



Overview of the Leadership Challenge Center

Your day on the challenge course will begin with a review of your Confidential Participant Health Information. It is important that we know about your health history for your own safety. After that, we start the group with a series of quick, energetic icebreakers and initiatives, designed to set a tone of fun and excitement. These games encourage participants to set aside the fear of embarrassment and help to establish a safe space where individuals feel supported to step forward and assume an active role in the group process.

After reviewing goals and expectations, groups progress through a series of mental and physical problem-solving activities. These are chosen with specific regard to how appropriate they are for the group and how they address issues relevant to the program goals. Certain events take place on the challenge course's *low elements*, which can include swinging on ropes, traversing planks and wires, and balancing on logs, all close to the ground. The group creates the safety system by spotting and supporting one another throughout the *low elements*.

Reflection and discussion follows each activity. Facilitators pose questions to encourage thoughtful responses. Participants think "outside the box" to assess themselves and identify opportunities for growth.

Some, though not all programs progress to the *high element* events on poles towering as high as 40 feet above the ground. Successes in the low activities establish a safe, supportive environment where participants are capable of stepping beyond their comfort zones. Whether climbing a rock wall, diving for a trapeze bar, traversing set tight wires as a team, these elements deliver the impression of risk, though they are built to be as safe as any activity on the ground.

Facilitators encourage everyone who feels capable to attempt the high elements rather than emphasize completion. The experience is different for every individual. Some participants are comfortable with the loftiest heights, while others might be at their limit on the first rungs of a ladder. A diverse array of activities is available, varying in difficulty and accommodating the many different people who come to the course.

At day's end, facilitators gather the group together for a final piece of discussion and reflection. How successful was the day? What did everyone learn about themselves and their group? What can they take back to school, to work, to the community, or for themselves? How do they feel about what they accomplished? Challenge course programs provide the opportunities for this to happen.

Leadership Challenge Course activities are designed to...

- ✓ Increase awareness of self, attitudes, behaviors, etc.
 - ✓ Increase confidence and self-esteem
 - ✓ Enhance coordination and agility
 - ✓ Enhance an understanding and respect for individual differences
 - ✓ Promote expression of thoughts and feelings
 - ✓ Enhance communication skills (active listening, giving/receiving feedback, etc.)
 - ✓ Identify and improve critical thinking and problem solving skills
 - ✓ Enhance trust
 - ✓ Identify and improve decision-making skills
 - ✓ Enhance teamwork and cooperation
 - ✓ Identify and improve planning skills
 - ✓ Enhance leadership (responsibility for guiding a group towards a goal)
 - ✓ Overcome preconceived personal limits, prejudices, and fears
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