

## WHAT ARE YOUR CHICKENS?

*This metaphorical chicken version of Group Juggle in Karl Rohnke's Silver Bullets comes from Dick Hammond.*

**Activity Objective:** The group is challenged to move a number of objects between players without dropping them.

**Facilitated Objectives:** communication, collaboration, active engagement, helping (asking for and accepting), commitment, community, self-talk, confidence, resource management, and task pressure

**Needs & Numbers:** One tossable object is needed for every 2 players. All tossables should look the same. You also need at least 1 rubber chicken. This works well with 8 to 16 players. Multiple groups can play at the same time.

**Time:** 20 to 30 minutes

### Procedure

Ask players to circle up, leaving a little elbowroom. Have them create a person-to-person sequence by tossing one object (not the chicken) throughout the group. Say something like, "Each person in the group will toss the object only once and receive the object only once." You can also tell them, "The first person to toss the object will be the last person to receive it," or let them figure this out on their own if there is time. They cannot toss the object to the person directly to their left or right; this encourages more crisscrossing action with the objects, making the activity more interesting.

Once the person-to-person tossing sequence is established, have players practice a couple more times with the one tossable. Let players know that drops are not consequential, "Simply do your best; if there is a drop, pick up the object and continue tossing." Also, any time a person receives an object, she or he must toss it on to the next person in the sequence "within 3 seconds" (if you want to quantify it).

Here's where the additional objects come into play. After the group begins another tossing sequence, walk around and randomly hand players

### NOTE

Before getting started, be sure to have the rubber chicken(s) nearby hidden from view—you don't want to let the "chicken" out of the bag just yet. I usually have my small props bag with me so I can tuck the chicken(s) in there until needed.



in the group identical tossable objects. Once a new object is incorporated into the process, add another object, and so on—until all the tossables (1 for every 2 players) are handed out or the group seems to have enough to work with. At this level, the idea is for the players to establish a routine of sorts. This means very few, if any, dropped tossables. So, allow some time to work this out. You may want to stop the process and ask how it's going and if there is anything that might increase their comfort with the process.

When working with adult groups, you can add in a little metaphorical consideration. Ask them to think of the tossable objects as information (i.e., e-mails, phone calls, text messages, memos). Stress the importance of each object and, that if the object is dropped, there is a chance the information will not move along accurately. For teacher groups, the tossables can be students moving from subject-to-subject, class-to-class, or year-to-year. If a student is dropped within the system, she or he might fail to graduate. This places an importance on catching the objects, which usually leads to more focus and planning in order to avoid as many drops as possible.

Give players enough time to establish a comfort level with the process. Look for confidence, smooth movements, relaxed communication, and, more often than not, a quiet-like environment. Encourage from the sidelines and cue them to keep the process going until you let them know they can stop (but not before the chicken!).

Don't forget about the chicken! Once the group is "set in their ways," so to speak, stealthily get out the chicken and hand it to one of the participants. At this point, the players may need some reminders: keep the objects moving until you tell them to stop, pick up any drops and move the objects where they need to go. In some cases, the group is able to smoothly integrate the chicken; in other cases, the group breaks down and starts using unproductive (or unsafe!) behaviors. If the process stays productive, let it play out a bit before stopping to review the activity. If the process becomes unproductive, stop and move into reviewing the activity.

### **Safety**

The main safety issue is objects being thrown too fast at other players. This usually happens after the chicken is added and tossables start dropping. After talking about this behavior, it seems that once drops start occurring there is less interest in regaining order than there is in "having a little fun"—throwing objects "at" others instead of "to" others. This kind of behavior can lead to conflict, so it's an experiential moment from which to learn. When this behavior occurs, stop and discuss the concern before continuing.

### **Facilitation**

There may be times, after a review session, when a group wants to reattempt the activity. If time allows, give the group another opportunity. Or, move on to the next activity, remembering to incorporate what was just learned.

### **Observations/Questions**

- What role did each of you take during the activity? How did each role relate to the group as a whole?

- How would you describe the process over time? What was the energy like? What did it sound like? What did it feel like for everyone? Did you feel successful?
- How did the activity change once you considered the metaphorical connection to the objects? What behaviors changed? What changed in your planning?
- Describe your personal experience when the chicken was added to the sequence? What changes did you observe in the group after the chicken joined you? What was the energy like? What did it sound like? What did it feel like? Did you feel successful? Unsuccessful? How did the chicken “influence” your process?
- How did each person react (or relate) to the chicken?
- Metaphorically, what does the chicken represent to you? Was it positive? In what ways? Was it negative? In what ways?
- Let’s look outside this experience. What chickens do you encounter in the “real” world? What are your chickens?
- What are some unproductive chickens in your life? What are some productive chickens in your life? Where in your life (or work) might you need to add some chickens? Take away some chickens? What can be a first step toward chickening or dechickening?

### **Variations**

Add more than one rubber chicken to the mix. Be sure to take out one of the tossables you started with every time you add a chicken. How many “chickens” could a group actually handle together?

You will find a number of tried and true Group Juggle variations in Karl Rohnke’s new book, *FUNN ‘N GAMES* (see Resources).

*Additional Ideas:*