Motivation Formula

1. Learning Activity: Swinging Candy

Spatial Requirements: Classroom with moderate space required
Activity Type: Movement/group
Grades: 3-12
Group size: 2 or more
Time: 30-40 minutes

Introduction: Desire, time, and effort are the keys to achieving goals and getting satisfying results out of life. In this activity, students will use this formula to build a swing suspended from a doorway. They will work as a team and be able to enjoy the rewards of their efforts. This activity also ties in to “Desire, Time, and Effort.”

Materials (per team of 5):
- 50 pennies per swing
- 1 paper cup
- 4 licorice sticks
- 4 small paper clips
- 1 piece of paper (8 ½ x 11)
- 4 rubber bands
- 12 toothpicks
- 15 large marshmallows

Group Materials:
- 1 measuring tape or yardstick (to be used for measuring only)
- 1 roll of tape to adhere the swing to the doorway (not to build the swing)

Activity:
The object of this game is to build the longest structure that will support the most pennies while suspended in a doorway. To set up, place all the materials into bags for each team. Let the teams know the bags are not to be used as a resource for building their structure.

After distributing the bags, explain to the teams that the cup will be attached to the bottom of the swing to hold the pennies. At least one of everything must be used, and the swing must be completed within the time limit. All items must be accounted for before scoring begins. Any missing item disqualifies the team (and yes, a marshmallow in your stomach counts as missing).

Once the swings are completed, tape them to the door jam with 15 pennies in the cup. They must make one full swing (1 yard, in an arc, from the starting point) and stay intact. If this is successful, the team wins 30 points. When the swing comes to rest, don’t allow the students to alter or repair it.

The longest swing receives points in multiples of five as measured from the top of the cup. This means the shortest swing would receive five points, the next longest would receive ten, etc. For each penny added in a two-second interval, the team receives two points. Once the swing breaks, the team tallies its points. The team with the most points at the end of the activity is the winner.

Processing the Experience:
- What worked for you in this activity? What didn’t work?
- What made the winning swing successful?
• What were some of your feelings during this activity? What frustrated you? What motivated you?
• When you are in a stressful situation, do you fall apart or “hang in there?” Why?
• If each penny represents a stressor or challenge in your life. What do you do when you reach your breaking point?
• What motivates you to keep going?
• How do you get out of the flood zone when your stressors build up?
• What support systems do you use?
• What kind of self-talk do you use?
• How does passion or purpose help you?
Motivation Formula

2. Learning Activity: Smartest Student in Class

Spatial requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required
Activity type: Object lesson
Grades: K-12
Group size: 2 or more
Time: 5 minutes

Introduction: This ice-breaking activity demonstrates that confidence and positive self-talk can bring about satisfying results.

Materials: (The printed materials below can be found at www.whytry.org/activities.)
- 1 piece of letter-size cardstock paper with a big question mark (?)
- 1 piece of letter-size cardstock paper with a big “NO”
- 3 sheets of paper with a picture of a pig on each sheet
- 1 sheet protector

Activity:
To set up the activity, put the two pieces of cardstock paper inside the sheet protector, so that the question mark is visible on one side and the word “NO” is visible on the other. In between these two sheets, place the three pig pictures.

Ask, by raise of hands, “Who is the smartest person in the group?” Invite your volunteer to come forward. Holding the sheet protector close to your body, show the question mark side to the group. Ask the volunteer, “Do you know the word on the other side of this sheet?” When the volunteer responds, “No,” turn the sheet over to reveal “NO.” Say, “You are the smartest kid in class!”

Then put your hand inside the sheet protector out of view of the volunteer and ask, “Think of a number between one and five.” When they give their answer, pull out your fingers to match their answer. Say, “You really are the smartest!”

Now comes the final test. Ask the volunteer to think of an animal. Regardless of the response, pull out one of the pigs and show it to the group. Repeat the question two more times until all the pig cards are shown. Usually the volunteer will catch on and guess “Pig.”

Processing the Experience:
- How did you feel when I asked, “Who is the smartest kid in the class?” If I asked again, would you volunteer? Why or why not?
- What positive self-talk did our volunteer use?
- Why is positive self-talk important?
- How can we use positive self-talk to respond to our challenges? Is it easy or hard to be positive in the face of challenges?
- What are some challenges we do not have control over? How can we respond?
- What are some challenges we can control? How can we respond to these?
Motivation Formula

3. Learning Activity: Balloon Pop

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required
Activity Type: Object lesson
Grades: K-12
Group size: 1 or more
Time: 15-20 minutes

Introduction: When we channel anger and challenges into positive motivation, we will find opportunity, freedom, and self-respect. Our energy will be focused, and healing will take place. This activity illustrates the contrast between being in “The Flood Zone” and finding ways to channel anger in a positive direction.

Materials:
• 2 large balloons
• 1 pin or needle

Activity Part 1:
Blow up a large balloon part way. Tell the group that the balloon represents challenges that we have. These challenges may make us mad, upset, angry, or frustrated. Ask the group to name things that make them angry, upset, mad, or frustrated. Have someone write them on the board. Each time something is listed on the board, blow the balloon up a little bigger. You, as the facilitator, are in control of how many items are listed on the board and how big the balloon gets. Blow the balloon up until it explodes. Use the pin to pop the balloon if you cannot blow it up big enough. Hide the pin in your hand and try to make it look like all of the “challenges” made the balloon pop.

Processing the Experience:
• Why did the balloon pop?
• In our own lives, what makes us “pop” or lose control? Why?
• What happens to opportunities, freedom, and self-respect when we lose control and wind up in “The Flood Zone?”
• Which of the items listed on the board make you mad? Why or why not?
• Why do some people react to the items on the board in a negative way, and others do in a positive way?
• Is it OK to be angry? Why or why not?
• When is anger not OK?

Activity Part 2:
Blow up a large balloon but do not let it pop. Ask the group to tell you things that can help channel the anger (energy) from the items listed into positive motivation. As the group shares positive ways to deal with the anger, let a little air out each time an item is shared. Have a group member write each idea on the board. When the group runs out of ideas, let the balloon go.

Processing the Experience:
• What happens when we channel our anger in positive ways?
• How do you get motivated to channel anger in a positive way?
• Why do we need to channel our anger?
• How would your life be different if your anger was controlled?
• What kind of opportunities will you have if your challenges are channeled in a positive direction?
Motivation Formula
4. Learning Activity: Human Tangle

Spatial Requirements: Classroom with moderate space required
Activity Type: Movement/group
Grades: 2-12
Group size: 10 or more
Time: 15-20 minutes

Introduction: This activity will enable students to get untangled (out of the flood zone) using positive self-talk, character and heart, passion/purpose, and support systems as motivation to accomplish the task.

Materials:
• None

Activity:
Have everyone hold their right hand out in front of them, then stand in a circle facing the center. The group members then walk forward, forming a tight circle with their right hands still facing forward. Ask one person in the group to grab the right hand of another person across from them with their left hand.

Continue clockwise, with the next person doing the same until everyone is holding hands. Make sure that no one is holding both hands of the same person.

Once everyone is connected, ask the group to untangle themselves without letting go of each other’s hands. Give them a few minutes to plan, then let them begin. As they get untangled, they should end up standing in a circle. Make sure they know that while they can loosen their grip and rotate their hands to stay comfortable, they are not to let go of each other’s hands.

Note: Before they untangle, determine if they are connected in one big circle or several small ones by asking one person to lift the hand of another person, who lifts the hand of the next person, and so forth, until it goes through the entire group and comes back to the person that started the process. If you have several circles, reconnect the hands until you have one large circle.

Variation: For a bigger group or to make this activity less physical, have each person hold onto a string or rope. Have participants grab each other’s ropes rather than each other’s hands.

Processing the Experience:
• What was the biggest challenge of this activity?
• Did anything frustrate you in this activity?
• What motivated you to get untangled?
• Why didn’t you give up?
• How did you solve the problem?
• What resources did you use?
• What might the tangle represent in a person’s life?
• What might getting untangled represent?
Motivation Formula
5. Learning Activity: Fire in the Hole

Spatial Requirements: Classroom with moderate space required
Activity Type: Movement/group
Grades: K-12
Group size: 4 or more
Time: 5-10 minutes

Introduction: When faced with challenges in life, we can utilize support systems, character-heart, positive self-talk, and other resources to get us through. This simple challenge will help students recognize the importance of tapping into these tools when confronted with problems.

Materials:
• 1 large balloon per two people

Activity:
Divide the group into two even-numbered teams. (If you have odd numbers, someone may need to go twice.) Blow up all of the balloons. Have the players stand back to back with a teammate and link both arms. Place a balloon between the backs of each partnership. Start the game by saying, “Fire in the Hole!” Participants must then pop their balloon by squeezing it between their backs. The first team to have all of its team members pop their balloons is the winner.

Processing the Experience:
• What was challenging about this activity?
• What motivated you to pop all of the balloons?
• Why didn’t you give up or quit?
• In what ways can the balloon be like challenges in life?
• Did you have to use positive self-talk when you got to the balloon-popping part? Why or why not?
• Did character and heart play a part in the process? How?
• How important was it to work together to pop the balloon?
• Why are support systems important in life?
Motivation Formula

Spatial Requirements: Gym/outdoor space required
Activity Type: Movement/group
Grades: 3-12
Group Size: 8-10
Time: 15-20 minutes

Introduction: In large-scale disasters and everyday life problems, it is important for individuals to look beyond themselves. They must tap into their character of heart and utilize positive energy to think of solutions that will benefit the group or community. In this activity, students will learn the importance of doing just that, even when difficult and stressful situations arise.

Materials:
- 1 slip of paper for each student. Some of these slips of paper should contain a range of injuries that could be sustained in an earthquake; others should contain handicaps that someone could have prior to the earthquake. A few of the papers can be left blank so that some students will be in full health. Each paper should contain instructions to the student on how to act with their various injuries or handicaps.
- 1 sheet of letter-size paper per student
- 2 blindfolds
- Cotton balls

Activity:
Explain to the group that there has been a major earthquake, and many of the group members have sustained injuries. Each student will then draw a slip of paper. Someone who is deaf would be instructed to stuff cotton balls in their ears; another person may be blind and required to wear a blindfold. Someone who is unconscious could lie on the ground; another may have a broken leg and would be required to hop on one foot. Someone might have a broken arm and would not be allowed to use it.

After everyone has received their injury or handicap and followed the instructions on their slip of paper, you will announce that our area is experiencing aftershocks and the group must move to safety. Designate a safe area at least twenty yards away. Between this area and the danger zone, set up a series of obstacles ahead of time such as tables, overturned chairs, and other objects. The group’s goal is to move everyone through these obstacles to safety without causing any further injury. This is done by giving each student a piece of paper and telling the students that they must be stepping on the paper at all times on their way through the danger zone. Students will have to share their papers and pass them back to help others. They will have to pay special attention to the students who have handicaps to make sure they are safe.

If anyone touches an object or steps off their paper, they have to return to the end of the line. After this occurs three times, the entire group must start over. As a variation for older students, have everyone start over every time someone touches an object or steps off their paper. The activity is over when everyone has successfully passed through the danger zone.

Processing the Experience:
- Did anyone have to start over along the way?
- In what areas could your group have improved?
- How would one person giving up have affected everyone else?
- How did you feel when you were helping others?
• How did it feel when you knew others cared enough to help you?
• Did you see “Character-Heart” in action or feel it in yourself?
• In the Motivation Formula, where does having character and heart get you?
• How can thinking of others give you opportunity, freedom, and self-respect in life?
Motivation Formula
7. Learning Activity: Synergy

Spatial Requirements: Classroom with moderate space required
Activity Type: Movement/group
Grades: 3-12
Group size: 4 or more
Time: 25 minutes

Introduction: There are two things that help increase motivation: First, a passion or interest, and second, plugging in to a “support system.” This activity is designed to help students see that their abilities can be increased by learning from the passions, interests, and strengths of the people in their support system. They will learn that by working together, they can accomplish much more than they could on their own.

Materials:
- 1 pen or pencil per team
- 1 piece of paper for each team
- Watch or clock with a second hand

Activity:
Divide the class into teams of four or five and have them sit in a circle. Give each team a writing utensil and a piece of paper. Explain to the students that the object of the activity is to work as a team to create the longest list of answers possible from the categories that you give them. They are to pass a piece of paper around the circle with each person adding one answer to the list. A team may not have any duplicate answers. As the paper is passed around, they are not allowed to talk. If one person cannot think of an answer, they must write the word “skip” on the paper and then pass it to the next person. They continue to pass the paper around the circle for 60 seconds. When time has expired, each group will report their total number of answers (skips do not count). Then have each team read their list. Repeat a couple of times using new categories and starting with different people.

Next, play a few rounds where the group is allowed to talk, brainstorm, and suggest answers to the player who has the piece of paper at the moment. Explain that the paper must still be passed from person to person, with each student writing down an answer before it is passed on to the next person. The “skip” rule may still be used, but with the group helping, no one will likely have a need for it.

Suggestions for categories:
1. Animals with four legs
2. Major league baseball teams
3. Breakfast cereals
4. Television shows
5. Countries around the world
6. States in America
7. Sports
8. Musical instruments
9. Food served at restaurants

Processing the Experience:
- How many more answers did your team get in the “talking” rounds than in the “no-talking” rounds?
- How did being able to talk to each other (brainstorm) help?
- Why were some team members good at some categories and not others?
• What role does a person’s passions or interest play in what they know?
• How does working together help make a problem easier to solve?
• How can having a varied background, interests, and experiences make it easier to solve a problem?
Motivation Formula

8. Learning Activity: Silver Lining

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required
Activity Type: Group
Grades: 4-12
Group size: 2 or more
Time: 10 minutes

Introduction: We have all heard the expressions; “Every cloud has a silver lining,” or “Look on the bright side.” The message of these is to see the positive possibilities in seemingly negative situations. When channeling energy into overcoming challenges, seeing the potential benefits on the other side of the dam is essential. This activity is designed to help students find the silver lining in challenging situations.

Materials:
• Whiteboard, chart paper, or overhead with writing utensil

Activity:
Write on the board, “Every cloud has a silver lining.” Discuss with students what this means. Explain that they are going to practice looking for the silver lining in difficult or unpleasant situations. Give students an example such as, “It’s a rainy, damp, and cold day, and now I can’t go for a walk.” Have students brainstorm the positive scenarios that can emerge from this situation. Next, write on the board, “I hate it when...” and give students time to give several answers to finish that sentence. Write down responses on the board as students give them, then go back through each response and have students list positive outcomes that could come from each experience.

Processing the Experience:
• How difficult was it to finish the phrase, “I hate it when...”?
• How difficult was it to think of positive scenarios?
• What does the expression, “Every cloud has a silver lining” mean?
• When facing a challenge, how can looking for the silver lining be beneficial?
Motivation Formula

9. Learning Activity: Persnickety

Spatial Requirements: Classroom with moderate space required
Activity Type: Movement/group
Grades: 2-12
Group size: 4 or more
Time: 10 minutes

Introduction: The word “persnickety” is a fun word to say, and this activity is a fun way of looking at how we make choices. It might be a good introduction to explain to students that persnickety means being careful about our choices because we want only the best and the finest. This activity is designed to help students see that our choices – whether narrow or broad – affect our futures, and should therefore be deliberate and thought-out. This activity also ties in to the “Reality Ride.”

Materials:
• 1 piece of paper per student
• 1 pen or pencil per student
• Whiteboard or chart paper and writing utensil

Activity:
Make sure you have an empty space in four areas or corners of your room for students to move to depending on their choice. Have students gather to the middle of the room. Explain that you are going to give them four choices, and they are to choose one of them. If possible, label each corner/area with a number. Then read the first question in Choice List 1 and have them go to the corner that corresponds with their answer. Ask a few students to share why they made the choice they did, and continue this for all the questions in Choice List 1.

For Choice List 2, have students sit at their desks or tables and hand out papers and pencils. This time, when students are given a choice, they are to write the number response on their paper. Have a few students explain their choices.

Finally, give students Choice List 3, and have students write down their responses to these open-ended questions. Then go over each choice and have as many students as possible share what they wrote and why.

Choice List 1:
1. If you were a cookie what kind would you be? A. Chocolate chip; B. Peanut butter; C. Oatmeal; D. Sugar
2. If you were an animal, what would you be? A. Dog; B. Cat; C. Frog; D. Porcupine
3. If you were an entertainer, what kind would you be? A. Singer; B. Dancer; C. Actor; D. Musician
4. If you were a store, what kind would you be? A. Grocery; B. Clothing; C. Toy; D. Furniture

Choice List 2:
1. If you were a type of candy, what would you be? A. Chocolate bar; B. Sucker; C. Bubble gum; D. Licorice
2. If you were a bird, what kind would you be? A. Eagle; B. Penguin; C. Hummingbird; D. Flamingo
3. If you were stranded on a desert island with one person, who would you choose? A. Your best friend; B. Your Mom; C. Your teacher; D. Bill Nye
4. If you could go on a vacation, where would you choose to go? A. Disneyland; B. A beach house; C. Camping; D. New York City
Choice List 3:
1. If you were a drink, what kind would you be?
2. If you could meet a famous person from history, whom would you choose?
3. If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go?
4. If you were a piece of furniture, what would you be?

Processing the Experience:
- Which choices were easiest? Why?
- Which choices were hardest? Why?
- Did other people’s choices influence your choices at all in the first round?
- What influenced your choices in round 2 or 3?
- If your choices in the first two rounds hadn’t been limited, would you have made different choices?
- Which choices did you think about the most before making them? Why?
- In real life, do you have choices with limited options? What are they?
- In real life, do you have choices with unlimited options? What are they?
- Which kind of choices do you have to think about more? Which are you more careful about? Why?
- Do you think it is good to make decisions based on what others are doing? Why?
- What kind of decisions do you think it would be good to be persnickety about?
- In what ways can your choices affect your motivation?
Motivation Formula

10. Learning Activity: My Fave Fifteen

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required
Activity Type: Group
Grades: 3-12
Group size: 2 or more
Time: 15 minutes

Introduction: This activity will help students better identify their passions, purpose, and interests: an ability that can keep them out of the flood zone and help them stay motivated. It will also help them think realistically about the benefits or consequences associated with certain activities or behaviors.

Materials:
- 1 “Fave 15” sheet per person (These can be found at www.whytry.org/activities.)
- 1 pen or pencil per person

Activity:
Give each student a “Fave 15” sheet and a writing utensil. Give them several minutes to respond to each “favorite” question. Encourage them to think creatively and broadly.

After students have finished responding, have them take note of the five columns to the right of their responses. In the first column ($), have them put a check next to each item that costs more than $5 each time it is done. In the second column (R), have them put a check next to each item that involves risk. In the third column (U), have them place a check next to each item that they think others would think is unusual or unconventional. In the fourth column (F), have them put a check next to each item that they think would not appear on the list five years from now. In the fifth column (*), have them put a check next to their three favorite activities.

Processing the Experience:
- How many of your items did you check for costing more than $5? What were some?
- How many did you check for being risky? What were some?
- What was something you listed that you feel is unique?
- Tell something you listed that you feel you will still have on your list in five years. Why?
- How might this list help you identify your passion, purpose and/or interests?
- Does identifying cost, risk, uniqueness, longevity, etc. change the way you feel about any of these activities?
- How might thinking about those things help you when choosing a new activity or interest to pursue?
**Motivation Formula**

11. **Learning Activity: Mind Over Matter**

**Spatial Requirements:** Regular classroom setup: little or no space required  
**Activity Type:** Group  
**Grades:** K-12  
**Group size:** 2 or more  
**Time:** 5 minutes

**Introduction:** A lot of our success in achieving goals depends on our ability to put “mind over matter.” We have more power in our minds than we ever use. There is a term called self-fulfilling prophecy, which means that what we think is what will take place. This is similar to the benefits of “positive self-talk” and “believing in change.” This activity is designed to help students realize the power of the mind in accomplishing goals, and the effect the mind can have on our actions and abilities.

**Materials:**
- 1 Lifesaver candy per student  
- 1 15-inch piece of string per student

**Activity:**
Give each student a 15-inch piece of string with a Lifesaver tied to one end. Have each student hold their string up in front of their face so that the Lifesaver hangs about six inches from their eyes. Their arms, elbows, and hands must not be touching anything, such as a desk or a chair. Now have them stop the Lifesaver from swinging by using their other hand to stop its motion. Tell them that they are going to make the Lifesaver start to swing by just using their mind power. Have them focus carefully on the Lifesaver and think, “left, right,” while imagining it moving from left to right. While they are doing this, you will be saying slowly, “Left, right, left, right.” Repeat this phrase over and over until the Lifesavers start to swing back and forth. Most of the students will have their Lifesavers moving left and right. This is because the mind sends signals to the hand to move the Lifesaver in the same direction as the command you are giving. The success depends on the fine motor development of the students as well as how hard they are concentrating.

If you really want to amaze them, change the commands from “left to right” to “front, back” or “around and around” and have them focus on the same movement. For advanced students, you can start the Lifesavers moving in a circle and then change the direction and make the Lifesaver move in a circle in the opposite way.

**Processing the Experience:**
- How many of you were able to make the Lifesaver follow my commands?  
- How powerful is our mind (positive self-talk)?  
- How do our actions influence what we think and say to ourselves?  
- In what kinds of activities do your thoughts or self-talk impact your behavior?  
- How can our thoughts and self-talk impact our goals?
Motivation Formula

12. Learning Activity: How Are You?

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required
Activity Type: Group
Grades: 2-12
Group size: 1 or more
Time: 10 minutes

Introduction: When someone asks, “How are you?” our answer is generally an immediate, “I am fine.” We respond this way out of habit, without giving consideration to how we are really feeling. Similarly, our self-talk is something we don’t often consciously think about. We allow it to impact us without considering what we are telling ourselves. This activity is designed to help students stop and think about their self-talk, then to reframe their negative self-perceptions into something positive.

Materials:
- 1 sheet of paper with examples of self-talk for each student (These can be found at www.whytry.org/activities.)
- Markers and paper for self-talk signs

Activity:
On a sheet of paper, list several examples of self-talk. Include both positive and negative examples. A sample worksheet is given on the website, but feel free to create your own, listing examples that apply directly to your class.

Distribute the self-talk papers and ask the students to circle all the phrases that describe them. Have them count the number of positive items and the number of negative items circled. Have them choose one of the negative responses they circled (if they had any) and have them think of a way to rephrase it so that it becomes a positive motivation for them to do better. For example, if they circled, “I am dumb,” they could rephrase it as, “I always try my best,” or “I will study harder,” etc.

Then have them choose one of the items they circled that is positive. Have them make a sign or poster that they can hang up in their room that contains that phrase. Encourage them to look at it and use it as a reminder of the kind of self-talk they should be focusing on.

Processing the Experience:
- What were some of the negative responses you circled? Positive?
- Was it hard to reframe your negative responses? Why?
- Which did you have more of: positive or negative responses?
- Do you feel that these responses accurately reflect who you are?
- What phrases do you feel would more accurately describe you?
- How hard is it to think of positive things to tell yourself?
- How can focusing on your positive traits help you in life?
Motivation Formula

13. Learning Activity: Body By Design

Spatial Requirements: Classroom with moderate space required
Activity Type: Movement/group
Grades: 1-12
Group Size: 2 or more
Time: 20-25 minutes

Introduction: This activity will help reinforce the different parts of the motivation formula by comparing them to parts of the body.

Materials:
- 1 sheet of butcher paper per student, large enough to trace the student’s body
- Markers

Activity:
Have each student get with a partner. The partnerships will trace each other’s bodies with the markers on the butcher paper. The students may add hair, facial features, or clothing to their outlines. The students will then label the body parts according to the different parts of the motivation formula as follows:

1. Shoulders- Write your challenges, your problems, and a few of the things that are hard or difficult in your life.
2. Brain- Write some examples of positive self-talk you can use.
3. Heart- What helps you maintain character and heart, or what are your passions?
4. Arm (bicep)- What are your strengths? What are you good at?
5. Hands- Who are your support systems? Who can you count on to lend you a hand?
6. Feet- What are your goals? What can you do to gain opportunity, freedom, and self-respect?

Processing the Experience:
- What are some things you listed on your shoulders? Brain? Heart? Arm? Hands? Feet?
- What do these things tell others about you?
- How do these items make you feel?
- How would reflecting on this body profile help you stay out of the flood zone?
- In what ways will these things help you in your life?
Motivation Formula

14. Learning Activity: Rope Handcuffs

Spatial Requirements: Classroom with moderate space required
Activity Type: Movement/group
Grades: 3-12
Group size: 2 or more (even number)
Time: 15 minutes

Introduction: By using character and heart as well as support systems, we can overcome their challenges in life and help others overcome their challenges. This activity will illustrate this principle as students try to help each other “break free.” When group members learn the solution, they will share their knowledge with others, illustrating the importance of turning outward and sharing our skills and knowledge with those around us.

Materials:
- 1 length of rope, 3 feet long, for each person.

Activity:
Demonstrate the following with two people in front of the group:
Pair two people up and have a person tie the rope around the wrists of his/her partner so that each wrist is connected to the rope. There should be a length of rope between the wrists. (See pictures.)

Now tie the rope around one wrist of the second person. Before tying the rope on the second wrist, take the loose end of the rope and put it between the wrists of his/her partner and around the partner’s rope, and tie it to the wrist of the second person. Each person will then be linked together by the rope. (See pictures.)

Once everyone is connected to a partner by the rope, give the following instructions: “Your challenge is to disconnect from your partner without untying the rope or slipping the rope off your wrist.” Let them work on the challenge for four or five minutes. When the frustration level is high and they want to give up, challenge them to “think outside the box” and come up with another way to face the challenge. One hint might be: “The answer has more to do with what you do with the rope than it has to do with you climbing through the rope.” A second hint might be: “Under the rope and around the wrist.” A third hint might be, “A key goes through a...” If the teams still cannot figure it out, you as the facilitator might go up to one of the pairs and show them how. Once they know the solution, have them teach the other pairs one at a time. Continue the process until each pair that learns the solution goes individually to the next pair and shows them how. Continue until everyone learns the solution.

Solution:
One of the partners will take the loop of rope between his/her wrists and slip it under the rope of the wrist of his/her partner, being careful not to twist it in the process. (This is important!) With the loop of rope that is under his/her partner’s hand, move it over the hand of the partner to the opposite side of his/her partner’s hand. You are now disconnected. (See pictures.)

Processing the Experience:
- Why was this a hard challenge?
- How did you solve this challenge?
- Did some of you give up? Why?
- When one team figured it out, how did they help the other teams?
• How can turning outward and serving others be win-win for both parties?
• Do we ever give up on challenges we have in life? Why?
• What support systems do you have in your life?
• What does overcoming a challenge do for you?
• What challenges have you overcome in your life?
• How did you overcome your challenges?
Motivation Formula

15. Learning Activity: Hold Your Breath

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup: little or no space required
Activity Type: Movement/group
Grades: 2-12
Group size: 6 or more
Time: 20-30 minutes

Introduction: This activity will help students understand that when they are motivated, they can do much more than they thought possible.

Materials:
- Timer, watch, or clock with a second hand

Activity:
Divide the group in half and make two teams. If the group is larger than 15, divide the group into three teams to make groups of five to eight. Each team must contain the same number of members. If there is an odd number, fill in with one or more leaders or have a student go twice.

Round 1:
The two teams will be competing against each other to see which team can hold their breath the longest. When the time begins, the first person on each team holds his/her breath as long as possible. When they are finished, they touch the person next in line. This person holds his/her breath as long as possible, then touches the person next to them. This process continues until each person has a turn. When the last person on each team finishes, the time is totaled for each group. Each team’s totals are recorded on the board.

Round 2:
Ask each team what they can do to hold their breath longer for the second round. If they do not come up with ideas to increase their lung capacity, suggest the following: Ask everyone to take a deep breath and slowly let the air out. Take another deep breath and try to gulp down two or three mouths full of air and slowly release the air. Continue this process three or four more times and start the activity again. While each person is waiting for his/her turn, they can practice increasing their lung capacity by deep breathing. Write the new times on the board under the old times. The time should increase on the second round.

Processing the Experience:
Relate the following story:

There once was an eager student who wanted to gain wisdom and insight. He went to the wisest man in town to seek his counsel. Being a man of few words, Socrates chose not to speak, but to illustrate.

He took the young man to the beach and, with all of his clothes still on, walked straight out into the water. The pupil gingerly followed and walked into the sea, joining Socrates where the water was just below their chins.

Without saying a word, Socrates reached out and put his hands on the young man’s shoulders. Looking deep into his student’s eyes, Socrates pushed the student’s head under the water with all his might.

A struggle ensued, and just before life was taken away, Socrates released his captive. The boy raced to the...
surface and, gasping for air and choking from the salt water, looked around for Socrates, ‘Why did you try to kill me?’

The wise man calmly retorted with a question of his own: ‘Boy, when you were underneath the water, not sure if you would live to see another day, what did you want more than anything in the world?’

The student took a few moments to reflect, then said, ‘I wanted to breathe.’ Socrates looked at the boy comfortingly and said, ‘Ah! When you want wisdom and insight as badly as you wanted to breathe, it is then that you shall have it.’

- How badly did you want air after you had held your breath for as long as you could?
- Is there anything in your life that you wanted more at that point than air?
- Do you face your challenges and problems in life with the same intensity and effort you did when you wanted air? Why or why not?
- What determines how much effort you put into facing your challenges?
- What are some of the challenges you have overcome in your life?
- What would happen if you put the same amount of intensity into overcoming your life’s challenges as you did in this activity?