

Diminishing Resources

Set Up:

The floor of the room is set up with various sized "squares", made of newspapers, or flip chart paper or A4 or 8 1/2 x 11 sheets of paper. There should be a few more squares of paper than there are participants to create abundance. Place the pieces of paper close enough so that one could easily hop from one to the other.

Group Size:

6 or more (It's been done with a group of more than 200)

Instructions to Participants:

Here are the rules of the game. Please wait to hear all of the rules before beginning.

- Rule 1: the game begins when everyone has both feet on a square.

(Hold up one of papers)

I know my geometry and I know that this is actually a rectangle. However, for the purposes of the game we will call this a square. Agreed?

- Rule 2: When I say 'Change' everyone must move to a new square.
- Rule 3: The game begins again when everyone has both feet on a new square.

Ready? Begin

Facilitator instructions:

After two or three moves, begin to remove papers, forcing participants on to a smaller number of squares until new and different solutions are discovered. In most cases people will not start thinking "out of the box" (literally) until everyone is trying to stand, huddled over the last piece of paper.

Some people will feel, if they can't get on a paper that they are out of the game. Simply ask, "Does everyone have both feet on a square? The game begins again when everyone has both feet on a square." This is sometimes hint enough to get participants to start looking for alternatives to the papers.

Notes:

Be aware of your fingers when taking up squares. Sometimes participants get aggressive. It is easiest if you stand behind a participant and lift the paper when they move.

Do not answer specific questions. Simply repeat the instructions. Sometimes early on, a participant will ask "Can more than one person stand on one square?" Simply repeat the instructions.

After you pick up a paper square, discard it so it can't be used to create new squares.

If people start creating new squares with paper at hand, say "creative idea, but you may use only existing squares."

When you remove squares, get people to move off them by saying something like, "I know you're getting really attached to this square, but guess what--it just disappeared--you'll need to find a new square."

Do not to set up an adversarial struggle with people who don't want to give up a square.

Questions for a Debrief:

- What assumptions did you make?
- What rules did you make up (that weren't rules of the game)? The unspoken rules?
- What did you notice when the squares started diminishing?
- What did you notice about sharing squares in the beginning?
- When did it shift? What happened? What did that feel like?
- For the first person / people who tried a new idea for a square, what was that like?
- Did you tell anyone else? Why / why not?
- When others saw the first person, what did you think? (Breaking the "rules")
- How long did it take before everyone got it?
- What was that like?
- How does sharing (resources, ideas, etc.) or not sharing show up on your team?
- How does it contribute, or get in the way of, results?
- What did you learn about yourselves as a team?
- What could you do differently as a team to manage the resources that are available to you?

Our thanks to the people at Pecos River for introducing us to this game.