

ACTIVITY

15
MINUTES

TRUST WALK *

Fathers assume the role of "children," who must negotiate an obstacle course blindfolded, or "parents," who must lead the "children" safely through the course. The activity reminds participants of the feelings of dependence children can have and the responsibilities that this dependence can entail for parents.

MATERIALS

- ✓ Blindfolds for half the group
- ✓ Props for an obstacle course

PLANNING NOTES

1. For this activity, you'll need an open space with an "obstacle course" of chairs and boxes. Be creative, and include obstacles that participants must go around, through, over and under.
2. Write the following on a large sheet of newsprint:

Instructions for "Parents"

- ✧ *Lead the "child" physically, but don't speak*
- ✧ *Lead by speaking, but don't touch*
- ✧ *Shout orders*

PROCEDURE

1. Tell the fathers that you want to do a short warm-up activity designed to remind them what it's like to be a small child. Have the group count off 1, 2, 1, 2. Ask that all 2's par off with a 1, then explain that the 1's will be parents and the 2's will be their children.
2. Blindfold participants who will be "children." Instruct the "parents" that their task is to lead the children safely through the obstacle course, whether by guiding them physically, giving verbal directions or both. When everyone understands, have them get started.

* Adapted from Taking Care. Marc Mercer and Irene Renda, Interstate Consortium on Residential Child Care; New York State Division of Youth, 84 Holland Avenue, Albany NY 12208

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Building Your Child's Self-Esteem
TRUST WALK

3. After all pairs have completed the task, ask the following questions to prompt discussion of the activity:
 - ✧ *How did it feel to be the "child" and have to depend completely on the "parent?"*
 - ✧ *How did it feel to be the "parent" and have responsibility for the "child?"*
 - ✧ *Were any "children" pushed rather than led?*
 - ✧ *Did the "child" trust the "parent"? Why or why not?*
4. After the second experience, discuss how the "children" and "parents" felt about each approach to providing guidance. Now ask each pair to reverse their roles and repeat the activity. This time, ask the "parents" to lead their "children" using just one of the approaches listed on newsprint. Assign each pair an approach to work with. The approaches are:
 - ✧ *Lead the "child" physically, but don't speak.*
 - ✧ *Lead by speaking, but don't touch.*
 - ✧ *Shout orders.*
5. After the second experience, discuss how the "children" and "parents" felt about each approach to providing guidance. Make the point that being in physical contact makes you feel less helpless—children need physical touch from their parents. Being "ordered around" can distract, distress and anger the child.
6. Conclude with the discussion questions.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What did this activity teach you about the needs of small children? (Small children have to be led and watched *carefully or they could hurt themselves.*)
2. How did this activity sensitize you to the feelings that children experience as small people in an adult world? (*Most of us don't remember how it is to be a small child Small children are scared and helpless, and sometimes cling to their parents for help and protection.*)
3. What changes, if any, will you make in the way you lead your small children around?