

## Processing

What is processing? According to *Experiential Resources, Inc.*, processing or debriefing is the simple act of reviewing the activity and the behaviors of the group within the activity and connecting it with real life. This reflection helps to make the learning concrete.

The art of processing an activity is a skill that takes practice. Most facilitators will process an activity immediately after the activity. However, some will do a combination of activities and then process. Either way, you should not let your group leave you without going through the processing steps. Otherwise, participants leave you with the feeling of simply playing a fun game and not realizing they have learned something about themselves, another person, or their group. There are three basic questions you refer to when processing a team building activity:

**What?**

**So What?**

**Now What?**

### What?

Ask the group what happened during the activity—individually and as a team. Avoid value judgments and blaming, be objective, open and honest while at the same time being respectful. Debriefing should feel generally “safe” for participants because it is non-confrontational and involves a minimum of self-reflection.

### So What?

What did you learn from the activity? What did you learn about yourself, others, or the team? The “so what” can be more threatening because it requires self reflection on personal motivations, decisions, and actions. It is a critical step in helping participants analyze relationships with others and identify needed behavioral changes.

### Now What?

Based on what you have learned, how can you apply this to your life at home or school? Based on what you have learned, how will this help you make future decisions?

### Facilitator's Role

What does it mean to be a facilitator when processing is involved? Before activities begin

- \*learn what your group's goals, values, and missions are
- \*determine the size of the group
- \*know how much time is available
- \*preview the location (indoor, outdoor, temperature, facilities)

This assessment can be determined by simply talking with county Extension agents or the participants during a meal.

First, have the group gather in a circle—all participants standing or sitting—so everyone can see each other. Processing can take place at the element site, but please keep in mind environmental factors that can pose as a distraction for the group. Start by asking questions that follow the what, so what, now what pattern. Questions should be more than simple “yes” or “no” questions. Then let the group do most of the talking. Always be prepared for answers that vary from smart remarks to serious situations and always keep a sense of humor. If the group becomes disrespectful to one another, you as the facilitator should step in and get them back on track.

### **Tricks for Processing**

#### **Index Cards**

Use index cards to write 2-3 processing questions based on a topic. As you plan your team building event or activity, utilize the questions based on your needs. Remember, processing is a talent that takes practice.

#### **Appreciating and Respecting Self and Others**

What feelings did you have during this activity?

How do feelings cause you to act?

How do your feelings affect other people in a group you are in?

How are people treated who openly express a feeling? How should they be treated?

Do you usually express feelings or suppress them?

What feelings were expressed non-verbally in the group?

Did you express your appreciation to yourself and others? If so, how did you do this? (consider verbal and non verbal ways)

What expression of appreciation were especially important for you to hear?

Do you usually give appreciation to yourself and others?

Did anyone criticize or put themselves down at any time? If so, at what point in the initiative did this happen.

Do you usually get upset with yourself and put yourself down when you make a mistake or are not perfect?

What could you say to yourself to counter-act the put down message?

In what ways did you contribute to the initiative task?

Which contribution made you feel the best about yourself?

Are you able to feel good about yourself even if you are not able to identify a contribution you made?

How are you like some of the others in the group?

How were these commonalities helpful to the group in completing their tasks?

How were these commonalities a hindrance to the group in completing their task?

Do you think you have other things in common with some of the group members that you haven't found yet?

How are you different (unique) from some of the others in the group?

How do these differences strengthen the group as a whole?

What would this group be like if there were very few differences in people?

How would you feel if this were so?

In what instances did being different help (hinder) the group from reaching their objectives?

Do you usually view group differences as good, bad, or neither? Explain.

### **Awareness and Self-Efficacy**

Did you notice your role in this activity?

When you felt \_\_\_\_\_ how did you behave?

Who in the group was most rooting for your success?

Did you ask for all you wanted from the group members? Explain

How do you usually feel when you ask for what you want and get refused or rejected? Did that happen today?

### **Decision-making and Problem Solving**

How did the group make decisions for completing the task during the day?

Did one or several individuals make decisions?

Were you satisfied with the way decisions were made? Explain.

Did everyone in the group express an opinion when a choice was available? If not, why not?

What did you like about how the group made decisions? What didn't you like?

Did you all feel you had the opportunity to contribute ideas?

Before you started, did you feel you could make it?

Was there a group consensus on a solution?

Did everyone clearly understand the decisions?

Did you spend enough time and effort in planning?

What effect did planning time have on the process?

Did you have a plan that insured that every person made it?

How well did you execute your plan?

What do you need to change in order to enhance your problem solving ability?

Did you encounter problems you had not thought about?

What would you do differently if you did it over?

## **Leadership**

Who assumed leadership roles during the activity?

How did the group respond to these leadership behaviors?

Was it difficult to assume a leadership role in the group?

What behaviors would you describe as showing leadership?

Did the leadership role shift to other people during the initiative?

Was there more than one leader?

What is peer pressure?

Does peer pressure have positive or negative effect on a group?

Has this experience helped you be able to trust others more?

Did anyone try to lead the group, but felt they were unsuccessful? What were some possible reasons for this? How did it feel to be disregarded?

## **Listening and Communication**

What were some of the effective forms of communication you used in completing this task?

How were differences in opinions handled?

How could you improve your communication?

How did you know that what you communicated was understood?

What went wrong in the communication attempt?

What could the communicator do differently next time to give a clearer message?

What could the message receiver do differently next time to understand the message?

Did you learn something about communication that will be helpful later? If so what?

Who made suggestions for completing the initiative task?

Were all suggestions heard? Explain.

Which suggestions were acted upon?

Why were the other suggestions ignored?

How did it feel to be heard when you made a suggestion?

What interfered with your ability to listen to others?

Did you listen in the same way today as you generally do? If not, what was different about today?

## **Teamwork and Cooperation**

How did you develop your plan of action?

How well did you think you did?

What are the rewards of cooperating?

How did it feel to cooperate?

Can you think of specific examples of when the group cooperated in completing the activity? Explain.

How did cooperative behavior lead to successfully completing the activity?  
How can you cooperate in other areas of your life?  
At what point did you feel you would make it?  
Were you always thinking of ways to help it go faster, safer, or easier?  
Did your group work together well?  
How important is group support?  
How can group support get started?  
Who assumed a follower role at times throughout the activity? How did it feel?  
How did it feel to follow different leaders?  
Do you consider yourself a good follower? Was this an important role in the group today? Explain.  
How does refusal to follow affect the leadership role?  
Did you see unexpected talent or skills in others?  
When it looked like things were not working were you content to continue following?

### **Responsibility, Trust and Support Questions**

Is this a typical role for you?  
Do you ever use your strengths to excess?  
What strengths do you bring out in this group?  
What did it feel like to have your physical safety entrusted to the group?  
Can you give examples of when you trusted someone in the group? Explain.  
On a scale of 1-10, rate how much trust you have in the group as a whole. Explain.  
What is spotting? Is spotting important?  
Did you consider danger to members while planning?  
Did you consider danger to members while doing the obstacle?  
How did you feel toward others in your group after you finished?  
Was there more concern about safety or completing the challenge?  
Were you more concerned about your safety or the safety to others?  
Has your concept of others in the group changed?  
Has this experience helped you better understand what trust is?

### **Transfer and Closure Questions**

What did you learn about yourself? Your own talents? Feelings?  
What did you learn about other group members?  
How can you use what you learned today in other situations?  
What did you do today that you are proud of?  
What skill are you working to improve?  
Was your behavior today typical of the way you usually act in groups?  
What beliefs about yourself and others were reinforced today?  
What would you like to say to the group members?

Did you enjoy the activity? Why?  
How can you use this learning at home/school?

### **Sources**

Processing questions and other ideas were adapted from Experiential Resources, Inc. (ERi). *Training Workbook for Challenge Course Operations*.

*What? -So What? -Now What? -Processed Adventure Experiences*. John V. Fark, Ohio State University Extension, Marion County 4-H Agent. Dr. Dennis Elliott, Ohio State University Extension Specialist, Ed. Delivery. 1997 National 4-H Camping Institute IV, Bemidji, MN.

*John Fark, Ohio State University Extension Agent and Dr. Dennis Elliott, Ohio State Extension Specialist—Education,*