

TRAINING FOR CHANGE TOOL

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Trapdoors

Goals

- ▶ Give participants a shared experience of unequal conditions that can be used to extrapolate larger lessons about structural inequality and other experiences with oppression;
- ▶ build the container through a shared experiences;
- ▶ provide a group challenge.

What you need

- ▶ Tape or chalk
- ▶ A large floor space
- ▶ Notebook paper for facilitators
- ▶ Small pieces of paper or plastic chips
- ▶ Two facilitators, at least

Overview

In this activity the group will be split into two teams and each team will be assigned a blank grid to navigate. The goal of the activity is to find their way from one end of the grid to the other by guessing the correct or “safe” squares to land on and supporting each other to cross the grid one at a time. One team’s grid is inherently more difficult to navigate.

FINISH		
	14	
13		
12	11	10
		9
	8	
7	5	
6		4
	2	3
1		
START		

FINISH	
11	
	10
9	
8	
7	
6	5
4	
3	
1	2
START	

Set-Up

Trainers will need to use tape or chalk to create two grids, side by side, on the floor. Grid squares should be big enough for one person to stand in. One grid should be larger than the other. *Grid sizes: for 5-8 people use a 2 x 10 grid & 3 x 10 grid, for 8-15 people use a 3 x 10 and 4 x 10 grid, for 15-25 people use a 3 x 10 & 5 x 10 grid, and so on...*

Once the grids are created on the floor, trainers should make a corresponding drawing of each grid in their notebooks and chart the secret path that participants will need to discover by trial and error during the course of the game. Do this by numbering the squares on your paper to represent the order of squares participants will need to step on in order to make their way to the other side (see picture above). The numbered squares represent “safe” squares, the blank squares represent “trapdoors”. Do not share this ordering with participants, their job is to guess as they make their way across the blank grid.

The smaller grid should have an easier path, while the larger grid should have a more complicated path with more squares between the start and finish.

Option: Give the team with the smaller grid an even greater advantage by giving them small pieces of paper, chalk, or plastic chips that they can use to mark each safe square as they discover it.

Running

Split the group into two teams and assign each one a grid. Introduce the goals and rules of the game (you may want to write these up on newsprint):

- GOAL: To find the safe path to the other side and get your whole team across.
- RULES:
 - 1) Teams must stay on their own grid.
 - 2) Only one person from your team allowed on their grid at a time.
 - 3) You can only move one square at a time and can't jump a row (must move to the square immediately to the left, right, diagonal, forward or backward). Once you move to a new square, facilitator will call "SAFE" or "TRAPDOOR".
 - 4) If you land on a safe square you can make another move, if you land on a trapdoor, your turn is over and you must go back and allow another teammate to take a turn.
 - 5) A trapdoor square may become a safe square if stepped on in the correct order.
 - 6) Game is over when everyone is across.
 - 7) You can't use any props or markers besides what you've been given.

You may want to model how participants move on the grid and answer any clarifying questions about the rules. Some groups will complete the task faster than others but you should allow at least 30 minutes to run the activity.

Tell both teams to start. Each team should have one facilitator assigned to them who is responsible for calling out "SAFE" or "TRAPDOOR" as participants make their guesses on the squares. Besides making sure the rules are followed, facilitators should remain neutral.

As the teams are in the activity, facilitators should observe places where people get stuck, express frustration, support each other, change their attitude toward the game, etc. If the team with the advantage finishes first, pay attention to what they do as the other team works to get across. End the game when both teams have gotten all their members across.

Possible de-brief questions:

- ▶ How are you feeling? How did your feelings change during the course of the activity?
- ▶ What choices did you make about how you participated at different stages?
- ▶ What differences did you notice in how each team experienced the game? What were some of the advantages or disadvantages that each team had? What were your reactions to those differences?
- ▶ What parallels can be drawn from your experience of this game and how you have seen or experienced oppression (you can make it specific to a particular form of oppression depending on your goal) outside of this room? What could these trapdoors or safe squares represent if we were using them as a metaphor for how racism, sexism, homophobia, etc. shows up in our society?

Tool developed by Nico Amador, 2012