Don’t Break the Ice*

Goals:
- A fun variation of tag that seems to bring out the best in people
- Partners attempt to move about while connected through four suspended blocks, simultaneously trying to break the connection of other players

Bullying Awareness/Bullying Prevention Concepts or Goals:
- Don’t Break the Ice seems to bring about a variety of behaviors from everyone playing which leads to an ideal environment for discussing group norms and establishing a Full Value Contract
- Physical Activity and Movement
- Building Trust, Relationships, and Community Relationship Skills

Recommended Grade Level and Group Size: Grades 6-12 and groups of 12 or more

Estimated Time for Activity: 10-15 minutes

Equipment/Materials/Props:
- Plastic or wooden blocks – At least 2 blocks per person, 1-2 inch blocks work best

Setup:
- Clear an open space. The space does not need to be too large, but does need to be clear.
- Creatively divide your group into pairs. Consider fun ideas from the list of Snappy Partners in No Props or Count Me In by Mark Collard.

Description of Game/ How to Play/Framing:
- Say to the group: “Relationships are the foundation of a community. We form friendships/relationships that we feel comfortable with and want to maintain.” Or: “Sometimes we become distracted or exhausted and are challenged to maintain these relationships. Let’s explore ways to maintain these connections.”

Procedure:
- Tell participants to suspend four blocks in a straight horizontal line between them using only the tips of their index fingers. In other words, participants position two blocks on the tips of their index fingers and connect their two blocks directly to their partners’ in a straight horizontal line – to start anyway!
- State the objective: Participants attempt to move and maintain their connections through the four suspended blocks while trying to break the connections of other partner pairs using their free index fingers only.
- Explain and demonstrate the rules:
  - Connection breaking attempts can only happen by participants who are properly connected to their partners.
  - Physical contact should be kept to a minimum. This is a game of finesse and positioning, not asserting oneself physically. Participants should refrain from pushing, blocking, swatting, etc.
  - Participants may box out (as in basketball), move, and position themselves to make their blocks more challenging to knock.
  - Participants may only use the tips of their index fingers to connect through their four blocks. In other words, participants may not link hands, fingers, or thumbs in an attempt to better secure their blocks.
Debriefing/Reflection/Closure/Discussion:
- **Full Value Check-in** – Don’t Break the Ice seems to bring out the best in people (especially if you omit communication of the particular rules bulleted in the procedure)! Often times, behaviors such as cheating, dishonesty, revenge, competition, and miscommunication are demonstrated. This seems to provide an opportunity to either develop a Full Value Contract or check in with a pre-existing one.
- **Pair Share or Quadraphonic** – In a “Pair Share,” two people share responses to a question(s). During a “Quadraphonic,” four people share responses to a question(s). Using a “Quadraphonic” debrief provides the option of new pairings after debriefing.
  - Would you say that you and your partner were successful at maintaining your connections and communication?
  - What was allowed for your success or failure?
  - What are some of the best strategies for maintaining connections and communication that you demonstrated or saw another group demonstrate?
  - What are three healthy ways to stay connected to people in your life? What are three unhealthy ways of attempting to stay connected to people in your life?

Safety:
- Be aware that this activity generally inspires an exuberant and playful atmosphere. Without extinguishing that spirit, monitor the level of play in relation to the setting. Check in as necessary and adapt as needed.

Tips and Comments:
Connecting Variations
- Switch – Encourage participants to switch hands or play using their sub-dominant sides.
- Which Digit?
  - **Thumbs Up!** – Use thumbs as a connecting point rather than index fingers and, likewise, participants may attempt to break the connection of others with their thumbs.
  - **Pinkies Too!** – Similar to Thumbs Up, participants use pinky fingers for both connecting and disconnecting.
  - **Hey, Where Are You Going?** – Players challenge themselves by facing opposite directions.

Game Variations:
- Try omitting rule “d.” If you do, prepare for an opportunity to process particular behaviors that present themselves without it!
- **Ice Breakers** – Similar rules as Don’t Break the Ice with one partnering rule change. Once blocks are broken, participants pick up their blocks and re-connect with different partners. See Don’t Break the Ice write-up for Framing and Debriefing ideas.
- **Building Blocks** – Same rules as Don’t Break the Ice, with one competitive rule addition. Once blocks are broken, participants, whether connected or not and with or without blocks, attempt to pick up as many blocks as possible, re-connect either with their partners or anyone else, and continue playing. Participants may re-connect to another person with as many blocks as they are able and as few as one.
- **Three’s a Crowd** – Three participants attempt to remain connected based on the original rules of Don’t Break the Ice. Provide time for participants to strategize the best way to connect and play.
- **Connect 4** – Four participants attempt to remain connected based on the original rules of Don’t Break the Ice. Provide time for participants to strategize their best way to connect and play.

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