advance, and perhaps to have a backup plan just in case something happens. This is also a good activity to demonstrate that each member of the team doesn't necessarily have to cross at the same place, but that each participant's effort add to the overall success of the team (and that even a mistake at the easiest lower portion of the line can have an impact on the overall success of the project).

Anyone touching the line while crossing is allowed to try again, however, the clothespin is still moved from their first attempt. Thanks to Patrick Caton for this challenge, and the next one.

12. The Electric Box

Here is a great variation of the traditional spider web, or Window of Opportunity activity, and one that requires a bit more planning and strategy. The Electric Box is simply a raccoon circle opening through with the entire team must pass. The unusual feature of this Electric Box however, is that it starts as a vertical rectangle, and ends up as a horizontal rectangle. For each person passing through the Electric Box, the box changes shape. This is a great ‘Who Moved My Cheese’ activity, and definitely one that requires planning to navigate the changing environment of the Electric Box.



Who Moved My Cheese, 1999, Spencer Johnson, Penguin Putnam, New York ISBN 0-399-14446-3

13. Worms

The processing, debriefing and/or reviewing that typically occurs at the completion of an adventure-based learning activity, adds value. In some cases, it is not easy to hear everyone’s comments, but the facilitator may still wish to poll the feelings of the entire group. In other cases, some participants may mimic the answers of others, when the facilitator would like to hear each person’s individual voice. Here is a simple technique that allows everyone’s opinion to be registered, even if their voices are not necessarily heard.

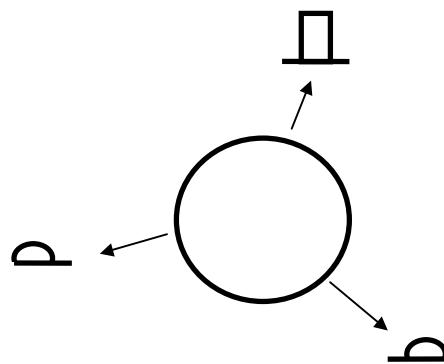
Begin by creating a dozen cards (made from 8 1/2" x 11" paper), filled with words, or pictures, or expressive faces. There should be a wide range of images or words, to cover the wide range of responses that typically are expressed in a debriefing session. Place these pictures on the floor or ground.

Next create the ‘worms’ by cutting very short pieces of webbing (about 3-4 inches long), from a colorful variety of Raccoon Circles. Give each participant in your group one ‘worm’ and at the completion of an adventure-based learning activity, ask them each to drop their worm on the picture that best represents their experience during the activity, at exactly the same time. Then begin the debriefing by discussing the pictures with the most worms, the next highest one, or even the ones with no worms. Thanks to Dave Knobbe for this brilliant debriefing technique.

Worms can also be used during the planning stages of a challenge activity, as a method of voting on various plans, techniques or options. Have a few cards that have words like YES, NO, Agree, Disagree, Plan A, Plan B, Plan C, or even Continue Planning, Start Working.

14. That’s My Hat

Here is a quick activity for those participants that enjoy a physical challenge. Three challengers are asked to hold onto a Raccoon Circle with one hand. The circle is placed at the center of a triangle of hats. At the word GO! each challenger attempts to pull the circle in the direction of their hat, so that they can grab it. This activity is best outside on a flat grassy surface.

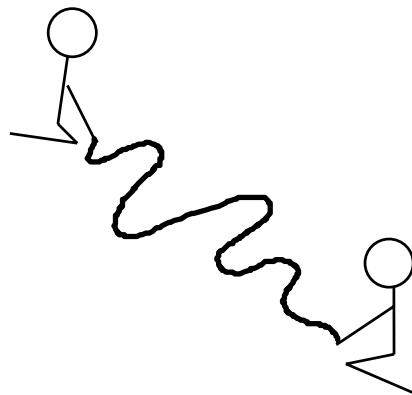


15. Chasing the Serpent

This activity originates as a French children’s game. One player stands at the center of a group of participants, holding one end of an untied Raccoon Circle (the tail of the snake), while wiggling the entire Raccoon Circle around. The other participants attempt to protect the other members of their group by standing on the head of the snake (the other knotted end of the Raccoon Circle). If a member of the group attempts to capture the snake, but does not, and the snake touches them, they need to seek first aid (which requires them to sit down outside the area of the snake, with their feet raised above their head for 30 seconds). If the snake is captured, that person is chosen to handle the snake for the next round.

16. Crossing the River

Here is a simple game that requires some coordination, jumping and reaction skills. Two volunteers grasp the end of a standard untied Raccoon Circle, at ground level. They both begin to wiggle the webbing back and forth, creating some high frequency ‘waves.’ Players then try to walk, jump and leap over the waves, without touching them, or being touched by them. In the first round, the waves can be small, but they increase in magnitude with each passing round.

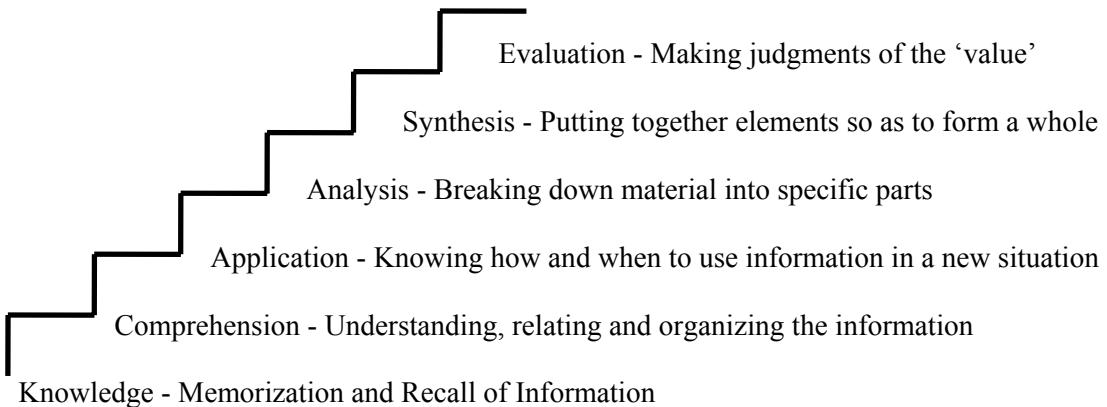


17. Learning Curves

OK, you are probably wondering how a discussion of educational learning models fits into a guide of adventure-based learning activities. There is a simple answer, and this is it: adventure-based and active learning facilitators and trainers can benefit from the structure of these models, and you can use a Raccoon Circle or two to create a visual representation of each model.

Bloom's Taxonomy - Bloom's taxonomy discusses the various level of learning, and these can be illustrated using an untied Raccoon Circle in the shape of an ascending staircase. (Benjamin S. Bloom, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals, Handbook I: Cognitive Domain*, 1956, David McKay Publishing, New York, NY USA) Next time you are pitching an adventure-based learning program, consider using this model to discuss which level the participants would like to achieve, and the path or effort required to get there.

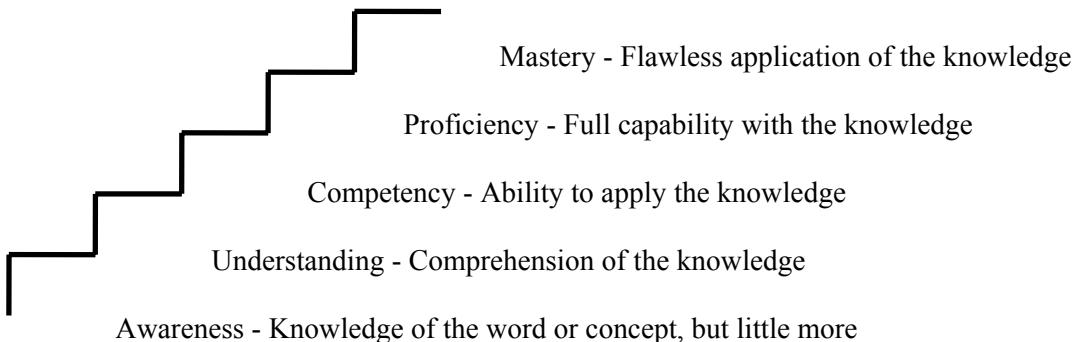
Levels in the Cognitive Domain - The Knowing Domain



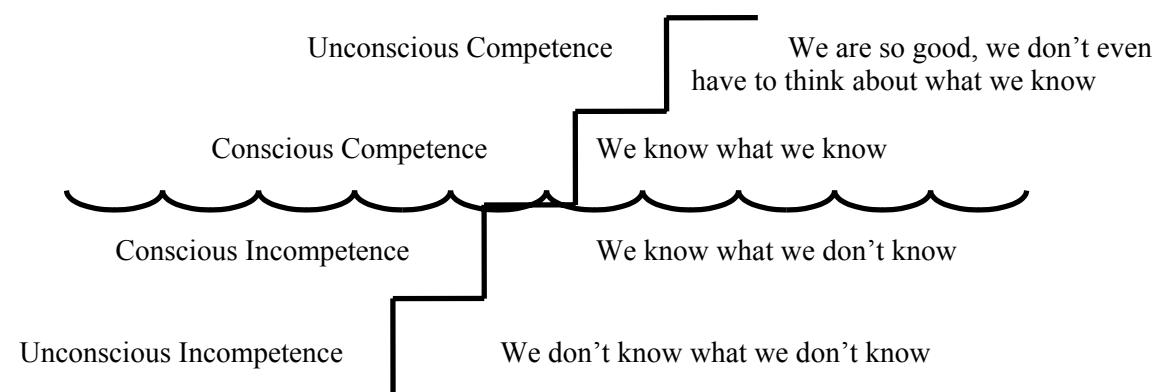
If you are interested in the above information from the cognitive domain, you are encouraged to read about increasing the level of student internalization in the affective domain, the feeling domain. (D. R. Krathwohl, *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives, Handbook II: Affective Domain*, 1964, David McKay Publishing, New York, NY USA)

The Learning Curve - This education and training model is another method for discussing which level of participation is appropriate for your adventure-based learning program. Pure playfulness, fun and recreation are generally thought to be below the ‘awareness’ level, since for this level of participation, there is no implied final

destination. The fun is enough all by itself. Above this level, there is a return on the learning investment, with each higher level bringing greater skill, but requiring greater preparation and teaching skill.

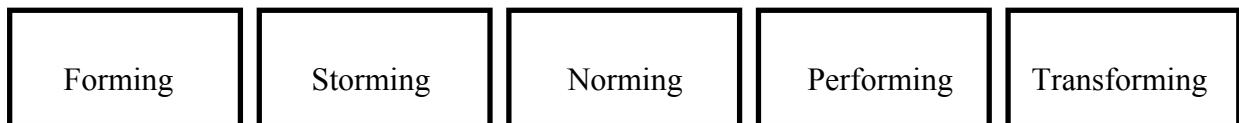


Above the Water Line - The goal of this simple model is to encourage the kind of proficiency that raises the learner ‘above the waterline.’ Below water is just that, all wet. A learner must get above the water line to utilize their skills in a competent manner. Use two different color Raccoon Circles to create the water line model (blue would be a good choice for the water itself).



18. Exploring the Stages of Group Formation Using Raccoon Circles

A longer version of this article is available in PDF format from the Teamwork & Teamplay website. The website article includes additional activities, and is presented for summer camp staffs, rather than the corporate focus used here.



During a new corporate project, your project team typically encounters most, if not all, of the stages of group formation, commonly referred to as forming, storming, norming, performing and finally, transforming. While entire graduate dissertations, college and management classes and seminars, and numerous journal articles have been written on this subject, this brief article ‘opens the door’ to explaining and experiencing the stages of group formation that your next corporate project team is likely to experience, and this exploration also includes building some of the skills necessary to navigate the stages successfully. This introduction to the stages of group formation is suitable for two to three hour staff training program, and can be conducted using only Raccoon Circles for props.

The stages of group development come from research by Tuckman and Jenson. For more information about this work, review the following historical articles:

Tuckman, B., 1965, "Developmental sequence of small groups," Psychological Bulletin, Number 63, p384-399.

Tuckman, B. & Jenson, M., 1977, "Stages of small group development revisited," Group and Organizational Studies, Number 2, p419-427.

You can find additional information related to the stages of group formation and group learning, in the Johnson & Johnson book, Joining Together, on page 469.

Consider the five stages of group formation shown above, and let's consider how a typical corporate project team might progress through these stages.

The Forming Stage

This is the polite, opening, get acquainted, ice breaking stage of group formation. This process begins at the moment new project team members begin to assemble for the first time. The opening meeting, the general welcome comments from the manager, the facility orientation session, and even the informal discussions after the initial gathering are all part of the forming stage. At this point, members of the group are just trying to identify who's who, and possibly where they fit into that plan. This stage includes forming an atmosphere of safety and acceptance, avoiding controversy, and is filled with guidance and direction from the project team leader or manager.

Activities for the Forming Stage

Get acquainted and community building activities are used here to form the atmosphere of safety and acceptance. There are a few more activities suggested in this stage because it is important to build a strong foundation if the rest of the stages are to be successfully navigated.

19. Believe It or Knot

Thanks to Mike Anderson for this excellent get acquainted activity that is a variation of Two Truths and a Lie. With the entire group holding a Raccoon Circle (either seated or standing), the knot is used as a pointer to identify the person talking. Begin by passing the knot to the right around the group. Someone says "right there!" the knot stops, and the person nearest it has the opportunity to disclose some interesting fact about themselves, such as, "I have seen three movies this week!" It is now the discussion and responsibility of the rest of the participants to decide whether they believe that this information is true or false. After some discussion, the group gives their opinion of the validity or falseness of the disclosure, and the person providing the comment can tell the real story. This single comment version of Two Truths and a Lie, proceeds a bit more quickly for each person than the full blown version. Use either, as time permits.

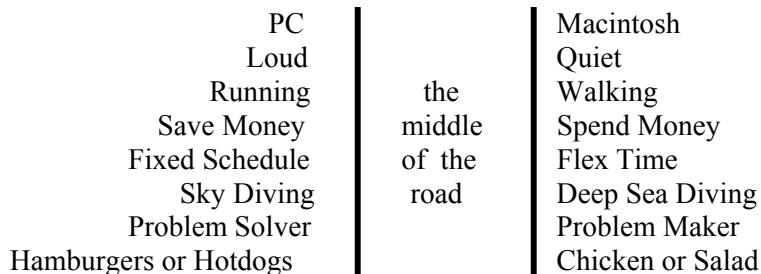
After a person has revealed the true nature of their comments (true or false), they say "left" or "right" and then "right there!", and a new person has the opportunity to disclose something to the group.

The level of disclosure to the group is often a measure of the closeness, unity and respect within the group. For example, a disclosure such as, "I have traveled to another country," is a lower level of disclosure than "I have some a family member that is in trouble with the law." Depending on the group setting, and the purpose of this activity for your group, different levels of information or disclosure are appropriate. As the group becomes more unified, this activity can bring out greater disclosure between members of the group, family members, members of a team, etc.

20. Which Side of the Road Are You On?

Possibly one of the greatest needs within a group is to identify what unites the members of the group. To this end, the goal here is to identify some commonalities shared by various members of the group. In this case, the more job related, the better.

Which Side of the Road are You On requires a central gathering place, and two boundary lines, which can be made using masking tape, string, rope, a hallway or sidewalk. Have participants begin by ‘standing in the middle of the road.’ As the first company truck comes barreling down the road, loaded with information for your project, team members must decide which side of the road they should be on. Some of the following decisions are fairly easy and the information content doesn’t have severe consequences. Others may make or break the entire project. After choosing sides, give project team members a minute to see who is on the same side of the road with them, and to discuss why they chose this particular side.



The object here is to find interests, activities, choices and decisions that project team members have in common. Obviously team members can be on ‘different sides of the road,’ but don’t focus on what is different, but rather who is on the same side with you. Alliances can be important. Be careful to choose topics appropriately for the audience that you are serving. This activity can be used with even large project teams, provided the folks in the middle of the road can hear when the truck is coming!

This activity also provides the opportunity for a bit of group discussion throughout the process. For example, were some folks left ‘in the middle of the road’ and only saved by another person pulling them to safety as the information truck came speeding towards them? Or did they become ‘corporate roadkill?’ Did some folks change their minds during a particular decision, and then change sides? Is there always a right and wrong side of the road, or more appropriately, two possible choices, both of which have merit? Does the entire project team need to be on the same side of a particular issue for the team to move forward successfully? How would you go about trying to get everyone on the team on the same side of the road for a key project decision?

In the book *Good to Great*, Collins talks about ‘getting the right people on the bus and the wrong people off the bus,’ and then ‘getting the right people into the right seats.’ This activity be used to explore where some members of your project team choose to be on specific team or management issues, but you might want to wait for the ‘storming’ stage of group formation to bring this up, rather than here in the safe environment of the ‘forming’ stage. Thanks to Tom Heck for sharing this activity.

21. Commonalities

Begin with partners for this activity. This conversational activity has the goal of identifying unique and sometimes unusual events, activities and life experiences that we have in common with other members of our group. The two partners need to identify three unique items that they have in common. Encourage participants to dig deep for these items. For example, they may discover that they both like dogs, but under closer examination, they may also discover that they like the same breed of dog. Additionally, they may discover that they both enjoy reading, but by digging a bit deeper, they may discover that they have read the same book in the past 6 months or perhaps enjoy the same author.

After identifying three attributes that they have in common, these two partners raise their hands, and find another group of two ready to form a group of four. Now the challenge is to identify 2 items that they have in common. Again, look deep, and no fair using any of the attributes already identified.

Finally, after this group of four finds out what they have in common, they raise their hands and join another group of four, for a total of eight, now standing inside one of the Raccoon Circles spread around on the floor. The goal for these eight is to find ONE event, interest or activity that they have in common. Have each of these groups of eight tell the other groups what they have in common. Again, the more unique and unusual, the better (or at least the more interesting!)

The Storming Stage

This second stage of group formation introduces conflict and competition into the formerly safe and pleasant work environment. In many corporate settings, this stage typically is encountered around week two. Why week two? Because that is when most project team members have had the weekend to think about the resources and requirements of the job ahead. Suddenly those things which didn't seem to matter, begin to matter, and conflicts arise. Staff behavior ranges from silence to domination in this environment, and a project leader or manager needs to demonstrate coaching to successfully move through this stage.

Activities for the Storming Stage

While some project team members would rather avoid the conflict of this stage, it is important to build skills and show them how to cope and deal with the storming stage. The activities in this section, therefore, contain just a bit of stress (so that the door may be ‘opened’ to discuss what is really going on). The following activities are very challenging, and need to have a suitable amount of time after each one for discussion within the group.

22. Photo Finish

Thanks to Sam Sikes for this seemingly simple but yet complex activity. You can find this and other activities in his book, Executive Marbles (1-888-622-4203).

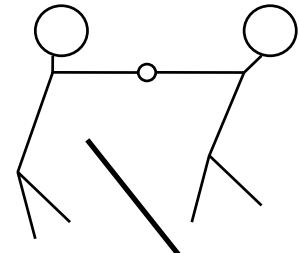
Photo Finish (or the Finish Line) uses one or more Raccoon Circles as a straight line. The task is for the members of a group to ALL cross the line at exactly the same time. You can additionally “stress” the group by minimizing the available space that they have to plan prior to crossing the finish line.

Tell the group that they have 15 minutes to make 5 attempts to cross the finish line at exactly the same time. This is a great opportunity to use a digital camera for instant feedback. Every time someone breaks the plane of the finish line, the facilitator yells, “Click!” even for the occasionally careless mistake.

This activity involves planning, communication, timing and occasionally the ability to deal with frustration.

23. Cross the Line

This activity requires a single untied Raccoon Circle, stretched into a straight line. With half of the group on one side of the line and standing about 6 feet (2 meters) behind the line, and the other half of the team on the other side, the scene is set for a moment of conflict (of “us” vs. “them”). Make no mistake, this Raccoon Circle activity is a bit higher level than most, but it is excellent for setting the stage to talk about conflict, negotiation and win/win, win/lose, and lose/lose scenarios.



Tom Heck calls this activity, “Their Ain’t No Flies On Me!”, and begins this activity by having one side say, “There ain’t no flies on me, there ain’t no flies on me, there might be flies on you (point to folks on the other side), but there ain’t no flies on me!”, and then boldly take a step towards the line (with just the right amount of attitude). The other side now replies, “there ain’t no flies on me, there ain’t no flies on me, there might be flies on you, but there ain’t no flies on me!”, and takes a step towards the line. The first side now repeats, and moves to the line, followed by the second side repeating their lines, and stepping face to face with the other side.

Now the facilitator says, “you have 5 seconds to get the person across the line from you onto your side of the line!” Typically, this phrasing results in a rather quick tug of war between partners, and usually a physical solution (for one person at least) to the challenge. Leaving open a major opportunity to discuss conflict, challenge, attitude, negotiation, and how to resolve differences between people.

24. Blind Square

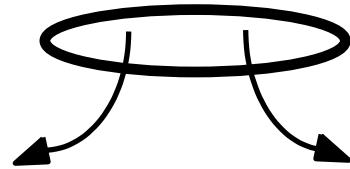
Blindfold the entire group, and allow them to search and find a nearby piece of rope (about 100 feet long), or several Raccoon Circles that have been tied together. After finding the rope, instruct the group that their goal, while still blindfolded, is to create a perfect square with the rope. Participants are allowed to slide along the length of the rope, but cannot let go or skip over or move around another participant.

The Norming Stage

This third stage of group formation is typically a welcome breath of fresh air after the storming stage. Although the project team is not yet at the high performing stage, some of the bugs are beginning to be worked out within the group, and good things are beginning to happen. This stage of group formation includes cohesion, sharing and trust building, creativity and skill acquisition. The project leader or program manager demonstrates support during this stage. Sharing, trust building, and skill building activities are used in the Norming stage.

25. Inside Out

This is a great initial problem solving activity. Begin with a Raccoon Circle on the floor. Have the entire group step inside the circle. The task is now for the entire group to go from the inside of the circle to the outside, by going underneath the Raccoon Circle, without anyone in the group using their hands, arms or shoulders.



What is important in this activity, is to stress the group problem solving process. In order for other members of the group to assist in the completion of the task, they need to know the plan, and what their part is in the solution. To this end, encourage the group to “plan their work” and then “work their plan.” This means that prior to ANY action, the group will need to plan their approach to solving this problem, and making sure that everyone in the group knows their part of the plan.

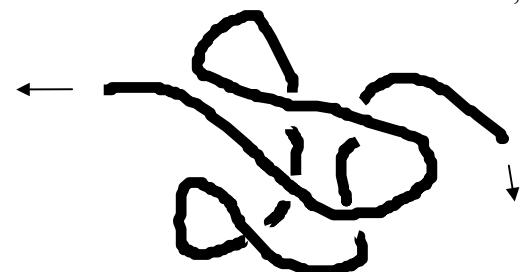
After completing the task, debriefing questions include asking the group if they had a plan, and did they change the plan during the completion of the activity, and if so, why? As a second part to this activity, you can also ask the group to go Outside In, again without using their hands, arms or shoulders.... and see if they “plan their work” before “working their plan.” Thanks to Tom Heck for sharing this activity.

26. Not Knots

A natural consensus building activity to follow 2B or KNOT 2B is Not Knots. In this activity, which can be accomplished with only a single piece of webbing (in a straight line, without a water knot), a “doodle” is constructed (see examples below) and the group is given the choice of whether this doodle will create a KNOT or NOT A KNOT, when the ends of the webbing are pulled.

The object here is to provide the group with some tools to use when they cannot easily form a consensus. Typically, upon analysis, about half of the group thinks the doodle will form a knot, and the other half a straight line. If this is the case, ask participants to partner with another person that has a different viewpoint (i.e. one partner from the KNOT side, and one partner from the NOT A KNOT side). By learning how to listen to a person with a different viewpoint, group members learn how to cooperate. After this discussion, ask participants to choose sides, with the KNOT decision folks on one side of the knot doodle, and the NOT A KNOT folks on the other side.

At this point, it is likely that there will still not be a complete consensus within the group. Prior to slowly pulling the ends of the knot doodle, let the members of the group know that you will pull the knot doodle slowly, and that they can change sides at any time during the unraveling of the knot doodle (this illustrates the ability to make an initial decision, but still be flexible as more information becomes available).



The Performing Stage

The fourth stage of group formation provides a feeling of unity, group identity, interdependence and independence. It is the most highly productive stage. Leadership from the project leader or program manager comes in the form of delegation. The team has all the skills, resources and talent needed to complete the task.

27. Grand Prix Racing

Turn the Raccoon Circle into a complete circle or loop using a water knot, and you are ready for the ultimate in sport racing. Thanks to Tom Heck for not only the idea for this activity, but also the enthusiasm to lead it effectively. This activity will boost the enthusiasm of your audience, and provide some moderate competition in the process.

Begin by spreading several Raccoon Circles around the available space, in close proximity to each other. Ask participants to join one of the “racing teams”, picking their favorite color team in the process. Approximately 5 to 10 participants per Raccoon Circle. Have participants hold the Raccoon Circle with both hands in front of them.

“Ladies and Gentlemen! It is summertime, and that means one thing in this part of the world - Grand Prix Racing ! Now I know that you are such die-hard race fans that just the thought of a race makes your heart beat faster. So this race comes in three parts. First, when I say that “we’re going to have a race”, your response is loud, “Yahoo!!!!” Next I’ll say, start your engines! and I want to hear your best race car sounds (audience practices making race car revving engine, shifting gears and braking sounds).

Finally, with so many cars on the track today, it will be difficult to see just which group finishes their race first, so we’ll need a sign indicating when your group is finished. That sign is to raise your hands (and the Raccoon Circle) above your heads and yell “Yessssssssss!””

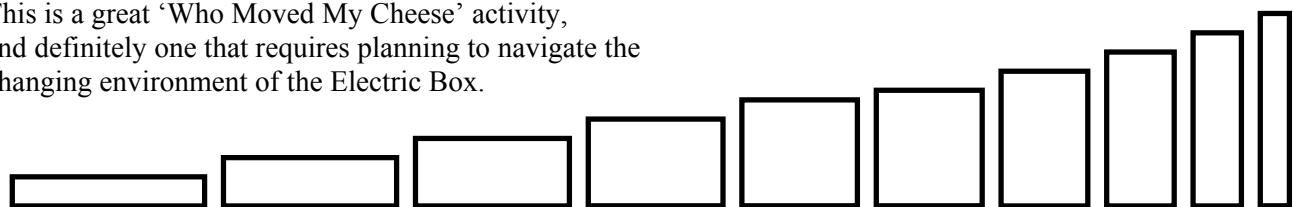
Logistically, Grand Prix involves having the group transfer the knot around the group as quickly as possible, using only their hands. This activity can even be performed for a seated audience. To begin, you’ll need a “start / finish” line, which can be the person that was born the farthest distance away from the present location. The race begins at this location, and ends when the knot is passed around the circle, and returns to this same location (Yessssssssss!).

Typically in Raccoon Circle Grand Prix racing, there are three qualifying rounds or races. The first race is a single lap race to the right, with the knot traveling once around the inside of the circle to the right (counterclockwise). The second race is a multi-lap race (two or three laps) to the left (clockwise) around the circle. And the final race of the series, is a “winner take all” championship race, with one lap to the right (counterclockwise) followed by one lap to the left (clockwise).

Incidentally, after this activity, the group will not only be energized, but perhaps in a slightly competitive mood. From a sequencing standpoint, you can either continue this atmosphere (with more competitive challenges - such as into a summer camp competition) or introduce a bit of counterpoint, by following this activity with one that requires the group working together in a collaborative manner.

28. The Electric Box

Here is a great variation of the traditional spider web, or Window of Opportunity activity, and one that requires a bit more planning and strategy. The Electric Box is simply a raccoon circle opening through with the entire team must pass. The unusual feature of this Electric Box however, is that it starts as a vertical rectangle, and ends up as a horizontal rectangle. For each person passing through the Electric Box, the box changes shape. This is a great ‘Who Moved My Cheese’ activity, and definitely one that requires planning to navigate the changing environment of the Electric Box.



The Transforming Stage

The final stage of group formation is the other bookend to the initial forming stage. The Transforming stage allows the group to regroup, thank the participants and move on at the completion of the project or task. This stage is marked by recognition by the leader, conclusion and disengagement of the participants.

Activities for the Transforming Stage

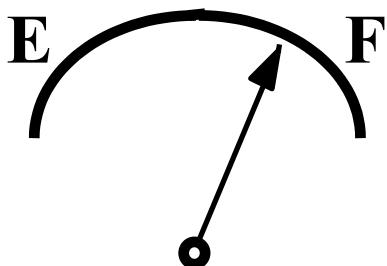
Allow for the completion and conclusion of the group process. Feelings of celebration and affirmation are suitable.

29. A Circle of Kindness

Form a double circle with all group members, with one partner facing the center of the circle, and their partner behind them (also facing the center, with their hands on the shoulders of the inner circle person). The inner circle is asked to close their eyes, and only reply ‘thank you’ or keep silent. The outer circle is asked to quietly talk into the ear of the inner circle participants, mentioning something important that they learned from them during the summer, or a pleasant memory, or any other positive comment. The out group then moves one person to the right, and continues. When the outer group has completed the circle, they are asked to become the center group, and the process begins again.

** This concludes the stages of group formation activities. **
**More Raccoon Circle games, initiatives and challenges follow. **

30. The Meter



With one Raccoon Circle, make an arch shape like the one shown here. This is your fuel gauge, or any type of meter that you wish. Ask participants to stand outside the meter, at the position that best relates to them. For example, the amount of energy that you have right now, could be just like a gas tank gauge (empty, half a tank, full). This activity acquaints participants with each other, indicates preferences, and lets us find out about each other. Other topics can include: The number of books you have read in the past year, the years you have spent working in the adventure-based learning field, or the number of hours sleep you had last night. Thanks (again) to Tom Heck for sharing this simple but powerful activity.

31. Rope Jousting

Here is a fun activity for two participants that requires balance, skill and a certain amount of understanding and anticipating the other player’s moves. Use two Raccoon Circles that have been tied together with a single water knot in the middle, to form a 30 foot (9 meters) long line. Use other Raccoon Circles to form two 15 inch diameter circles (these are called zones) 10 feet (3 meters) apart.

Two contenders (participants) now stand in their zones with the 30 foot long Raccoon Circle nearby. The object is to make the other person either let go of the Raccoon Circle, or to step outside their zone by pulling, yanking and controlling the 30 foot long Raccoon Circle.

Two other interesting variations to this activity include using three raccoon circles in a Y formation for three players, or a big X version for four players.



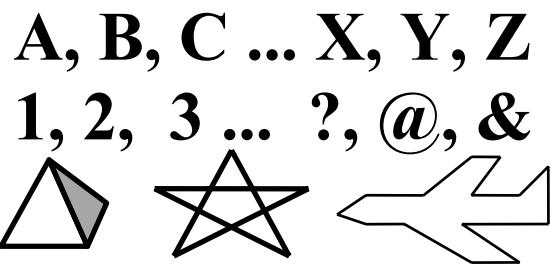
32. Fingerpainting the Web

Looking for an interesting method for personalizing your Raccoon Circle - try using fingerpaints! Begin with a light colored Raccoon Circle (white, yellow, or some other light color), let individual members of your group dip their hands in different color fingerpaints, and then grab a hold. They now have ‘marked their spot’ on the webbing, and can always return to the same spot in the group.

33. Shape Up!

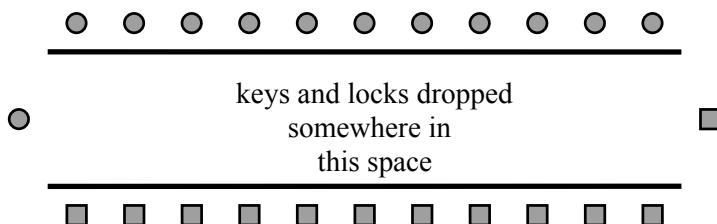
Using a Raccoon Circle, with all member of the group holding on, form the following letters, numbers and shapes as quickly as possible. Focus on the leadership aspects of this simple activity - for example: consider the difference between a group forming the capital letter E and the letter O. How did the members of the group know where they fit in, with the letter E? What about the letter O?

In addition to letters and numbers, you can add a few simple shapes, such as a house, pyramid, jet airplane, or company logo .



34. The Keys to Communication

Thanks to Alf Grigg for sharing the original idea for this activity. This expanded version (with beginner, intermediate and advanced levels), was first used with a team theme of trying to 'unlock the future.'



Round One. Begin by dividing the group into two teams. Two untied Raccoon Circle boundaries are established (see illustration), two blindfolds (for the active participants from each group), and a small object (in this case, keys and padlocks) are needed. The activity begins in the first round by placing the blindfolded participants at each end of the playing area. Next the facilitator shows each team what the objects are. Their teammates then attempt to verbally (only!) tell them how to find the keys and the lock, and then open the lock. Chaos is pretty likely in the first round. Facilitators should stand between the two blindfolded participants, and make sure that they don't bump into each other.

In round two, allow each team 3 minutes to form a strategy between their teammates and a new blindfolded participant. Then repeat the activity, moving the keys and locks to a new, mostly central location.

Round three also allows for 3 minutes of strategy, but uses a combination lock instead of keys and padlocks. The combination numbers are given to the sighted team members of each group. Only the blindfolded participant can touch the object, but the combination locks can be brought to their teammates for additional visual assistance during the unlocking procedure.

Debriefing topics include: "what communication techniques were valuable during this activity?", "what were some of the unsuccessful techniques for communicating with the blindfolded teammate?", "What additional, but untried suggestions were made during the strategy sessions?", "Were different techniques used for the combination locks, compared to the key and padlocks?"

35. Casting Nets Upon the Waters

Here is a traditional activity with some new equipment. With a knotted Raccoon Circle as a net, and a collection of partially filled and capped soda bottles as fish, the object is to throw the Raccoon Circle over as many bottles (fish) as possible. For each fish completely captured, one point is awarded. The fisherman with the most points after 5 throws gets to feed their village for the day. If you would like to bring in some environmental awareness into this activity, include a few special soda bottles, which represent non-game fish, endangered species or some other aquatic life caught in the net. This creates an opportunity to discuss the need for collecting food and still being environmentally responsible.

36. Singing in Circles

With several groups holding onto Raccoon Circles, have each group be responsible for one portion of a singing round, such as ‘Row, row, row your boat.’ You can also try songs with motions, such as, ‘The Grand Old Duke of York.’ Every time the group says the word ‘up’ or ‘down,’ have the entire group holding the Raccoon Circle, while pulling outward on the circle, stand up or down. For another variation, try singing ‘My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean,’ and every time a word with the letter ‘B’ is sung, either stand or sit down. If you have more than one group, each group can move opposite the one nearest them (i.e. Group 1 goes up, when Group 2 goes down).

37. Musical Activities

During activities, try using some of the following music to reinforce the circles theme of the Raccoon Circle:

<i>Circle of Life</i>	Walt Disney	Lion King Soundtrack
<i>All my Life's a Circle</i>	Harry Chapin	Greatest Stories Live
<i>Circle of Friends</i>	Paul Winter Consort	Double Album
<i>Circle</i>	Barbara Streisand	Higher Ground
<i>Circle Dream</i>	10000 Maniacs	Our Time In Eden
<i>Full Circle</i>	Collective Soul	Disciplined Breakdown
<i>Perfect Circle</i>	R.E.M.	Murmur
<i>Circle</i>	Sarah McLachlan	Fumbling Towards Ecstasy

Other musical ideas include using a Raccoon Circle for making a limbo pole, and then having participants limbo under the stretched Raccoon Circle as it is slowly lowered to the ground.

The Raccoon Shuffle is a warm up activity that requires some balance, skill, timing and teamwork. Start with 6 to 8 participants standing in a circle, supporting the raccoon circle with one raised foot. On the count of three, all participants are to jump and kick the opposite foot forward, catching the Raccoon Circle before it hits the ground. If the raccoon circle touches the ground, no points. Collect your best score for ten attempts.

Finally, you can use two full length Raccoon Circles as a Chinese Jump Rope, and bring music together with balance, rhythm and individual style.

38. Quotes & Stories of the Raccoon Circle

Notes from Dr. Tom Smith

In the 1960's I studied with and about the Native Americans. I spent time during the summer camping and teaching pow-wows in Wisconsin and Minnesota. On my third visit I was given (and I accepted) the name "Raccoon." It was suggested by the elders, and after some soul-searching and dialogue, I began to understand why it was an appropriate name. I did not use my native name for the next twenty years, but when I started presenting training workshops for challenge and adventure educators and other professional groups in the 1980's, I sometimes used the name. When I retired in 1987 to develop my own consulting and training business, I called it the "Raccoon Institute."

It was also in the early 1960's, and every summer thereafter for 25 years, that I organized and facilitated 10-12 day outdoor adventures for groups of adolescents and adults. Participants were told that they would share a small group experience involving a 'personal growth journey to the wilderness.' The trips involved camping, climbing, caving, and a 4-5 day canoe trip in the Boundary Waters on the Minnesota-Canada border. Although my professional academic training was as a clinical psychologist, I had evolved through time to become an experiential educator and personal growth facilitator. By the 1970's my business card announced that I was a "psychologist/wilderness guide." I had come to realize the importance of the connection between the 'wilderness beyond' and the 'wilderness within.'

In the mid-1970's I learned about rope and team course methodology. I built my first teams and high rope course in 1975, and thereafter my adventure group sequence included experiences on that course. I had come to recognize the value of teams course experiences in the personal growth journey.

However, in the early 1980's, I heard voices from teachers, youth workers, counselors and corporate trainers asking for activities that they could use in classrooms, schoolyards, and corporate centers. They sought experiential activities that might create the same individual and group dynamics as the ropes course and/or the wilderness adventure - trust, cooperation, communication, risk-taking, commitment, empowerment, problem solving, etc. I began to develop my personal 'bag-of-tricks' with which I could create those dynamics. I drew on my experiences with the Human Potential Movement, New Games, Sensory and Somatic Awareness, and the Native Americans. Like many other leaders of challenge and adventure experiences, I prided myself in being able to facilitate two and three day training sessions with just the contents of my backpack - no ropes or teams course, and no outdoor adventure to the 'wilderness beyond.' I especially prized those activities which were simple and portable but still guided participants to explore the 'wilderness within.' Like most facilitators, I was always adding new ideas to my 'bag-of-tricks,' and sometimes replacing or discarding ideas that seemed less effective.

Then, in the early 1990's, I discovered the magic, the simplicity, and the power of a sequence of activities using only a length of tubular nylon webbing. At the time, that web loop became just another carry along for my 'bag-of-tricks.' I'm sure that other challenge and adventure leaders had explored activities with web loops or rope circles before that, as I have learned that nothing we think of as 'new' really is!

Then, in 1994, I was asked to co-facilitate the opening celebration of Northeastern Illinois University's T.E.A.M. conference with Karl Rohnke. I passed out twenty circles of webbing and there were twenty groups of people sharing the joys, the dynamics, and the healing powers of the web loops. Karl was taking pictures from high above, and after we finished he asked me what the circle of webbing was called. I informed him that I just called them "web circles," and he, with a second from my friend, Bill Quinn, suggested that a nice name for the activities would be "Raccoon Circles."

That was nearly a decade ago now. Boy, time does fly when you're having fun! The web loop and the associated activities that became "Raccoon Circles," can now be found in the bag-of-tricks of many facilitators and adventure educators. Over 1500 copies of my little booklet of instructions have been distributed, and probably double that amount copied over the years. Jim Cain placed a handbook for facilitators of Raccoon Circles on the Teamwork & Teamplay website, and reported that the website had experience thousands of downloads around the world. Shortly after this, Jim and I decided to collaborate on this project. His enthusiasm, knowledge of adventure-based activities, and writing style, and my work with the ritual, ceremony and philosophy of circles seemed like a natural partnership, and it has been a joy working together. We hope you enjoy the fruits of our labors, we certainly have.

From the Hills of Western North Carolina

Jim, I enjoyed the workshop this past Thursday. I wanted to let you know that when I stopped back by the conference center on my way to get two more raccoon circles, as I was coming up the driveway I saw a pair of eyes reflecting in my headlights. As I got closer, I saw a raccoon move off the side of the road and begin climbing a tree. Is somebody trying to tell me something?

Thanks again, Craig Smith

From the Great White North

Hello Tom and Jim,

We met in Portland, Oregon at the ACCT conference this past January. I wanted to let you know that I've had great fun using the Raccoon circles with Inupiat and Yupik Eskimos here in Alaska. My only problem has been that there are no raccoons in the Arctic. People here have heard of them, but groups give me a sort of blank look when I talk about raccoons.

My work-around: I remembered Tom's baboon story from South Africa, so I decided that some artistic license would be permissible. Traditionally, rope in the Arctic was made out of the skins of the bearded seal, so the Arctic name was a no brainer: "Seal Circles." I really like the double OO's of the Inupiat word for bearded seal (oogruk), but "seal circle" is more alliterative sounding in English.

I thought you'd enjoy the Arctic update. Cheers and best wishes!

Tim Pearson - Anchorage, Alaska

According to the Alaska Department of Fish and Game: The bearded seal (*Erignathus barbatus*) is the largest true seal normally found in the seas adjacent to Alaska. It inhabits areas of the Bering, Chukchi, and Beaufort seas where sea ice forms during the winter. Eskimos who speak the Yupik language refer to this seal as mukluk, and Inupik-speaking Eskimos call it oogruk. Oogruk is the most common name. Residents of western coastal villages depend upon bearded seals and other seals for hides and a large part of their food. Bearded seal meat is the most desirable of the seals, and the hides are necessary for boat covers, raw-hide line, boot soles, and numerous other uses.

The term mukluk has, apparently by accident, come to mean a certain type of footwear made of skins. The story was told that when white men first came to western Alaska, someone asked a local resident what he was wearing on his feet. The Eskimo, thinking he was being asked what his boots were made from, said that they were mukluk (meaning from a bearded seal). Today almost all types of eskimo-made footwear are called mukluks. <http://www.state.ak.us/adfg/notebook/marine/brd-seal.htm>

Raccoon Circles in Unusual Place Jim Cain

A few years ago, I was scheduled to present a one hour community building program for the entire staff of a collegiate food service program. After a morning of presentations, nearly 150 participants were ready for the program. The biggest challenge of the program was the room in which the program was to be held. It was an auditorium, filled with seats fixed to the sloping floor. The aisles were very narrow, and in short, there was little room left for movement. No problem! Enter an entire collection of Raccoon Circle activities.

In small groups of 8 people, connected by various color Raccoon Circles, participants were able to stand on different levels, stretch over chairs and seats, and yet perform nearly a dozen different activities (many of which are mentioned in this publication). There were even a few folks seated at two circular tables near the front of the room, also able to participate, while seated, holding onto their own Raccoon Circle. Next time you host a program in a restricted space, think about using some Raccoon Circles.

39. Closing Activities

The Final Transmission - You can create a large “gear” system, by using a variety of colorful Raccoon Circles, and then asking various groups to “mesh” together, with participants turning like gears. This is an opportunity to say good-bye (or hello) to many of the other participants. It is particularly effective to use appropriate music during this activity.

Lots of Knots - Begin by tying as many knots in an untied raccoon circle as possible. Then, pass this knotted Raccoon Circle around the group. As each member of the group expresses some commentary about the day’s events, they may untie a single knot for each comment. When all knots are removed, the processing is complete. This is a great technique for those groups that don’t always have enough to talk about at the completion of a program. Waiting for someone to untie one of the last remaining knots can be a bit anxious, but don’t worry, a voice will immerge from the group eventually.

Question Marks - Place a variety of numbers, letters or symbols along the length of a light colored Raccoon Circle, using a permanent marker. Ask your group to connect up, and then pass the knot along to the left, using their hands. At the word stop, each member of the group is asked to describe their experience today, using a word that begins with that letter (or that has that letter within the word). Another variation is to ask the group to pass the circle along and then stop. One person from the group reads off the number or symbol nearest them, and then answers a corresponding question associated with that number or symbol. This technique allows you to make just one Question Mark Raccoon Circle, but continuously alter the questions used. Write these on index cards and keep them with your Raccoon Circles. You can find additional question books in major bookstores.

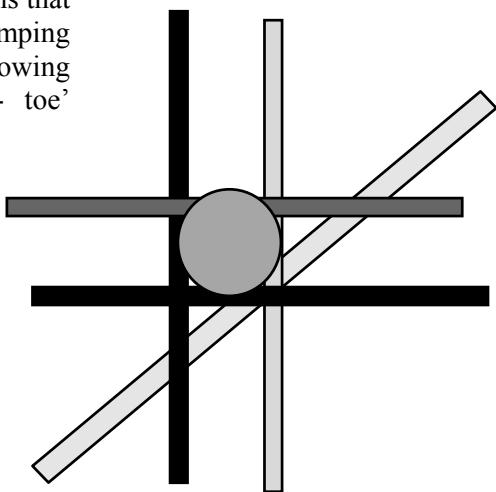
40. Random Thoughts and Misc. Activities

The world of Raccoon Circle activities is always expanding. Here is a sampling of the most recent additions.

Snap - Here is an activity borrowed from the world of parachute games. Begin by tying four or five Raccoon Circles together to form one large circle. Next invite participants to connect up around the outside of the circle, with some space between each person. Next have the group count off by fives (1,2,3,4,5,1,2,3,4,5,etc.) and remember their number. The game begins with everyone raising the large Raccoon Circle above their heads. The facilitator calls out a number (Number 3!) and everyone with that number is asked to change places, by running into the center, and then finding an open position along the outside of the Raccoon Circle. At any time in the process, the facilitator can call out “SNAP!” and the remaining members on the outside of the circle quickly lower the circle, possibly trapping a few participants on the inside of the circle. When the next number is called, the ‘trapped’ folks join the new folks in trying to find a place, before the next SNAP!

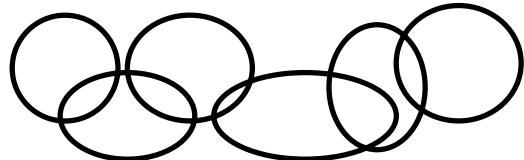
Be sure that participants change places with ‘bumpers up.’ That means that everyone changes places with both hands up, to guard against bumping into another person while changing places. Another method of slowing down the speed of this activity is to ask participants to walk ‘heel - toe’ when changing places.

Ball Transport - Here is an activity modified from the Bull Ring activity found in the book Teamwork & Teamplay. In this case, no ring is required. You’ll need one untied Raccoon Circle for each two people, and a large ball (such as a soccer ball or volley ball (easier) or a softball, croquet ball or bocci ball (harder)). The goal is to transport the ball using only the straight Raccoon Circles. Each person can hold onto only one Raccoon Circle. You can impose an additional challenge by requesting that no two Raccoon Circles can touch each other in more than one place.



World Wide Webbing Challenge - This is a highly physical, challenge activity. Consider this a webbing version of the ‘Living Ladder’ initiative found on page 117 of the book, Teamwork & Teamplay. You’ll need a large group of participants for this activity, at least 30 for starters.

Begin by forming interconnected Raccoon Circles (shown below), with at least six participants holding on to each circle. A ‘mountain climber’ is chosen to traverse the interconnected circles, without touching the ground.



Beginning climbers can make contact with both Raccoon Circles, and also the holders. For a higher level challenge (a 5.10 climb), climbers can make contact only with the Raccoon Circles. Use an additional spotter at the beginning and end of the climb. The ‘holes’ in the center of each Raccoon Circle are crevasses. Watch out!

41. Closing Thoughts

“When the Raccoon looks out from inside, the circle of connectedness of all things of the universe becomes quite evident.”

Tom Smith

Connectedness

When I first read Tom Smith’s words, I wasn’t sure if ‘connectedness’ was really a word. But lately, this word has been showing up in some pretty interesting places. Most recently, in the published results of the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health. In the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA), Resnick et. al reports that parent-family connectedness and perceived school connectedness were factors that protected youths against nearly every health risk behavior measured in the study (See the first article

mentioned below for details). Clearly connection between people, between people and the organizations they belong to, to the environment, and to the global community is a valuable thing. The Alameda Study conducted in California in the late 1990's also illustrates that above many significant social factors (such as poverty, access to healthcare, community, substance abuse, and other social pressures) the presence of connectedness within a community has an overwhelming effect on the overall health of the community. Edward Hallowell mentions some of these findings in his book simply titled 'Connect.' I encourage you to read some of these findings the next time you are trying to justify the need for community building activities in your classroom, adventure program, learning community or corporation. The facts are in, 'connectedness' is one of the most outstanding methods for the health of your community - and with Raccoon Circles, you have hundreds of methods for creating connectedness. Good Luck!

Protecting Adolescents from Harm: Findings from the national Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health, Resnick, Bearman, Blum, Bauman, et.al., JAMA, September 10, 1997, Volume 278, Issue 10, pages 823-832.

The National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health: Preliminary Results: Great Expectations, Klein, JAMA, September 10, 1997, Volume 278, Issue 10, pages 864-865.

Connect: 12 vital ties that open your heart, lengthen your life, and deepen your soul, 1999, Edward M. Hallowell, Pantheon Book, New York, NY USA ISBN 0-375-40357-4

Try using the word 'connectedness' for a Google search on the internet. You'll find dozens of articles, websites and links that are worth researching.

The Value of Connection

Since writing the Book on Raccoon Circles with Tom Smith, I have seen the value of connection through new eyes. In the past year, along with co-author Kirk Weisler, I have been writing a new book, focused on creating an environment of connection in the workplace. This book includes stories of organizations that are working hard to create such environments, and activities for the 'do it yourself' crowd. Learning Unlimited, the same publisher that brings you the Book on Raccoon Circles, will be publishing **The Value of Connection - In the Workplace** in the summer of 2004. This book is filled with dozens of activities, stories, resources and ideas for creating a connected work environment, for little cost, but with significant impact.

The Value of Connection - In the Workplace, 2004, by Jim Cain and Kirk Weisler, Learning Unlimited Publishers, Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA Phone 1-888-622-4203 www.learningunlimited.com Available Summer 2004.

42. Resources

For conference appearances, staff training events, keynote presentations and more information on experiential & adventure-based programs (and of course Raccoon Circle activities) contact:

Dr. Jim Cain, Teamwork & Teamplay 468 Salmon Creek Road Brockport, New York 14420 USA
Phone (585) 637-0328 Fax (585) 637-5277
Email: jimcain@teamworkandteamplay.com Website: www.teamworkandteamplay.com

Dr. Tom Smith, Raccoon Institute N2020 Cty. H. South #570 Lake Geneva, WI 53147 USA
Phone (262) 248-3750

43. Books and Other Resources for Circle and Raccoon Circle Activities:

The Book on Raccoon Circles, 2002, by Jim Cain and Tom Smith, Learning Unlimited Publishers, Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA Phone 1-888-622-4203 www.learningunlimited.com ISBN 0-9646541-6-4

Teamwork & Teamplay, 1998, by Jim Cain and Barry Jolliff, Kendall Hunt Publishers, Dubuque, Iowa Phone 1-800-228-0810 ISBN 0-7872-4532-1 419 pages of portable adventure-based activities, equipment, resources and references, with many activities that can be performed using Raccoon Circles.

The Value of Connection - In the Workplace, 2004, by Jim Cain and Kirk Weisler, Learning Unlimited, Tulsa, Oklahoma, USA Phone 1-888-622-4203 www.learningunlimited.com Available Summer 2004

The Group Loop Activity Guide - 22 Fun Group Activities that enhance community, teamwork, leadership and creative problem-solving, by Tom Heck. Phone (828) 665-0303 www.tomheck.com

Raccoon Circles - A Guide for Facilitators (2004 Internet Edition), by Jim Cain, January 2004
Teamwork & Teamplay Website www.teamworkandteamplay.com/raccooncircles.html
27 pages of activities and ideas for making the Raccoon Circle a popular part of your program.

Lines and Loops - Community Building Activities with Webbing, by Chris Cavert. 22 pages of activities, illustrations & references. Phone (928) 526-6386 chris@fundoing.com www.fundoing.com

Creative Idea for Team Work - Using Old Ties, by Alf Grigg. Seven tasks using ties, with debriefing ideas. Alf Grigg 394 Woodsworth Road #48 Willowdale, Ontario, Canada M2I 2T9
Phone (416) 444-7550 Email: 3griggs@sympatico.ca

Adventure Hardware P.O.Box 69 Jonas Ridge, NC 28641 Phone (800)706-0064
Carries Raccoon Circles and several other small, portable adventure-based learning props in the Teamwork & Teamplay Team Kit, and other Teamwork & Teamplay equipment, plus all levels of adventure-based training.
Website: www.adventurehardware.com

Sportime - Carries both the group loop and activity guide. One Sportime Way, Atlanta, GA 30340
Phone (800) 283-5700 Email: orders@sportime.com www.sportime.com

American Camping Association Bookstore Phone (800) 428-2267 www.ACACamps.org/bookstore

Amazon.com carries the Book on Raccoon Circles and Teamwork and Teamplay.

44. Conferences, Workshops & Training Opportunities

There are a variety of scheduled conferences where you can enjoy workshops using the Raccoon Circle activities. Here are a few. Visit the websites of these organizations, or contact the conference organizers for more information.

The American Camping Association (ACA) Regional Conferences, January 2004 in Texas, and Tri-States (New York City) in March 2004. www.acacamps.org

The Association for Experiential Education (AEE) Heartland Regional Conference, Indiana, April 2004 and Mid-Atlantic Region in April 2004. www.aee.org

The National Challenge Course Practitioner's Symposium (NCCPS) Boulder, Colorado February 2004

Christian Camping Conference, Jumonville, Hopwood, PA April 2004 1-800-463-7688

MAP Training Session, Tuscany, Italy May 2004

In addition to these scheduled conferences, you are welcome to request a customized training program for your students, teachers, counselors, staff or co-workers by contacting Jim Cain directly at (585) 637-0328 or jimcain@teamworkandteamplay.com

45. Additional Resources and Information

From authors Jim Cain and Barry Jolliff, comes the essential adventure-based teambuilding text

Teamwork & Teamplay

Now in it's 5th printing, this 400+ page book covers the complete adventure experience, from planning a program, to facilitating the activities and creating the equipment yourself. Plus there are hundreds of references, resources and additional ideas for creative programming with a variety of populations.

You can obtain a copy of Teamwork & Teamplay directly from the publisher,
Kendall Hunt, at 1-800-228-0810 or www.kendallhunt.com

Teamwork & Teamplay

The Adventure-Based Training Company

Workshops and Training Events

Here is a collection of some of my favorite workshops, conference presentations and training events. You can request any of these prepared programs for your event, or a custom designed program.

Teamwork & Teamplay - An active workshops based on the title of the award winning book.

The Nuts and Bolts of Building Portable Challenge and Adventure Equipment - Build you own adventure equipment and learn how to facilitate these activities.

Wings, Strings and Flying Things - This workshop utilizes a variety of flying, floating and soaring devices to encourage an interest in science, physics and just for fun.

Traveling Light - This workshop utilizes the lightweight props found in Teamwork & Teamplay (like Raccoon Circles), and is ideal for those that lead adventure activities and wish to travel light.

Play with a Purpose - This hands-on workshop uses a variety of simply games and activities that can be used with a variety of groups. From get acquainted activities to thought provoking activities.

Raccoon Circles - A full or half-day workshop filled with Raccoon Circle ceremony and activities.

Dancing in Lines, Squares and Circles - Jim is a third generation square dance caller, musician and dancer, and this workshop shares some of that heritage in a fun and community building session.

The Elements of a Truly Outstanding Challenge Program - This workshop is intended to acquaint the participant with the basic elements of establishing an outstanding challenge program.

Working and Playing in Groups. Using the 5 stages of group performance (Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Transforming), this single or multiple day workshop leads a team through the various stages of performance, and encourages honesty, respect, feedback, open communication and teamwork, as the group pulls together, overcomes difficulties, and really learns how to work together.

The Challenge Course in the 21st Century - As the former Executive Director of the Association for Challenge Course Technology (ACCT), Dr. Cain presents a variety of topics related to ropes courses and adventure-based education in North America and around the world.

Staff Training and Train the Trainer Programs - Train your staff with Teamwork & Teamplay activities, equipment and resource materials. Half day to 3 day programs available.

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468 Salmon Creek Road Brockport, New York 14420
Phone (585) 637-0328 Fax (585) 637-5277

Email: jimcain@teamworkandteamplay.com Website: www.teamworkandteamplay.com

Some Information about Dr. Jim Cain

Dr. Jim Cain is the author of the award winning adventure-based text Teamwork & Teamplay, which received the Karl Rohnke Creativity Award presented by the Association for Experiential Education, and co-author with Tom Smith of the Book on Raccoon Circles. He is a former Executive Director of the Association for Challenge Course Technology, and Senior Consultant to the Cornell University Corporate Teambuilding Program. In the past 3 years, he has presented and facilitated more than 500 teambuilding programs in 37 states and 9 countries. Jim makes his home in Brockport, New York. From 1983 to 1998, he worked as a senior research engineer for Eastman Kodak. He holds a Bachelor degree from YSU, Master degrees from RIT and U of R, and a Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering from the University of Rochester. Dr. Cain frequently serves as a visiting professor on subjects ranging from experiential education to challenge and adventure-based activities, and from recreational dancing and games leadership, to structural engineering, chaos and powder mechanics. He is presently working on three new adventure-based and teambuilding projects, including The Value of Connection - In the Workplace, with Kirk Weisler, A Facilitation Guide and a second volume of Teamwork & Teamplay activities. Visit the Teamwork & Teamplay website for more info.

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For more information, visit the Teamwork & Teamplay website

www.teamworkandteamplay.com

Or call the publisher, Learning Unlimited, at 1-888-622-4203

You can also download for free the

2004 Internet Edition of Raccoon Circle activities at:

www.teamworkandteamplay/raccooncircles.html