

Interactive Staff Training Activities Workshop



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Michelle Cummings M.S. is the Big Wheel and founder of Training Wheels, a known leader in the Team Development industry. She is an accomplished author and sought-after speaker and consultant on leadership, teambuilding, and experiential learning. Michelle has created a wide variety of facilitation, debriefing and teambuilding activities that have collectively changed the way trainers and educators work. Michelle is also the co-founder and Chief Creative Officer for Personify Leadership, a leadership development company.

Michelle has delivered innovative leadership programs for hundreds of camps and non-profit organizations. Michelle works with professional associations, corporations, universities, and non-profit organizations throughout the world. Her online teambuilding gear site has over 350 different books, activities and kits dedicated to the teambuilding field.

Michelle speaks at more than 20 local, national, and international conferences each year and authors a monthly teambuilding newsletter called [*The Spokesperson*](#) that has over 23,000 subscribers in over 100 countries. Michelle Cummings has authored six books, 1. [*A Teachable Moment*](#) 2. [*Bouldering Games for Kids*](#) 3. [*Playing With a Full Deck*](#) 4. [*Setting the Conflict Compass*](#) 5. [*Facilitated Growth*](#) and 6. [*Team Building From the Toy Aisle*](#). She has two new books coming out this year, 1. [*Table Top Team Building*](#) and 2. [*Storytelling as Experiential Education: Building Resilience, Leadership and Community*](#). She also designed a unique course for teaching new facilitators called [*Experiential Facilitation 101*](#).

Michelle also write a novel called [*The Reel Sisters*](#), a story about a group of women fly fishers that was released November 4, 2017.

Michelle received her Bachelor's degree in Psychology from Kansas State University and her Masters degree in Experiential Education from Minnesota State University at Mankato. Michelle currently lives in Littleton, CO with her husband, Paul, and two sons.

As If

Divide your group into pairs. Begin this activity by letting participants know that you will give them a relationship role to play for the upcoming interaction. Have the pairs stand about 15 feet apart from one another. Have them determine which partner will be the "greeter" and which partner will play out the "role." Each interaction is approximately 20–30 seconds in duration. Then announce the first interaction.

Ask your group to greet another person in the room **AS IF** you are:

- Long lost college roommates
- A controversial famous person, e.g. President George W Bush
- A colleague you have had a conflict with
- A homesick camper

The Pocket Processor

The [Pocket Processor](#) is a processing tool based on the theory of the yin and the yang. This theory describes two ends of a continuum, with each end having the seed of the other. The Pocket Processor helps participants examine the flow along the continuum. Human Continuum variation: Put a piece of rope in the center of the room. Ask everyone to stand on the line. Then read the two sides of the card and allow every participant to physically place himself or herself anywhere on that continuum. For example, a facilitator can say, "This side of the room is always taking charge." The other side of the room is always, "allowing others to lead." I want each of you to find the place on the continuum where you most fit today."



Later Letters

Later Letters allow participants to receive a letter from themselves at a later date to remind them of their experience during the program. For summer camp staff, have staff write themselves a letter about what they want to tell themselves in July when burnout starts to set in.

- Give each participant a piece of paper, pen/pencil and envelope, or a postcard from our [Postcard Processing Kit](#).
- Ask each person to write a letter to themselves describing their experience from this program.
- After they have finished writing have them seal the letter inside the envelope, and write their mailing address on the front of the envelope.
- Seal letters and mail them back to their authors at some other strategic time. If you have the ability to keep up with a calendar, ask the participants to place a date on the back of the envelope as to when they would like to receive the letter. Then you can mail the letter to them a few days before the wished to receive it. A file cabinet system and good organization are key to making this work.
- As an alternative, before sealing each envelope, other members of the group can include greetings, mailing addresses, birthday wishes, email addresses, sketches or photographs. And don't forget a greeting from the group's facilitator.

Zoom

Zoom: The activity takes anywhere from 30-45 minutes to complete but it highly depends on how you set up the parameters and the groups level. Cut the pages out of the book and laminate them or you can use sheet protectors if you don't have a laminator (handling a piece of paper that long it will be wrinkled, folded, rolled, or torn by end).

It's one of our favorite large group problem solving and communication activities. It is usually sequenced after initial icebreakers and energizers. It can be good to give the group one large group problem solver before splitting the group up into smaller groups. There are 32 pages in Zoom (including covers) and around 35 or so in Re-Zoom (including covers).



Process: Distribute one page to each participant. Have players closely examine their picture for all the details. Let them know that they are NOT to show their picture to anyone else and are NOT allowed to look at anyone else's picture.

The task the group must complete is to line up in correct sequence according to the picture they received. Participants will generally mill around talking to others to see whether their pictures have anything in common. Sometimes leadership efforts will emerge to try to understand the overall story. When the group feels the book is "in order" have the group reveal their pictures to the rest of the group and reposition themselves if they made any errors.

The Other Side

Props Needed: Pages from the book, [The Other Side](#) by Istvan Banyai

This activity is designed to stimulate conversation about how there are always two sides to every story.

- Invite your participants to find a partner.
- Slide one page of the book in between each pair. Try to distribute the pages to each pair so that each person in the pair only sees one side of the page.
- Have players closely examine their side of the picture for all of the details. Let them know that they are NOT to show their picture to their partner.
- Instruct players to discuss what is happening on their side of the page and then to listen to their partner's perspective from their page.
- Have each pair try to determine what event or story is taking place.
- After several minutes of discussion, allow participants to reveal their pictures to their partner and discuss the differences in the perspective of 'the other side.'

52 Card Pick UP

This activity is from our [Stack the Deck cards](#). Place all 52 cards with the image side face down on the floor or tabletop. You will need lots of space for participants to move around and perform various tasks. Explain to the group that the objective is to pick all 52 cards up before explaining the following rules:

1. **You may only pick one card up at a time.**
2. **You must perform the task written on the card before picking up another card.**
3. **If you choose not to perform the task on the card, simply return the card face down on the floor.**
4. **Your card is for your eyes only. You are not to share what is written on your card with other group members.**
5. **Enjoy the game.**

Additional thoughts: 52 cards are ideal for groups of 8-15 participants. For larger groups you will need an additional set of cards. Also, some facilitators like to cover the 52 Card Pick Up section with a small Post It Note while doing other activities. This prevents the group from reading the prompts ahead of time.

Debriefing points: First, let the group go around and read off a few of the ‘covert’ operations that went on during the activity. These are silly in nature, but there are many debriefing points you can relate to real life. Here are a few pointers to ask: How is this activity like everyday life? How are the behaviors demonstrated in this activity like interacting in a group setting? Each behavior demonstrated in this activity could relate to a behavior in the real world.

Switch, Change & Rotate

Props Needed: None. From the non-prop book [The Empty Bag](#), by Chris Cavert and Dick Hammond.

Set Up: You’ll need a nice big open area for this one. Works well with 20 or more for 20 to 25 minutes.

Process: Ask your players to get into groups of 3 to 6 and stand in a single-file line facing in the same direction. This activity involves the facilitator giving specific commands the small groups are asked to follow - to the best of their ability.

You’ll want to do some practicing with the small groups standing in place. The first command is, “Switch.” This command requires the front and back players to exchange places – practice. Next, introduce “Change.” The line of players is required to turn 180 degrees to face the opposite direction – practice. Next is “Rotate.” The player at the front of the line peels off and goes to the back of the line – practice. Spend a little time practicing with each command while the groups are stationary.



At this point you are going to add the command, “Move.” On this command, the groups start walking (slowly) around the room (within the established boundary area) in their single file line formation – the head of the line being the leader. The lines are allowed to weave around the area as long as each small group stays together. The last command you will need to give the groups is “Freeze” – this obviously stops all the action.

So, now the groups have all the commands they need. Here is the ultimate challenge. Start out the groups with, “Move” then begin working in the Switch, Change & Rotates as the groups are walking around. (If you have some music to play during the activity it gives the groups some beat to walk to.) Give the groups enough time between calls to get into the correct formation. Be sure to mix up the “commands” so the groups do not know what order the commands will be given!! After a few minutes the groups should have it down pretty well. Then, give them multiple commands at once (Change, Rotate, Switch). This activity brings you wonderful leadership issues and how the group members help one another.

Variations: If you think your group is ready for a trusting challenge, have them first, “Freeze” in place. Ask them to close their eyes for the next round. Assure the players they can open their eyes at any time if they need to but challenge them to work together to keep this safe. Also, teach the “Bumpers Up” position (hands and arms up in front of you with thumbs touching) to add some up-front safety.

The Clock (Perspective)

Have each participant point with their pointer finger just above their head. Once the facilitator says go ask participants to draw a circle in the air going clockwise. As they draw their circle without stopping have them lower their arm until the about chest high. Ask them whether the circle was still being drawn the same direction as started. The result is when your finger is above the head the circle is drawn clockwise but after dropping the arm the circle appears to be drawn counter-clockwise. The reason is perspective. Play around with this and the different perspectives they have with each other and in various situations.

Memory Test

Instruct participants that they need to listen to a list of words, then try and recall every word that is said. Read off the following list of 17 words in order, do not change the sequence. One word is repeated 3 times.

1. Dream
2. Sleep
3. Night
4. Mattress
5. Snooze
6. Sheet
7. Nod
8. Tired
9. Night
10. Artichoke
11. Insomnia
12. Blanket
13. Night
14. Alarm
15. Nap
16. Snore
17. Pillow



Memory Test Debriefing points:

When finished, debrief the activity with the group:

Teaching points:

1st and last word: Ask participants if they got Dream and Pillow. They are the first and last thing you said. Participants will remember the first thing you say and the last thing you say.

Surprise effect: Artichoke. Almost everyone will get this. People remember surprises. Throw in something different here or there. It could be the way you say something (change your tone, enunciate a key word, throw in a joke)

Repetition effect: Ask if they got the word night. It was repeated three times. Repeat really important directions multiple times.

False-memory effect: Ask if they got the word bed. You didn't say bed. People will fill in the gaps with associated things.

Recommended Publications

[A Teachable Moment](#), a Facilitator's Guide to Activities for Processing, Debriefing, Reviewing, and Reflecting. Jim Cain, Michelle Cummings, Jennifer Stanchfield, 2004. Kendall Hunt Publishing, Dubuque Iowa 2004.

[Essential Staff Training Activities](#), Jim Cain, Claire Marie Hannon and Dave Knobbe, Kendall Hunt Publishing, Dubuque Iowa 2009.

[Facilitated Growth: Experiential Activities for Recovery and Wellness](#), by Michelle Cummings, Marc Pimsler and Diane Sherman. Kendall Hunt Publishing, Dubuque Iowa, 2017

[Islands of Healing](#), A Guide to Adventure Based Counseling by Jim Schoel, Dick Prouty and Paul Radcliffe, 1989, 301 pp. Project Adventure, www.pa.org

[Lasting Lessons](#), Clifford Knapp, 1992, ISBN 1-880785-06-4, ERIC Publishing, PO Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325

[Reflective Learning: Theory and Practice](#). Sugarman, D. Doherty, K., Garvey, D., Gass, M. Kendall Hunt Publisher, 2000.

[Open to Outcome](#), Micah Jacobsen and Mari Ruddy, 2005, Wood N Barnes Publishing.

[Processing Pinnacle](#), An Educator's Guide to Better Processing by Steve Simpson, PhD, Dan Miller & Buzz Bocher, 2006, Wood N Barnes Publishing.

[Processing The Experience](#), Second Edition; John L.Luckner, Reldan S.Nadler, Kendall Hunt Publishing, Dubuque Iowa 1997.

[Setting The Conflict Compass](#), Activities for Conflict Resolution and Prevention, Michelle Cummings with Mike Anderson, Kendall Hunt Publishing, Dubuque Iowa 2010.

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Processing & Debriefing Workshops

Need more to processing than sitting in a circle, asking questions, and talking about what happened? This workshop is designed to introduce you to a multitude of different processing tools that are simple and easy to use. You will learn how to make/do the activities yourself or find out where to get them. You can increase the quality and value of your programs through powerful reflective learning.

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