



The Band Instructions



The Band feels like one big group trust fall. Deep down we know we rely on each other, but in practice, it isn't so easy to let go. Use this tool to explore concepts such as interdependency, trust, change and reciprocity. This is also excellent for re-energizing groups after a morning workshop or lunch.

How does it work?

Participants start out standing in a small circle with the large, flat ring of elastic running around the outside, loose at their backs. As they step back, the circle expands, and the fabric stretches until it becomes taught. This allows people to lean back with their entire weight supported.

Trust grows naturally as the group quickly recognizes the interdependency between the parts; if enough people are not moving backward in sync, the band will lose its tension and someone's weight will no longer be supported causing him/her to fall. The experience can become dynamic as participants are sent (by instruction or on their own initiative) from one side to the other, requiring everyone else to adapt to the changing structure of the band.

What do you need?

People: Standard (4-16), Large (4-24)

Time for Activity: 10-45 minutes

Materials: Standard (1 blue band and 1 set of instructions), Large (1 red band and 1 set of instructions)

Workspace: Standard (20 x 20 ft), Large (at least 30 x 30 ft)

Instructions

1. Prepare for the activity by finding a large open space with no obstacles. Outdoor sites can be grass (best) or pavement. Set The Band down.
2. Explain the goal of the activity. You can say something like, *“Learning to rely on each other is an important characteristic of highly effective teams. The goal of this activity is for you to experience mutual trust by both supporting each other, and by experiencing the support that others provide for you.”*
3. Invite everyone to step inside The Band. Ask them to pull The Band up around their lower shoulders and take a few steps backward in order to pull The Band taut. It must be stretched enough so everyone can lean back comfortably.
4. Once you have established a feeling of stability and control among the participants, ask someone to run to a free space on The Band, then have others follow, one at a time. As soon as everyone realizes they can mutually stabilize themselves, have them run faster, and observe the dynamic team coordination that rapidly occurs.
5. Another option is to use The Band as a safe space or feedback forum. Invite people to sit or stand inside The Band, lean back to feel the group’s mutual support, then begin a discussion. The sheltered feeling of the space often affects the quality of a conversation, and can lead to encounters with emotional authenticity.
6. Lead the debrief, noting the group’s responses on a flip chart. Here are some sample questions to ask:
 - What was the key to this exercise?
 - How did you experience trust?
 - What did each individual contribute?
 - How did you manage to have fun AND assume responsibility?
 - Where are there parallels between this activity and your real life?
 - What are some team settings where you provide support for your colleagues?
 - What are some team settings where you receive support from your colleagues?

Common Sense Caution

This activity requires participants to move up and down, kneel, squat, move around on their feet, and at times, lean against The Band. Participants may experience dizziness, nausea, vertigo or headaches, and may fall or stumble as a result. If a participant suffers from balance problems, vertigo, dizziness, lightheadedness or orthopedic problems, he or she should refrain from participating in this activity. Participants who are pregnant or suffer from back pain or other orthopedic injuries should consider refraining from participating in this activity.

The Band is intended for use in areas with soft flat surfaces such as carpeted rooms or grass that are also dry, level and stable. Make sure the area is free of steps, posts, furniture, debris or other potential trip hazards. Prior to each use, inspect The Band for any rips, tears or loose seams, and do not use it if you find any.

Participants should not wear high heels or unstable shoes, or clothing with sharp metal parts such as rivets or belt buckles. All keys and smart phones should be removed from participants' pockets.

The Band is an exercise for adults only, and if used improperly, could cause strangulation.