

How to WIN at Cornerstone: Sharing Responsibility and Measuring Success *Elective 2*

AUTHOR(S):	Erica Goldman
SUMMARY:	Short team tasks, like picking up a ball, assigned to participants who have previously given themselves roles, like "artist", reveal how the labeling holds them back from doing things they can do. You will explore how you may limit campers (or yourself) by labeling yourself and what it might mean to wear the label of Cornerstone Fellow - <i>Submitted by Erica Goldman</i>
TOPIC(S):	Group Dynamics, Leadership Development
LEARNING OBJECTIVE:	To encourage participants to be comfortable being afraid, to give thought to how they measure "success" and consider attributes positive or negative, to consider how they label themselves and others and thereby limit what they do
AUDIENCE:	At least nine participants, but can be a very large group. Particularly good for professional development / staff training, but portions of program could be done with campers.
TIMING:	90 minutes
APPENDICES:	Appendix - How to Win at Cornerstone
MATERIALS NEEDED:	One copy of the handout for each participant. One tennis ball, one roll of tape (scotch or masking or blue, doesn't matter) and one box of straws for every three participants (if there are 12 people, then 4 of each of those items). A big sticky poster-pad Lots of markers or crayons of many different colors.
SET-UP DETAILS:	Chairs set up in a circle in part of the room; other part of the room empty so can be used for moving around activities.

SESSION TIMELINE & OUTLINE:

Introduction:

Begin the session by inviting everyone to introduce themselves by saying their name and something they once didn't know how to do but now they can, with the caveat that no one can repeat what someone else has said. Usually participants will say big accomplishments they are proud of, for example, they once didn't know how to speak Hebrew or drive a stick shift, for example, but now they can. Anyone who can't think of something or wants an easy way out can use learning to walk or to tie their shoes or something like that, but because of the "no repeats" rule they may still have to get a little bit creative. The idea is to start raising the participants' awareness that they are capable of learning, and of learning hard things, and that they have done it many times before.

Form Teams, Assign Roles:

Invite participants to split into teams: the ideal size is at least three teams of at least four or five people each, but the specific instruction will depend on the total size of the group. Explain that they need to designate roles, by saying something like, "Each team needs someone to be the runner, someone to be the timer, someone to be the artist, and someone to be the creator." (This will have to be adapted to the number of people in each group. If teams are uneven, additional roles can be "Supporter" and "Listener".) The roles and the order (as below) should be clearly written on a poster so they are visible to everyone in the room. Once each team has its roles assigned or chosen, instruct them to line up in the following order within each team, at one end of the room so the lines are parallel to one another facing you: 1. Artist 2. Creator 3. Timer 4. Runner. (if applicable, 5. Supporter 6. Listener)

Allow teams to make up team names or assign each team a color to act as a team designator, and write down the team names at the top of the poster to act as a scorecard.

Task One: Labeling

Tell the group they are ready to start this fun activity and explain the first task. Say to the first person in each row that they have to run to [a specific location very nearby, like a particular room or tree or the other end of the room if it is big enough] and retrieve the tennis ball that is on the floor there.

At this point, the "Artist" or someone else on the team will point out, probably excitedly or nervously, that person one is not the "runner" and that you have made a mistake!

This is the first moment to stop and have a SHORT conversation about doing things we aren't good at, and labeling ourselves "an artist" or "a singer" or "bad at dancing," etc. Why doesn't person one want to run? What are they afraid of? Discuss how labeling themselves (and their campers) can be inhibiting; there is no reason the first person on the team can't run a few feet to another room and pick up a piece of paper, but because one person has been labeled "runner", suddenly no one else feels qualified to do it, or because someone has been designated "artist", then they must not be good at running. Point out that they've had these labels for sixty whole seconds or whatever and they're already letting themselves be defined by them!

*Be aware of known physical limitations in the room! If someone is on crutches or in a wheelchair, for example, be careful of language saying "everyone can run a few feet!" This will take adapting to the particular community in the room, or perhaps careful arrangement of the order in which the "roles" are lined up, etc.

*This is short debrief number one; **labeling** is one of the main topics to come back to later.*

After the short discussion, resume the activity. Instruct person number two in line that they have to keep track of the time it takes for person one to return with the object, using a stopwatch or a phone. It will be clear then that all the "roles" are off, because person two was not planning to be the "timer." When you say "Go," the second person will press start and the first person will run. As the runners return, the timers will press stop. Instruct them not to do anything else except hold the timing device stopped with the display showing how many seconds it took.

Now turn to the scorecard, ask each timer to read off how many seconds their device shows, and write down that number for the team. Casually explain as you are recording the scores that one second equals one point, and of course the team with the most "points" is in the lead.

At this point the participants will start to realize that the goal is not what they expected (speed turns out not to be the advantage, slowness is! The more seconds, the more points!). Lead a short conversation about the so-called "goals" of life and how unlike a game of basketball or a round of gaga in which the rules and "success" are well defined from the start, in life there are lots of different definitions for success and you never know what about you will turn out to be to your advantage. Don't get too deeply into this yet, explaining there are more tasks in the activity.

*This is short debrief number two; **defining success/advantages** is one of the main topics to come back to later.*

Task Two: Defining Success, Scoring

Invite person number three (originally the "timer," if not modified from above) to step up to their poster or butcher paper, and explain they will have 60 seconds to draw whatever is on the piece of paper they will be given. [Note that participants will already be expecting that the "rules" or the object of the game might not be what they expect; they might ask or start anticipating how it will work. Only give the instructions, not the rules, as before.] Papers will have objects like "rainbow," "bouquet of flowers," "Joseph's coat," "stained glass windows," and other significantly multi-colored things written on them (but do NOT point that out). Bring out a box or boxes of many colored markers – must be lots of colors and lots of extras! Use a timer, say "Go," and then "Stop" after 60 seconds. After the minute, ask team what they think was drawn. After all the teams have said what they think was drawn, announce that it's time to score the drawings: go to the first drawing and say, "This team used two colors in their drawing so they get two points" and add two to their score, "this team used one color so they get one point" and add two, etc, as appropriate. Again, there will be recognition that the participants did not know what would "count" ahead of time, and you may take a few more minutes to discuss the topic above of how in the world, the rules aren't always so clear, "success" can be defined in many ways, and you don't always know what will prove to be to your advantage. This time, move this explicitly into the camp setting, inviting participants to apply this to a bunk dynamic. Share stories of a time at camp when something that seemed like a disadvantage turned out to be an advantage, etc.

Tell the participants there is more to the activity. By then it will be clear that regardless of the instructions, the object of the game will not be obvious, so the participants will probably be guessing about the "secret" rules for scoring this round, and perhaps feeling very uneasy about being judged by some metric they don't know in advance. Allow these feelings to surface; perhaps tell participants to take note of how they are feeling as they get the last set of instructions.

OPTIONAL TASK THREE:

Invite person number four (originally the "runner", if not modified from above) to step up to the front and put out some piles of paper of lots of different sizes (all roughly rectangular or square) and tell them they have 60 seconds to make the best paper airplane they can make. After the 60 seconds of making, have them line up along a line and on "Go," launch their planes in the same direction. The traditional "metric" here would be to see which airplane goes the farthest but instead, give the most points to whichever team "used up the smallest amount of resources" (the least amount of paper) and say that this activity was submitted by the "conservation" or "recycling" department.

THIS TASK CAN BE SKIPPED FOR PURPOSES OF TIME, OR IF YOU FEEL IT IS NOT NECESSARY TO DO AN ADDITIONAL TASK, OR IF THE GROUPS ARE SMALL, ETC.

NON-OPTIONAL Last Task:

Give each group a box of straws and a roll of tape and ask them to build a bridge. (Consider having a set-up at the front of the room that appears to indicate the eventual goal of the bridge, like two chairs facing one another a foot or so apart, with a toy truck sitting on one of them, or an apple, or a few of the tennis balls from before. Do not refer to this, however.) Do not answer questions about the criteria for the bridge. Allow the groups a few minutes to build. Now, go to the scoreboard, and ask each team in turn what the criteria were and what score they got based on that; record each on the scoreboard. Note: the first group will probably say something numerical and materials-based, like “we got 100 points because we used 100 straws”. Each group after may get more creative: “we got infinity points because our bridge is the most beautiful,” for example. Allow each of these creative answers and find a way to record them on the board (for example, write the infinity sign and tally up the score to be “infinity plus five” if they already had five points).

Have a short conversation about personal comfort levels with unclear expectations: ask people to raise their hands if they were *more* into the activity because they didn’t know how it would be judged and compare with how many people raise their hands to say they were *less* enthusiastic because of that. Make the connection to camp and how every individual camper may respond to the same situation differently. For example, if you woke up a bunk of kids in the middle of the night and tell them to get dressed for a mystery adventure, some of them would feel really excited by the idea of the surprising and unknown and others would feel extremely uncomfortable not knowing what’s coming. It is important for a counselor to recognize these individual characteristics, and to see that they exist in the room right now, possibly within their own team.

CLOSING: Be Afraid and Do It Anyway

Invite everyone to sit down in one big circle and pass out copies of the lyrics to the song “Kol Haolam Kulo.” If they need to sing it to get it out of their systems, lead the song one time through. Otherwise, invite someone to read the words of the song in Hebrew and then someone to read the English translation, as written on the right side of the paper. Invite someone to explain what they think the message of the song is, then ask someone to read the translation on the bottom, the version that includes “not to be overwhelmed by fear” and ask the group what they think the difference is between the translations. Lead a conversation about what it means to be afraid, what is good or bad about being afraid, when are moments that campers or counselors may be afraid at camp, etc. Here are the important ideas to incorporate:

1. The translation at the bottom is often cited as what Rev Nachman really said, and that his idea was actually that *all of life is a very narrow bridge, everything can be scary, of course you will be afraid, but the essential thing is to not let that stop you (overwhelm you)*. The message is: Be afraid and do it anyway!
2. Participants should discuss how helpful it is or isn’t to be told: “Don’t be afraid.” It’s actually not usually that helpful; if someone could just turn off their fear like a switch, they would, but they can’t. Instead, a more helpful message from a counselor can be: it’s ok to be afraid! Go ahead and be afraid, but do not let that stop you.
3. Participants should recall the “fear” that came up during this activity. How did the “artist” feel when they were told they had to run? How did the “timer” feel about drawing? Was it scary to do something outside of their assigned roles or comfort zones? It happens all the time at camp that a staff member has to do something outside the strict bounds of their particular job, but a good staff member is ready to do that, even if it is scary. Discuss how labeling or assigning roles can be confining, and how counselors might encourage their campers to break out of their typical roles in the bunk dynamic, and how they might redefine “success” for some typical activities so that campers can see new aspects of themselves as strengths... and how they

can do this as well. Invite fellows to share their feelings about being Cornerstone fellows and if there is any fear associated with that.

Revisit the sub-themes:

- 1. Labeling:** remind participants how easy it was to fall into the trap of “I can’t run over there, I’m not the ‘runner’” that happened at the beginning of the activity. Talk about how this may play out with campers – if one kid gets designated “the sports guy” at the beginning of the summer, does he get the chance to be in the musical if that is what he wants? What are the way counselors can encourage kids to break out of their usual roles, and to recognize that they can be more than just one kind of person or interested in more than one kind of thing? Talk about how we are often afraid to do things that are outside our designated roles, but if a person feels comfortable in many roles, perhaps they feel less fear facing new tasks. Discuss their feelings about having the “Cornerstone fellow” label and what they anticipate that might mean for their relationships with their peers. How can labels be used to fortify, to build confidence, and to allow someone to grow beyond their previous boundaries?
- 2. Defining Success:** remind participants how the scoring mechanisms were unexpected in the first tasks and how it is not always clear in life how “success” will be measured. Brainstorm for camp by allowing participants to come up with typical activities with atypical means of scoring and play out how they might be implemented; you could even try out some of these, only revealing the scoring metrics after the activity is done. Try to think of times in life when you have to do something without knowing exactly how you’ll be “scored” on it (in fact, try to think of one time in real life when all the rules ARE clear ahead of time!). Discuss what they think “succeeding” at being a Fellow means, and how they can play with whatever metrics they think they will be measured by.
- 3. Defining Advantages:** Again, remember how “slowest” was the advantage in task one. Challenge participants to think of ways to turn supposed disadvantages into advantages (and how to therefore make a more inclusive bunk, celebrating everyone’s differences). For example: if bunk cleanup happens every day, maybe one day the “success” metric is how fast they can clean; another it’s how tidy the bunk can be (everything in its place); another day how clean it is (maybe items are out of place, but there’s no dirt), another day how silly or loud the cleaning process can be, another day how quiet. Find a sport in which you can turn the rules around to make the kids who are seen as unathletic come out the winners, or a song for so-called “bad singers”, etc.
- 4. Be Afraid and Do It Anyway:** end the activity with this phrase, and encourage participants to affirm campers’ fear, but not let it stop them. Discuss the idea that much of the reason for fear is having to step outside of one’s role, but if one can resist the urge to succumb to labels and roles, those limitations may vanish. Revisit the idea that some people were MORE comfortable not knowing the rules and some were LESS comfortable; a good counselor will recognize that one person may be afraid in a situation that is perfectly comfortable for another, so being affirming and comforting regardless of the situation is the key.

ADDITIONAL NOTES FOR BRINGING IT BACK TO CAMP:

Lots of notes for adaptations are included in the text above. Small portions of this activity can be used in isolation as well, including the ice breaker prompt.