Puzzle Squares

Goals
- explore issues of leadership and flow of information;
- learn about team work in a kinesthetic manner.

Materials
- Medium-length pieces of rope (5-10 feet)
- bandanas (pieces of cloth) to put over people's eyes [optional]

How It's Done

This tool can take 45-60 minutes. Get participants in medium-sized groups (6-10 people). Explain that participants are going to be challenged to make a square with a rope. The rules are thus:

- The group should form the rope into a square (4 equal sides at 90 degree angles) within the time limit specified (10 minutes is generally enough time for a good challenge);
- Everyone in the group must have their eyes shut throughout the entire exercise (bandanas placed over their eyes);
  - *NOTE: Bandanas over the eyes are optional. An advantage is they can increase the sense of challenge; a disadvantage is some people may have strong reactions to having their eyes covered (some people like the option to peek, even if they don't do it).*
- People can only touch the rope with their hands – once they touch the rope they cannot let go (though they can slide along the rope)! EXCEPT, the group can choose one person who – while still with eyes closed or covered – can let go of the rope and move around freely.

Ask for any questions for clarifications (do this before putting on the bandanas – it reduces anxiety!). Then ask everyone to get in a circle with their group to begin with and put on a bandana. Make sure they cannot see. Then put the rope in front of them on the ground (not in people's hands). "And go!"

During the running of the exercise, watch for specific moments you may want to bring back up regarding choices the group made.

Sample questions for issues of leadership and flow of information:
- Did they choose a person to have a bigger picture? What was the advantage/disadvantage of their choice?
- How did they relate to that role?
- Who was paying attention to the task? To the overall group dynamic?
- How does this behavior in the group relate to behavior in real life (or in *this* group)?
- What could have assisted the group to be even more effective? What might that look like in a future task or challenge?

This tool comes out of the field of adventure-based learning. We recommend Quicksilver: Adventure Games, Initiative Problems, Trust Activities and a Guide to Effective Leadership, by Karl Rohnke and Steve Butter (Kendall/Hunt Publishing Company, reprint 1996).