

**Blindfolded Line-Up Exercise Directions**

The purpose of this exercise is to point out how our mindsets are critical to us achieving the results we want in life. It illustrates how extenuating circumstances can be overcome when the belief exists.

**SAY:** I have a very simple task for you to complete. I need 12 volunteers to come up here with me.

*This exercise can work with less than 12 people; however, 12 is the optimal number. Wait for 12 people to volunteer. At this stage in the process, it is ok to strongly encourage participants to come forward.*

**SAY:** Thank you very much for volunteering. You will be lining up in a straight line in a specific order. As the facilitator, I will judge you on both line appearance (straightness and spacing) and order.

*Point out and name landmark walls, such as, the wall over here with the window will be the front wall and the doorway over there will be the back wall. Remember to stress that this exercise needs to be taken seriously.*

**ASK:** Are there any questions so far?

*They will know the order in a moment when you give them the criteria around which to line up.*

**SAY:** Before moving on, you won't be able to ask any additional questions from this point on.

*This is to check for additional questions.*

**SAY:** As you line up, you will need to refrain from speaking. There will be no talking. Cheating will be confronted. The other rule is that you must also keep your eyes closed during the entire exercise. You can only open your eyes when I specifically say, "Okay, everyone open your eyes." So move somewhat slowly to be safe.

*If pushed, be careful with your language to include no verbal communication. Start the no-talking zone quickly to prevent further questions.*

**SAY:** Everyone close your eyes. Line up by birthday – month and day. We are not concerned with how incredibly young you are so we will ignore the year for now. January birthdays will be at the front of the line facing the front wall I already pointed out. December birthdays will be at the back of the line. Get in order sequentially by birthday. Go for it!

*Watch as they work confronting indirectly eyes open or talking. When movement stops or it looks like they have stopped working on the problem, check if they're done by asking them to raise their right hands. If all hands are raised, let them open their eyes but do not let them adjust the line.*

**SAY:** Please raise your right hand if you believe you've got it – one straight line, in order, equally spaced, and everyone facing the same direction?

*Every time you sense that movement has slowed and they have stopped working. Continue asking the question and encouraging the volunteers to keep working until you have all hands raised.*

**First Debrief**

**ASK:** How did you do?

*Listen and take responses.*

**ASK:** How's the line look? How acceptable is the line to you? Is this result surprising? If no, then why did you raise your hand if you know there were probably errors?

*Check the order – comment on the error number.*

**ASK:** I am the customer, what do you think I am thinking of the line? What led to your end result?

*Comment on the miserable or terrific results. If miserable, ask if this is typical of their work. Why or why not?*

*Many times they will attribute their errors on the facilitator's limitations or the exercise's impossibility to complete. Let them come up with many reasons, stories, and excuses, as they will be useful in the next debrief. Also play on any team members who challenge the group's victim approach. Also ask, what was your strategy? Did you go to your spot and did you look out for your spot in relationship to your team members?*

**ASK:** Did you believe that this is possible to have a perfectly-aligned, error-free lineup given the same conditions? Why or why not?

**SAY:** Fourth graders actually complete this task very well and can get this line perfectly straight and in order on the first try.

**ASK:** Why might that be?

*Focus on attitude, risk-taking, comfort with blindness and touching, willingness to think out-of-the-box, and their techniques.*

**ASK:** How many of you believed it was possible?

**SAY:** Did you know that until a person is about 10 years old, they believe anything an authority figure asks them to do is possible? They might not want to do it for various reasons, but it doesn't occur to them that the task itself is impossible. Since we don't want to end on a note of failure, we will give you another chance – a chance to measure up to those fourth graders.

**ASK:** Are you in the game? Anyone want to sit down?

**SAY:** There is no judgment or blame. Anyone can sit down who wants to.

*Ask each person directly if you can depend on him or her. Anyone who wants to sit can do so at this time. If they choose to quit, be sure to thank them for their choice. Let them plan a little or start to jockey around birthdates.*

**SAY:** Stop speaking and close your eyes.

*When all are in compliance, again stress what will be acceptable and that any talking or opening of eyes will be confronted.*

**SAY:** Now I need one line, equally-spaced, everyone facing the same direction and in order by shoe size – men's and women's count the same. Smallest shoe size to the front of the line with the largest in the back of the line. Go.

*End the exercise with the same litmus test. Ask if they are really sure. Check their results – hopefully some improvement. Congratulate them on their result if appropriate. Process why the results improved. Drill down on what was different to arrive at the keys, their attitude, they believed it could be done, they play more seriously, took more risks, "looked left and right" instead of just covering their tushes, they got creative, stayed with the question more, etc.. Comment on the first debrief where the facilitator was to blame for the limitations and ask who really limited them more, you or them?*

**ASK:** So what? What does all this mean? How does it apply to their approach to work? What did you learn about yourselves?

*Other questions could be...*

- Are there any examples from real life that you can give?
- Which time with the line-ups today was more fun? Why?
- Which atmosphere would they prefer at work?
- What did they individually have to contribute to get that?