



It Can be Toxic!

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Identify Problem: Often times in life we come across problems that are too large for us to solve on our own. The help of family and friends becomes necessary. It's not always easy to work as a team or to have others help you accomplish your goal. Sometimes it can be very stressful. However, everyone needs help at some point in their life and it's important to be able to function as a group (family, friends, co-workers) without causing stress or reacting harshly to stressful situations.

Materials: One large bucket
One small bucket
One long rope (radiation zone)
*If outdoors sidewalk chalk can be used
1 bungee cord looped
8 cords/ropes
Toxic waste (water, marbles, whatever)

Setup: Use the rope (or chalk) to create a circle at least 8 ft in diameter on the ground to represent the toxic waste radiation zone. The larger the radiation zone, the more difficult the activity.
Place the small bucket in the center of the radiation zone and fill it with water or marbles to represent the toxic waste.
Place the large neutralization bucket approximately 30 to 50 feet away. The further the distance, the more difficult the activity.

Exercise: The challenge is for the group to work out how to transfer the toxic waste from the small bucket into the large bucket where it will be "neutralized", **using only the equipment provided and within a time frame.** The waste will blow up and destroy the world after 20 minutes if it is not neutralized.
Anyone who steps into the radiation zone will suffer injury and possibly even death, and spillage will create partial death and destruction. Therefore, the group should aim to save the world and do so without injury to any group members.
The rope circle or chalk circle represents the radiation zone emanating from the toxic waste in the bucket. Emphasize that everyone must maintain a distance (circle radius) from the toxic waste wherever it goes, otherwise they will suffer severe injury, such as loss of a limb or even death.

Give the group 5 minutes planning time with no action. Then, start the clock and indicate it is time for action, e.g., 15 or 20 minutes.

The solution involves attaching the cords/ropes to the bungee, then guiding the bungee with the strings to sit around and grab the toxic waste bucket. Then with everyone pulling on their cord and with good coordination and care, the toxic waste bucket can be lifted, moved and tipped into the empty neutralizing bucket. *If there is not enough time for this you can prep the bucket, bungee, and ropes ahead of time and go on from there.

If someone breaches the toxic waste zone, indicated by the circle, enforce an appropriate penalty e.g., loss of limbs (hand behind back) or function (e.g., blindfolds if a head enters the zone) that lasts for the rest of the game. If a whole person enters the zone, they die and must then sit out for the rest of the activity.

If the group struggles to work out what to do, freeze the action and help them discuss.

If the group spills the waste entirely, make a big deal about catastrophic failure (everyone dies), invite them to discuss what went wrong and how they can do better, then refill the container and let them have another go.

Questions & Discussion

- What was the first reaction of the group?
- How well did the group cope with this challenge?
- What did you feel was stressful about the task?
- What did it take to be successful as a group?
- What creative solutions were suggested and how were they received?
- What would an outside observer have seen as the strengths and weaknesses of the group?
- What roles did people play?
- What did each group member learn about him/herself as an individual?

Identify Skills:

Team building
Problem solving
Asking for help
Dealing with a stressful situation as a group

Stick this label on the biohazard bucket.

