

Inspire and Educate Your Team with Team Building!

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Over the years, team building in general has remained a fun and popular option for supervisors interested in developing a sense of closeness and togetherness in their teams. Today, more than ever, team building is embraced for a number of reasons including a changing generational shift in childcare staff. You see team building is all about interaction and engagement and is a highly effective means to co-learn, co-discover, and share together...as a team!

Some of the benefits for team building include ...

- Building better interpersonal connections and improving communication
- Breaking down barriers, increasing inclusion, building mutual empathy, and understanding
- Creating a deeper foundation for greater trust
- Teaching us all that collaboration and supporting each other makes us stronger as a group
- Unleashing creativity and imagination and that demonstrates the power of group problem solving

So, as a supervisor, where do you start if team building is something you'd like to try?

Your **first step** would be to think of what your team needs in terms of skills and new abilities. Most supervisors know from daily experience what areas could be improved and team building provides a safe and often enjoyable experience that provides solutions by shining light on the problems that exist.

I find a good question for a supervisor to ask themselves is ***“what outcome or outcomes do I hope or expect will happen from team building?”***.

When I facilitate on-site team building, one of my many team building activities is entitled ***“Listen Up”***. It is a partner activity that accomplishes so many communication goals – listening skills, listening for respect and understanding, discovering how listening with bias shapes your view of an issue, to be able to listen to someone completely even if you don't agree with them and your ability to show that you actually heard what the other person said by recapping to them. It's a perfect activity for staff meetings as it only takes less than 10 minutes to run and best of all it's totally free.

As the supervisor, start by partnering up staff. Provide each team with an interesting list of 5 – 8 of topics that should evoke interest and emotion. Ask the first partner to select a topic that is of interest. When everyone is ready, tell them that the first partner is to speak on that topic for 60 seconds and that the other partner is to remain quiet and to listen carefully and attentively. It is important to say that this activity is NOT a conversation, it's listening exercise.

At the end of the 60 seconds, stop everyone and have the other partner take 60 seconds to recap what the first partner said. The goal is to prove that they could accurately and attentively listen and do so WITHOUT stating their own opinion. The objective is to build listening for understanding. It's about being respectful of someone else's ideas and thoughts. Talk to your team about what they learned and then flip the process and let the second partner to speak on any topic they want and that the first partner then listens.

There are many, many simple and cost-effective team building activities that you can try. Team Building is an amazing and often revealing experience. More challenging team building experiences can really bring out the best in people and can be inspiring and uplifting.

You and your team will learn again and again that coming together and supporting each other builds closer connections, creates more understanding, breaks down barriers and of course, makes for a better and more collaborative workplace environment for everyone – staff, children and families...and you, the supervisor!