

Teacher Resource

Diminishing Resources Game

Goal: To keep all players in the game

- Facilitator(s) distributes chairs (or paper, tiles, rug squares, etc.) for each participant to occupy.
- As in musical chairs, the music plays, and the facilitator directs participants to move about the room, until the music stops. (Meanwhile the facilitator begins taking chairs away slowly.) When the music stops, everyone must take a seat.
- Unlike musical chairs, the object of this game is for all participants to have a seat when the music stops. No one should be left out.
- In the debriefing discussion to follow, make sure to ask the following questions and lead the following discussions:
 - What happened?
 - What were the different creative strategies people used to stay in the game?
 - What challenges did you face in playing the game?
 - What was the problem you were trying to solve? Were these effective ways to deal with the problem?
 - Did anyone think to stop us from taking the chairs away as a strategy for playing this game? Why/Why not? Who had the authority to remove the chairs? Did anyone question the authority?
 - If you identified the problem as “I need a place to sit” than it is probably true that any number of the strategies employed did address the problem. If, however, you identify that the problem is “the resources are diminishing”, then your solutions did not address the problem.

Note: This is a good place to introduce the concept of “upstream” thinking. Explain that instead of forming a “downstream” solution (i.e., combining four or five people to a chair) and not addressing a root cause of the challenge (i.e. that the chairs, or resources, were being taken away), one could instead apply “upstream” problem-identification to the challenge.
 - What would’ve been an ‘upstream’ solution (i.e. one that would prevent the resources from diminishing in the first place)?

Note: Examples could include telling the facilitator to stop and unplugging the radio.
 - Here are some additional examples of ‘downstream’ solutions:
 - Problem: You get sick a lot because you don’t eat healthfully
 - “Downstream” Solution: Take medicine for each illness

- Result: Each individual illness eventually gets better, but then you get another illness because you still aren't taking care of yourself in the first place
- "Upstream" Solution: Eat healthfully and use preventative healthcare
- Problem: Congested highway
 - "Downstream" Solution: Add more lanes for traffic
 - Result: Even more traffic congests roads because the highway accommodates more cars, and more cars decide to use the highway
 - "Upstream" Solution: Improve public transportation, so that fewer people need to drive in order to get to their destinations
- Problem: Polluted river
 - "Downstream" Solution: River clean-up project
 - Result: River will get somewhat cleaner for a while
 - "Upstream" Solution: Prevent river from becoming polluted in the first place.