

MARSHMALLOW CHALLENGE – A way of working on teamwork, group dynamics and communication skills.

MATERIALS: (1) Identical bags of toothpicks and marshmallow. Each bag should have 60 – 70 pieces. 2 bags needed per team. (2) A non-transparent box to contain the structure (3) Ample room for teams to work remotely from one another.

STEPS: **Divide into groups of 3 (or 4 if necessary) but should be of equal size.** Arrange so they are far from each other. (There are 2 phases to this activity. First, each team designs and creates a structure without knowing they are building it for another team to duplicate. In the 2nd phase, the teams duplicate the design of another while each member plays an assigned role).

PLACE A ROW OF numbered chairs at a FRONT TABLE (or numbers on picnic blanket for each team) that is large enough to hold ALL THE BOXES

1. Give each team a bag of supplies and 1 box. They can build any kind of structure they want WITHOUT MODIFYING THE PIECES. (cannot bend or break toothpicks). Encourage creativity. **Give 8 minutes to complete structure! Place into box, COVER.** Now assign a role to each member: EXPLAINER, MESSENGER AND BUILDER. 2 can be messengers if there are 4 per team. TEAMS MUST MAKE THESE ASSIGNMENTS BEFORE PROCEEDING.
2. The explainer brings the team's box to front table and place it at one of the chairs. Explainers then chooses a **different** box to sit in front of.
3. Give each BUILDER another bag of materials. The builder's job is to build a structure identical to the model their EXPLAINER HAS SELECTED. They will do this with the information THAT THE MESSENGER BRINGS TO THEM.
4. The EXPLAINER MUST TELL THE MESSENGER what the design looks like, including color if needed. Here are the rules:
 - a) Only the EXPLAINER can view the model; not the messenger or builder ***ensure a distance of 1 m between EXPLAINER AND MESSENGER***
 - b) Only the BUILDER can touch the new structure or raw materials
 - c) Only the MESSENGER can talk to the builder or explainer. The Builder can ask the messenger questions, but cannot speak to the Explainer
 - d) Messengers can keep going back and forth as much as necessary
 - e) If there are 2 Messengers on a team, they each take turns going to the Explainer, and there is NO OVERLAP of Messenger activities. The messengers CANNOT SPEAK TO EACH OTHER.

- f) The messenger can correct what the builder is doing wrong but cannot touch the structure.

GIVE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR QUESTIONS and then 10 minutes to complete this phase. Then have all 3 members from each team get together with both structures to see how well they completed the task!

DEBRIEF: While every team had the same goal, they most likely worked very differently together. Discuss what they experienced and learned about communication. Use questions like: a) After building the structure for the first time, what was your reaction when you realized what you had to do after? b) Describe what it was like to be the Explainer, Builder or Messenger? Which role do you think was the most challenging? Why? c) How well did your team do? What changes could you do for your team to be more effective as communicators? d) Were there times when you found yourself doubting the information being communicated to you?

This could be related to the real-life situations of how rumors and gossip spread, and affect people...

