

Human Knot (Community-Building Activity)

Purpose: Foster teamwork, cooperation, problem-solving, and communication. Engage in thoughtful reflection about the decision-making process and group collaboration.

APPROXIMATE TIME:
30 minutes

MATERIALS: NONE

ADVISOR NOTES:

1. Set Aside Time for Reflection

The amount of time this activity takes depends, in part, on the size of your advisory group and whether or not your advisees have played this game before. You might set a time limit, such as 15 minutes, at the outset of the activity or let the group work on the task for a longer period of time as needed. It is important that you set aside plenty of time for the group to reflect on their process and participation. This reflection is as important as the activity itself.

2. Know Your Advisees

This activity may be difficult for advisees with limited mobility because it can involve crouching, stepping through tight spaces, and standing in awkward positions. If this is the case, you might need to choose one of the other community-building games in this section so everyone in the group can participate and feels comfortable and safe doing so.

3. Revisit the Human Knot

You can repeat this team-building activity in the middle and at the end of the year and reflect on any changes in the group's communication, strategy, or process.

PROCEDURE:

1. Set Up and Create the Human Knot

- After clearing a space in the center of the room, ask advisees to stand in a tight circle. Then have them place their right hand into the center of the circle and take the hand of one of their peers. They should not take the hand of the person next to them on either side. Then repeat with the left hand, making sure that they are grasping the hand of a different advisee.
- Then let the advisees know that they need to untangle the knot so they are standing in a big circle. They may not release and regasp hands at any point during the activity.
- You might place a time cap on the activity, such as 15 minutes. It is important that you leave enough time for the group to reflect on their process in a circle discussion.

2. Debrief the Human Knot

Sit in a circle to discuss a selection of the following questions about the game. The final two questions are important because they provide the opportunity for advisees to reflect on their advisory contract and the theme of community.

- How did you decide on a strategy to untangle the knot? Was everyone involved in the decision-making process, or were decisions about strategy made by a few people? How did you feel during this time?
- How did the group communicate during the challenge? In what ways was communication effective? What could you have done as a group and as individuals to make it more effective?
- What observations did you make about how the group worked together? What are you proud of in terms of group collaboration and cooperation? What might you have done as individuals and as a group to improve collaboration and cooperation?
- Did you achieve the goal of untangling the knot and forming a circle? If so, what factors contributed to you attaining this goal? If not, what factors prevented you from attaining this goal?
- Did the group honor our advisory contract? If so, what are examples of moments during the human knot activity when one or more norms was honored? If not, which norms were not honored, and what was the outcome? What could you have done differently to honor these norms?
- What qualities of a strong community did you observe in the group during the activity? What factors that can weaken a community did you observe during the activity?