Don’t Speak: A Nonverbal Counseling Workshop

*Elective 2*

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| **AUTHOR(S):** | Jon Adam Ross |
| **SUMMARY:** | You can change the world without a word. In this session you will accomplish tasks without any verbal instruction and experience nonverbal communication as an alternative teaching tool. *– Submitted by Jon Adam Ross* |
| **TOPIC(S):** | Communication Skills, Leadership Development |
| **LEARNING OBJECTIVE:** | The participants will be able to take several exercises and games back to camp that can be played to help build group dynamics without talking. They will also be given skills to use when trying to develop programming to accomplish group tasks in a nonverbal way. This is a really great workshop to lead during staff week. |
| **AUDIENCE:** | Any group, any size |
| **TIMING:** | 60 minutes (but can be broken down into smaller pieces) |
| **APPENDICES:** | Appendix for Don’t Speak (Genesis 11: 1-9, Genesis 27: 18-23) |
| **MATERIALS NEEDED:** | * Enough paint brushes for every participant + leader (they can be the cheap skinny ones, and we can throw them away after) * 4 tubes of cheap paint (variety of colors) * 3’ x 8’ piece of white butcher paper * 4’ x 9’ piece of tarp or cloth to use under butcher paper * A bucket of water (to put the brushes in when we’re done) |
| **SET-UP DETAILS:** | A wide open space where you can paint on a tarp (not an indoor room) |

**Session Timeline & Outline:**

**Warm Up Activity: Pass the Clap**

Everyone will be sitting in a circle. The facilitator will pass the clap in a game where s/he claps and waits until the person next to him/her realizes that the facilitator wants him or her to pass the clap around the circle. Once we successfully get that going, the facilitator will add in a pat the lap to be passed in the opposite direction at the same time as the clap is going around. Then the facilitator stands the group up. The facilitator will play a game where s/he claps at someone and s/he claps back. And then the facilitator stomps a foot at someone and s/he stomps back.

Then the facilitator says “bum” to someone and s/he says “bum” back. This is a great way to get people in the “ready position” as a warmup activity. Then the facilitator will sit down; everyone will sit down.

**Game: This is a What?**

The facilitator will have the paintbrushes hidden behind me under a sweatshirt. The facilitator will verbally ask for everyone to put one object already in their possession in the middle of the circle (a shoe, a watch, a water bottle). The facilitator will then lead the group without instruction to play “This is a What”. The way “This is a What” works is that everyone contributes one object in their possession to the middle of the circle. The facilitator takes those objects and gives them names (a brush, a hat, a shoe, etc.). The facilitator will then teach the group to say “This is a hat. A what? A hat. A what? A hat. Oh, a hat!” And the group will repeat it as a group until its time to start the game. The facilitator will pass the first object to the person next to him or her and we will say the conversational phrase. Then after the “Oh” line, that person will grab what the facilitator is holding and offer it to the person next to me in the same way as the facilitator offers a new object to the person again. In a couple of minutes, everyone in the circle is having a conversation with the only different word being the object they are passing. Eventually, as we play “This is a What,” the facilitator will phase out the objects and replace them with paintbrushes.

**Group March**

The facilitator will then stand up with his or her paintbrush and begin to walk away from the circle. Nonverbally, the facilitator will ensure that the person to his or her right follows, and the next person follows, and so on until the circle becomes a straight line of people marching/walking through the camp holding up their paintbrushes. The liaisons will gather the objects left in the circle and bring them to the art room.

The facilitator will lead the group all around the camp in a variety of marching that will include dance breaks, arm raising, tree hugging, etc. The group will march under trees, through buildings (it is best to map out the path ahead of time) before the Fellows arrive on camp). This will be led completely nonverbally and the goal is to get the group to see the camp through different eyes while also seeing how easy it is to follow directions without verbal instruction – through modeling.

**Nonverbal Art**

Eventually we will make our way into the art room where a long piece of butcher paper will be laid out on the ground with bowls of paint around the edges. The facilitator will take a paintbrush and lead everyone to stand in a circle around the butcher paper. The facilitator will then dip his or her paintbrush into the paint and make a mark on the paper. The hope is that everyone will follow suit and will paint lines (squiggly, straight, and other) on the paper. The facilitator will then place his or her paintbrush in a bucket of water that will be nearby. Everyone will (hopefully by the facilitator’s lead) do the same with their brushes and the facilitator will lead them back outside to do a couple of exercises.

**Games: Can I have Your Space? And Triangle**

“Can I have your space?” and “Triangle” are usually great games for this non-verbal workshop because they are nonverbal in execution. “Can I have your space?” is a game in which all participants except one are standing in a circle facing in. There is one person on the inside of the circle who goes to each person and asks for their space. The only thing the circle is allowed to say is “no.” But they should be communicating using eye contact and body language with other people in the circle to switch places. If the person in the middle gets to an empty space first, the odd man out is now the odd man in. And the game keeps going.

The “Triangle” game is part of series of exercises derived from the theater technique known as “viewpoints” in which floor pattern is used in exercises illustrating the building blocks of theater. These games deal with skills of group awareness.

**Debrief**

The group will sit to debrief and discuss how these exercises and the theory of nonverbal teaching/leading can be applied at camp. It is at this time that someone will be asked to read Genesis 11: 1-9 so they can discuss how the exercises that day in learning how to work together as a group nonverbally relate to the Tower of Babel.

The facilitator will take the conversation now into a different direction, to talk about language in the world and then at camp. I will ask everyone to think of an example of words/terms that different people use differently. The facilitator will give the example of ISIS/Daesh/ISIL and also words that some cultures find offensive, but own for themselves. Then the group will talk about what this looks like at camp.

The group also will discuss how the voice can mislead (הקל קל יעקוב), bringing it back to the fact that body language is, many times, more accurate than speech. One thing that’s good to talk about here is a woodshop. If there’s a woodshop in camp, and machines are humming loudly, saws, etc., then staff members cannot communicate with campers verbally. They have to use visual and physical cues – body language – to keep campers safe and following directions. So the group will talk about that and how that can apply in other places in camp, and how those skills can be taught.

**Additional Notes for Bringing it Back to Camp:**

Each of the games can be played separately!