

# Community Building Challenge Course

## Overview:

Challenge courses can be used as team and community building activities because they help to define a program's identity and to create teamwork and unity between students.

These challenge course activities are designed to help students learn to work with one another, beginning relationships necessary for the growth of your Bonner Program. A continued exploration of community building can be achieved through weekly gatherings to discuss and reflect on Bonners' experiences.

## Category:

Community building, interpersonal development, relationship building, communication, teamwork, problem solving, reflection

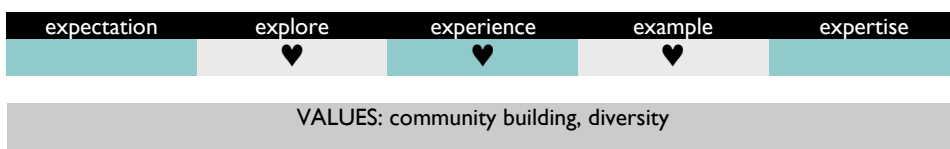
## Level:

Beginner to Intermediate

## Recommended

### Bonner Sequence:

This training is recommended for Bonner students during the first or second year. These activities are also suitable for a retreat.



## Type:

Structured series of flexible activities suitable for small to large groups. Activities may be omitted so the training fits within your time limit and space constraints.

## Goals of this Guide:

- To engage participants in meaningful activities that will help them learn more about each other, communication and teamwork.
- To help establish an identity for a Bonner class or program

## How to Prepare:

As the facilitator, it will be your job to ensure the safety of all participants. If possible, go through the workshop prior to facilitating it to determine if you have the necessary space

available for a safe, effective challenge course. Also, prepare all materials and have them ready for easy distribution during the activities.

### **Brief Outline:**

The following are sample activities for a challenge course. Review the complete guide and select which activities you want to include. You may choose to do activities as time and/or space allows. After each activity, you should pose the suggested reflection questions or create your own based on the group's decisions and interactions during the activity. Try to include variety in the types of activities and types of reflection and discussion.

This workshop has the following parts:

- |  |                           |
|--|---------------------------|
| 1. The Guidelines                        | suggested time 5 minutes  |
| 2. Introduction and Icebreaker           | suggested time 15 minutes |
| Category A (choose <b>one</b> activity): |                           |
| 3. Amoeba Race                           | suggested time 15 minutes |
| 4. Human Knot                            | suggested time 15 minutes |
| Category B (choose <b>one</b> activity)  |                           |
| 5. Hoop Circle                           | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 6. All Aboard                            | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 7. Up Chuck                              | suggested time 20 minutes |
| Category C (choose <b>one</b> activity)  |                           |
| 8. Trust Lean                            | suggested time 15 minutes |
| 9. Ha Ha                                 | suggested time 15 minutes |
| 10. Limited Senses                       | suggested time 15 minutes |
| Category D (choose <b>one</b> activity)  |                           |
| 11. Bull Ring                            | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 12. Traffic Jam                          | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 13. Great Egg Drop                       | suggested time 20 minutes |
| 14. Closing                              | suggested time 20 minutes |

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## **1. The Guidelines**

Suggested time: 5 minutes

Begin the workshop by introducing yourself, role, and hopes for the challenge course. Set a tone for the day's activities to ensure that safety is always the highest priority.

## **2. Introduction and Icebreaker**

Suggested time: 10 minutes

If not all of the group members know each other, you may want to do a brief introduction so everyone can learn each other's names.

*A sample introduction is the Name and Adjective icebreaker:*

Everyone sits in a circle. Each person introduces him/herself one after another, saying his/her name and then one adjective that describes him/herself. The second person repeats the first

person's name and the adjective and adds his/her own. The third person repeats the previous two, adding his/her own. And so on. The last person has the hardest job because he/she must remember all of the names and adjectives.

### 3. Amoeba Race

Suggested time: 15 minutes

**Purpose:** This game serves as a brief icebreaker and encourages large group cooperation.

**Materials:** None

**Attributes:** An Amoeba Race can be done with any size group as space allows. This activity usually works best outdoors in an open field.

**Directions:** Have everyone form a circle facing outward and then instruct them to link elbows to form an amoeba. Once your amoeba is formed, have everyone walk across the field to coordinate movements. Eventually have your amoeba "divide" and split into two or three groups and have an Amoeba Race. To do so, start each team at one end of the field and have them run to the other end of the field and back.

**Reflection:** Ask the teams what they did well and what they would have changed. You may also ask them how cooperation, communication, active listening and teamwork influenced the result of the activity.

### 4. Human Knot

Suggested time: 20 minutes

**Purpose:** This is a physical challenge game that is effective in helping a team become more aware of its own individual member and group dynamics in problem solving.

**Materials:** None, but space must be sufficient to accommodate a large group circle.

**Attributes:** Works well with groups of 7-15 people. Larger groups can be subdivided into small groups.

**Directions:** Ask the group of people to form a tight circle. Have each person extend both hands into the center, and grasp the hands of two different people. When this is completed, the group must untangle the knot they have created without breaking physical hand-to-hand contact. Grips may change and palms may pivot on one another, but contact must be maintained.

**Reflection:** Ask how the team how it felt to accomplish the task. If they did not complete them, ask the team how it felt to not complete the task. You may also want to have them reflect on the types and styles of leadership and followership demonstrated by the group's members.

## 5. Hoop Circle

Suggested time: 15 minutes

**Purpose:** This is a game that demonstrates the importance of the individual in a group while promoting teamwork.

**Materials:** Hula Hoop

**Attributes:** Only one to two people will be touching the hula hoop at any given time; this allows each person to take an active roll in the activity.

**Directions:** Have players form a circle and join hands. The leader has a hula hoop resting on his arm (and is holding hands with those beside him/her). Without breaking hands, the leader must pass the hoop to the next person. The hula hoop continues around the circle with each player stepping into the hoop and then over his/her head and on to the next person.

**Variation:** Have the group set a time limit for completing the activity and have participants determine the best way to meet this goal (this may include rearranging the circle)

**Reflection:** Did you feel supported by the group? What does this activity make you think about the role of an individual within a team? What can team members do to support an individual's success?

## 6. All Aboard

Suggested time: 15 minutes

**Purpose:** This activity encourages teamwork and group interaction.

**Materials:** Platform, hula hoop or large piece of paper (2 feet by 2 feet) to simulate a platform

**Attributes:** The game can be done in smaller spaces, making it an effective indoor or outdoor activity.

**Directions:** The goal is to get a group of twelve to fifteen people on a two-foot square platform, without anyone touching the ground. You can also paper taped to the floor or use a hula hoop if a platform is not available. Each person must have both feet off the ground and everyone in the group must remain on the platform for at least 10 seconds. Participants cannot lie on top of each other, forming a dog pile, as a solution to this activity.

**Variation:** As the group completes the task, decrease the size of the platform.

**Reflection:** How did completing the exercise make you feel? What would you have done differently? Was it frustrating to not solve the activity right away? What kinds of creative thinking and problem solving techniques did the group demonstrate? How might these be applicable in other circumstances?

## 7. Up Chuck

Suggested time: 20 minutes

**Purpose:** This activity encourages quick thinking and action.

**Materials:** One ball, or other soft object that can be thrown and caught, per person.

**Attributes:** This game is best done in a place where an out-of-control ball won't hurt someone or damage the room/environment. You may want to do it outside.

**Directions:** The objective is for everyone to throw their ball up in the air and catch a different ball without a single one touching the ground.

Every person in the group has a ball. Standing in a circle or cluster, group members must toss their ball up to a height of at least 10 feet and then attempt to catch a ball that they did not throw. The goal is to have no balls touch the ground. Allow the group to work together to make this work. This will be pretty difficult and the group might need lots of time or multiple sessions to accomplish the goal.

**Variation:** Have the group start with only one ball thrown and caught. Each time they successfully catch a ball, another is added for the next round until finally they drop one and then the whole thing starts over.

**Reflection:** Have the group reflect on how they communicated with each other during this task. Did people signal to others verbally or non-verbally about the process? You might have the group reflect on the importance of communication and teamwork in difficult situations.

## 8. Trust Lean

Suggested time: 10 minutes

**Purpose:** This activity is placed after initial get to know you activities when students have learned more about each other.

**Materials:** None, but the trust lean should be performed on a flat, level surface.

**Attributes:** Strengthens one-on-one relationships and trust between group members.

**Directions:** Ask participants to find a partner of similar height and weight. One person is the faller and the other is the catcher. The faller must stand upright, keep his/her feet together, cross his/her hands across chest, placing them on shoulders and keep the body stiff. The Catcher is "spotting" by keeping one leg in front of the other with arms extended. As the faller falls, the Catcher will give with the weight, taking most of it with the legs. Establish clear communication between the faller and catcher, and announce when ready to fall, ready to catch and falling. Switch Catchers and Fallers.

**Reflection:** What made you feel more trusting (e.g., clear communication, positive encouragement)? What made you feel less trusting (e.g., laughing/joking, lack of communication)? Invite people to contribute to a group discussion about what things their partner did to make them feel more or less trusting.

## 9. Ha Ha

Suggested time: 10 minutes

**Purpose:** To show how the group is part of a chain and connected to each other in a silly, fun way.

**Materials:** None

**Attributes:** Enhances group dynamics

**Directions:** Each person places his head on another person's stomach so that everyone is connected. The first person says "Ha," the second says, "Ha, ha," adding a "ha" for each person. The goal is to get all the way through the group without anyone laughing.

**Reflection:** Was the group able to make it through the task without laughing? Was anyone frustrated that others started laughing and the group had to start over? Even though this activity is silly, are there ways it relates to aspects of the Bonner Program?

## 10. Limited Senses

Suggested time: 10 minutes

**Purpose:** To build group communication by speaking and seeing to force the group to develop other methods of communication.

**Materials:** One blindfold per person

**Attributes:** This activity should be done in an open space so participants are not in danger of running into things; it may be done indoors or outdoors.

**Directions:** Give each participant a number that they are not allowed to share with anyone and then blindfold each participant. Without talking (or seeing), the group must put themselves into numeric order. Participants must learn to use other methods to communicate in order to complete this exercise. To make it more difficult, you may choose to give participants inconsecutive numbers, but at some point you will need to tell the group that there are some missing numbers.

**Reflection:** Was it hard not to talk/see? What other modes or ways of communication did the group members use? What kinds of problem solving was demonstrated by the group?

## 11. Bull Ring

Suggested time: 20 minutes

**Purpose:** Builds group cooperation and teamwork while working on communication skills

**Materials:** Tennis ball, cup with large opening, a bull ring. The Bull Ring can be made from either a 1 1/2 diameter metal ring (available at most hardware stores), a shower curtain holder or a large key ring. To make the ring into a bull ring, cut pieces of string into 10 foot sections and fold the string around the ring and tie it. Place six to ten strings around the ring, giving you 12-20 ends. and several pieces of string or twine.

**Attributes:** Can be done in any space as long as there is a path to walk through. This path can include obstacles (trees, stairs, tables)

**Directions:** Each person grabs a piece of string (if there are fewer participants than pieces of string, have some participants take two strings). A tennis ball will be placed on the metal ring and the object is to get the ball into a cup on the other side of the room, Each string may only have one hand on it and all participants should be touching a piece of string. No one is allowed to touch the ball; the facilitator should be in charge of putting the ball back on the ring should it fall. Start with the bull ring on the ground and have participants determine the best solution to move the tennis ball across the room and into the cup.

**Variation:** To make it more difficult, you can put a chair or other object over the cup. It is also possible to put objects in the pathway and require the ball to be transported around them. Also, if one or two people are dominating the solution, you may make them become mute, lose their sight, et cetera.

**Reflection:** Why was this activity difficult? How effective was your communication? Was there one leader or several leaders? Was anyone excluded? How would you rate your cooperation? How would you rate your teamwork?

## 12. Traffic Jam

Suggested time: 15 minutes

**Purpose:** Develop problem solving skills and group communication

**Materials:** One stepping stone (or piece of paper taped to the floor to simulate a stepping stone) per person, plus an extra one. To make it more difficult, this could also be done standing on benches (make sure they are sturdy enough to support the weight of multiple people) and participants will have to visualize the individual spaces.

**Attributes:** Can be adapted for any size group

**Directions:** There should be one more stepping stone than participants. Have participants line up on the stones so that the empty stone is in the center. Everyone must move to the opposite side from where they started. You may only move in the opposite direction from where you started and each person must be standing on a separate stone after each move. You

may jump across someone if there is an empty stone on the other side, but you may not jump over more than one person. Only one person may move at a time.

To make this more difficult, have students stand on a raised platform or bench and challenge them to complete the activity without falling off the bench.

**Reflection:** Have the group process how they handled the situation? How would you have done this activity differently? How would you do it if you had to do it again?

### **13. Great Egg Drop**

Suggested time: 20 minutes

**Purpose:** Highlights teamwork and leadership, opens lines of communication and explores team dynamics.

**Materials:** At least four straws per group, masking tape, one egg per group, tarp or garbage bag to shield the floor

**Attributes:** Engaging small group activity as part of a large group

**Directions:** Divide the group into smaller groups of four or five people. Each group is given the task of constructing a model to keep an egg from cracking if it falls off a shelf in the supermarket. The protective device will be made out of straws and masking tape.

Give each group at least four straws, a strip of masking tape and an egg (you can vary the amount that groups receive or give everyone the same amount) and have them use their creativity, imagination and innovation to create their product. They must also develop a name for their creation. Give teams about 10 minutes to develop their products. Once complete, test them from different heights (e.g. waist level, as high as your arm reaches and standing on a chair) to see whose product is the most effective. To keep this from getting too messy, tape a garbage bag or tarp to the floor.

**Reflection:** What was the most challenging part of this activity? How did your group work together? Which creation do you think was the most innovative?

### **14. Closing**

Suggested time: 15 minutes

Use this time to debrief and talk about the day's activities. You may want to address the issues and insights that individuals and the group generated through the various challenge activities.

**Reflection:**

How have you grown as a group?

Which activity was most interesting for you individually? How about for our group? Why?

Which activity seemed to present our group with the most challenges?

What kinds of insights have people had about how our group works together?