

# Initiatives

Initiatives are problematic tasks given to the group with no solution or direction provided by the leader (Hammersley, 1992). Initiative activities offer a number of precisely and uniquely defined problems. Each of these activities is designed so that a group must make use of a cooperative attitude and some physical effort to achieve a solution satisfactory to all. Some problems are more cognitive than physical and vice-versa (Rohnke, 1989). This approach to learning can be useful in developing each adolescent's understanding of decision-making processes, leadership roles, and the physical and mental strengths of each member within a group (Rohnke, 1989). Undertaking these problems within groups, according to Rohnke (1989), allow adolescents to take advantage of their own competencies and the combined strengths of other group members. This type of group process helps to break down the stereotypes that exist so neatly in the microcosm of adolescents. Developing an attitude of "common good" can provide adolescents with a safe and successful learning environment.

## Presenting Group Initiative Problems (Brief – Lead - Debrief)

1. Choose a problem suited to the age and physical ability of the group.
2. Find a safe and convenient place to set up the task. The environment can be key.
3. Make sure all the rules and guidelines are clear before attempting the task.
4. Present the task (**Brief**), and then step back and allow the group to work through the problem. Interaction among group members is the important "process" here. Guide (**Lead**) the group only when they need some guidance.
5. Present the initiative as an elaborate and funny "made up" situation. It makes for more fun and enthusiasm.
6. Administer the rules as they were set. In other words, don't make rules for the problem if you don't plan to enforce them.
7. Competition can be used if: a) it is against oneself, b) against the clock, or c) against some arbitrary group (not present).
8. Groups of 10-12 are a nice size.
9. Upon completion of the problem (or agreement to stop), the details should be discussed by all involved. As the teacher (leader), you were obliged during the problem solving process to be silent. Now you must facilitate (**Debrief**) the discussion to allow maximum learning to take place. Your goal should be for individuals to gain some insight into the value of the group process.

## Sources for Initiatives

- Rohnke, K. (1984). Silver Bullets. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing.
- Rohnke, K. (1989). Cowstails & Cobras II. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing.
- Rohnke, K. & Butler, S. (1995). Quicksilver. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt Publishing.