Problem Solving Activities

The Great Egg Drop Activity
Time Required: 1-2 hours

This problem solving activity may be messy, but it is a classic and engages all team members. The activity requires splitting the room into two large groups. They are given the task of building a package that can prevent an egg breaking from an eight foot drop. The leader will provide the groups with a variety of materials and resources to create their package. Each team must also present a 30-second pitch for their package, highlighting why it's unique and how it works. Following the pitches, each group get the chance to test their creation. Aside from teaching team members to work together and communicate, it also brings them together with the common goal of both winning the egg drop and successfully creating an egg package.

Sneak a Peek Activity
Time Required: 20 minutes

This activity teaches team members how to problem solve in a group and communicate effectively. The only required material are children's building blocks. Prior to the activity, the team leader is to build a structure and store it somewhere not visible to the team members. Once this is done, the group should be divided into teams of three or four. Each team should be given enough building material so that they can duplicate the structure you've already created. The instructor should then place their sculpture in an area that is an equal distance from all the groups. One member from each team can come up at the same time to look at the sculpture for ten seconds and try to memorize it before returning to their team. After they return to their teams, they have twenty-five seconds to instruct their teams about how to build an exact replica of the instructor's sculpture. After one minute of trying to recreate the sculpture, another member from each team can come up for a "sneak peek" before returning to their team and trying to recreate the sculpture. The game should be continued in this pattern until one of the team's successfully duplicates the original sculpture.

Lost at Sea Activity
Time Required: 40 minutes

This activity allows team members to build their problem-solving skills, analyse information and negotiate and cooperate with one another. It also encourages them to listen and to think about the way they make decisions. Participants must pretend that they've been shipwrecked and are stranded in a life boat. To be successful in this activity, ALL members must agree which items are most important for their survival. Each team has a box of matches, and a number of items that they've salvaged from a sinking ship. The items to be ranked are: a mosquito net, a can of petrol, a water container, a shaving mirror, a sextant, emergency rations, a sea chart, a floating seat or cushion, a rope, some chocolate bars, a waterproof sheet, a fishing rod, shark repellent, a bottle of rum, and a VHF radio. Each team member is given a "lost at sea" ranking chart. Here they list their own individual rankings of the items, the group ranking, and the actual ranking of the US Coast Guard. For the ranking sheet, and full instructions of the activity, click here.