

The Staff Team Chain Activity

This activity is best-facilitated when you have 20-30 minutes available. I would suggest including this activity in your monthly staff site meeting when there is time to discuss and debrief. Also, this activity is best completed after 1-2 months into program so staff can properly self-assess themselves on an individual level and team level based on feedback they have already received during weekly check-ins.

Materials Needed:

Construction Paper Strips, 2 colors (2 inches by 8 inches)

Markers/Colored Pencils/Crayons/Pencils (your choice)

Stapler or Scotch Tape

- ➔ Provide each staff member with six strips of construction paper, 3 of one color and 3 of another.
- ➔ Instruct them to write 3 STRENGTHS on some, and 3 STRUGGLES on the others.
 - Tell them to only write items they feel comfortable sharing out loud with the group.
 - Tell them they need to choose professional strengths, but that they could be personal if they are applicable to their work in the program.
- ➔ In a Round-Robin fashion, allow each staff member to share their strengths (where they feel they excel) out loud with the team.
 - Other staff can comment and offer insight.
 - Allow for discussion that includes validating each other and sharing examples that other staff have witnessed to support the strengths shared.
 - This area may include suggestions for further improvement or the next-level to attain in this strength area.

Example: Staff Member says they feel very confident in Relationship Building with the kids.

You can say: I agree that you are really good with Relationship Building. I saw you the other day asking a child about their vacation and when you found out they went to Disney, you called over another child who also went to Disney and said, "I think you both were at Disney at the same time." And then you initiated the conversation. When you walked away they kept talking to each other about their vacation. I have never seen those kids talk to each other before then. It was awesome. Maybe you can work with another staff member to come up with more intentional activities that center around this strength.

- ➔ In a Round-Robin fashion, allow each staff member to share their struggles (where they think they are weak) out loud with the team.
- Other staff can comment and offer insight.
- Allow for discussion that includes validating each other and sharing examples that other staff have witnessed to support the struggles shared.
- This area may also include some degree of invalidating them if they are being hypercritical of themselves.

Example: Staff Member says they don't feel confident talking to parents. They never know what to say. They feel awkward. They say this makes it difficult when they HAVE to talk to parents about their child in the program.

You can say: You are always kind and polite to parents as they come in. When I see you opening the door for them, you smile and you are warm and welcoming. I do see that is where the interaction ends. Start simple with, "How was your day?"...and then just listen. They will probably ask you how yours was in return. This could be a great segue into talking about the program and their child within it.

- ➔ Using the stapler or tape, connect the STRUGGLE strips to create a paper chain.
- ➔ Ask the staff how they feel about the chain created with the STRUGGLES. Include the idea that "A Chain is Only as Strong as its Weakest Link." Discuss.
- ➔ Using the stapler or tape, start to add STRENGTH strips over the struggle strips and connecting them into the paper chain. The idea is to create a chain that is reinforced, struggles made stronger, by the support of another staff member's strengths.
- ➔ Ask the staff how they feel about the chain now, relating back to the idea that "A Chain is Only as Strong as its Weakest Link." Discuss.
- ➔ Have the team each hold a link of the paper chain. Tell them, "This is our Team. There is no "I" in team. We are here to support and strengthen one another; never to feel uncomfortable or weak because someone will always be there to help.
- ➔ When the *The Staff Team Chain Activity* is completed, hang the paper chain in your staff area with a poster of this quote from Federico Chini, "People are like *chains*, the closer they are, the stronger they become." or "A Chain is Only as Strong as Its Weakest Link."

The Staff Team Paper Chain should be displayed in your program space as a daily reminder to your staff that they are a strong supported team, tethered by their skills, expertise, and willingness to connect with the rest of the team members.