



# **Block Game Facilitation Guide**

## **Purpose**

- To build trust within a group
- To explore how people in the group work together and how each contributes a different style and approach to collective work

## **Materials**

- Approximately 100 blocks - different colors, shapes sizes

## **Background**

This exercise was introduced by Roca, Inc., as a way for participants to experientially learn about each others' styles and approaches to collective work. This exercise is done in silence and it invites people to engage in a different type of learning about each other and about themselves.

This activity will increase the ability of the group to deepen relationships and understand how different perspectives add to the wholeness of the group – even if the differences are sometimes frustrating. It will also provide an opportunity for individuals to get feedback about how their actions affect other people. It is helpful if the group has some relationship with each other before engaging in this game. This exercise can take 2-4 hours depending on time allowed.

## **Facilitation Instructions**

People love to play games, so you can introduce this as a simple block game. It is important not to say too much at the beginning. The opportunity to frame the experience and bring out insights happens during the debrief. Since much of the learning is in the debrief, it is important to allow 45 minutes to an hour following the game itself for people to reflect on what has been learned.

Participants sit in a circle of chairs. Explain that this is a game to learn about how the group works together collectively. Put a container with all of the blocks in the middle of the circle and then dump the blocks in a random pile on the floor. Leave the container somewhere in the circle. Explain that the play will go around the circle with each person taking a turn in order. There are two rules of the game: no talking and move only one block at a time.

Begin the action by going to the middle and placing the first block somewhere in the circle and then sit down in silence. Each time the play goes around the circle, take a turn, moving one block at a time and keeping the play going. Model being present with the game and keeping silent.

Eventually, someone in the group will want to make the game more interesting by moving multiple blocks or going out of turn, or doing something to upset the order of the game. If there is a limited amount of time, you can introduce rule breaking after 4 or 5 rounds. The play keeps going in the circle until someone finds a way to create an ending or you need to end the game because of time constraints.



### **Debrief**

The debrief continues the pattern of the circle. You will lead three rounds of questions with each person taking a turn to provide the response as you go around the circle. It may be helpful to use a talking piece to reinforce that this is a chance for every person to be heard, rather than an open dialogue. Invite people to listen deeply to each person's reflection and to hold any questions or comments until it is his/her turn to speak. Let people know that it is okay to pass. When the circle has gone all the way around, it is good to ask those who have passed whether they would like to speak before going to the next round. It is still permissible for that person to pass.

### **First round framing/question:**

"Whenever a group is working together, it is seeking to find the wholeness of the group – to find what will make the overall work come together. The root of justice is two words – one meaning 'sacred formula,' and the other meaning 'rightness.' Sacred is also related to sacrifice, so one definition of justice is letting go of something to make things right. Sometimes, an individual needs to let go of something in order for the whole group to be able to do its work – to be whole.

"When you reflect on this experience, what did you learn that you individually needed to let go of or give up in order to support the wholeness of the group?"

Start the circle with a personal example. The most powerful example is one that has genuinely come up from your experience of the game.

"I had to give up my judgment of others."

"I had to give up my certainty about how the structure was supposed to look."

"I had to give up my perception about how this game was supposed to be played."

### **Second round framing:**

"This game reflects a lot of what it is like to work in community. People work together but everyone has a different idea about what they are building and how to value previous contributions. Someone with a different idea comes along and tears down all of the work that has been built together. Then you start again – without a clear sense of when you are finished or when the game will be done.

"What does your experience of this game tell you about what do you need to stay in the game of working in your community? What helps you stay connected to and caring about the work?"

Again, you start with a personal example.

"I love seeing the creativity of how people respond to change."

"I was curious to see what would happen next."

"I was totally frustrated but I stayed because I want to be part of this group."



### **Third round framing/question:**

“Remember that this game is a reflection of working together in community and there were many different energy flows – times of people coming together, competing visions, destructive forces, adaptation. So, think about what happened throughout the flow of the game and your relationship to all of those forces and to the other players.

“What did you learn about how you play off others and how you see and respond to what others need? What did you see about how others helped the group recognize and move towards wholeness? What is your contribution to wholeness?”

Begin the circle with another personal example.

“I found that I was very patient with what others needed and could easily wait my turn.”

“Whenever someone knocked over the structure I found myself getting anxious about how others would feel.”

“I tried to make a connection with the person knocking blocks over so he would stop.”

After you have completed these three rounds, you can open the conversation up for a general reflection about participants’ experiences and what they learned about themselves and the group.