

TogetherNESS

Grades 6-8

Segment Summary:

The cohesiveness of the Allstar Panthers cheerleading squad was tested when one of its members was injured during a competition. But with teamwork and cooperation, the squad adapted and overcame its challenges to perform its routine.

The Allstar Panthers cheerleading squad was preparing to compete in the first meet of the year. Each member worked hard to perfect her individual skills; however, cheerleading is a team sport, and the team's true strength lies in its ability to pull together. Confident that they could win the competition, the cheerleaders weren't intimidated by the other squads' routines. Their routine was flawless until one of the girls hurt her knee. With the routine halted, the cheerleaders were forced to make a difficult decision – either remove themselves from the competition or perform their routine minus one teammate. With one less person, the routine couldn't be performed in the same way. Nevertheless, they rallied together and returned to the competition to perform a modified version of their routine. They didn't perform perfectly the second time around, and they placed fifth in the competition. But their coach was proud of them, and they were proud of themselves for sticking together to overcome an obstacle. In their minds and in their hearts, the Allstar Panthers cheerleaders realized that their persistence as a team made them victorious at the end of the day.

Discussion Questions:

1. What characteristics do members of the Allstar Panthers cheerleading squad possess?
2. Which would you say is more important to an athletic team: the desire to win or the ability to work together? Explain.
3. Why is it particularly important for cheerleaders to be cohesive and work together? At what times in your life do feel it's important to work with others?
4. Have you ever been a member of a group or a team that was not cohesive? What were the circumstances? What were the effects of the lack of cohesion?
5. What is the relationship between the closeness of teammates and the team's ability to make a decision quickly?
6. Have you ever been injured while working with or playing on a team? What were the circumstances? Were your teammates supportive, or did your teammates make you feel as if you let them down? Explain.
7. How do you think the cheerleaders felt about returning to perform their routine again after their teammate's injury?
8. Give an example of a time or event where you had to pull together with others in your home, school or community in order to accomplish a goal. What were you trying to accomplish? Why was it important to be able to rely on others in that situation?
9. Think of a group to which you belong. How does it make you feel to know that you can rely on others in your group? How does it make you feel to know that they can rely on you?
10. In what ways does a family operate like a team? Why is it important for all of the members to work together? What kinds of "wins" or "victories" are available to families who work together?

Vocabulary Words and Definitions:

Band (n.)

Definition: a group of people formed because of a common belief or purpose

Context: The band of sixth-graders united in its effort to win the tug-of-war competition at field day.

Barrier (n.)

Definition: a rule, problem, etc., that prevents people from doing something or limits what they can do

Context: The cultural barrier between Onkar and Juliette is one of the reasons they have difficulty understanding each other.

Cohesive (adj.)

Definition: related, united, linked, etc., in such a way as to form a whole

Context: If Riley's junior class were more cohesive, it could accomplish its goal of raising \$20,000 for the junior-senior prom.

Consolation (n.)

Definition: someone or something that makes a person feel better when he or she is sad or disappointed

Context: Uzi sought consolation from his parents after he failed a difficult test.

Eliminate (v.)

Definition: to remove or destroy something

Context: Dirk eliminated the pollution from the nearby stream by organizing a weekly cleanup schedule.

Essential (adj.)

Definition: important and necessary

Context: Studying is an essential part of becoming a successful student.

Hinder (v.)

Definition: to make it difficult for someone to do something or for something to develop

Context: The weather hindered Penda's plans to go hiking.

Isolated (adj.)

Definition: feeling alone and unable to meet or speak to other people

Context: After her accident, Marisa felt isolated from her friends because she thought they couldn't understand the pain and fear she was experiencing.

Stereotype (n.)

Definition: an idea of what a particular group of people is like, especially one that is wrong or unfair, that many people hold

Context: Because Ade studies hard and pays attention in class, he doesn't fit the slacker stereotype.

Teamwork (n.)

Definition: the ability of a group of people to communicate and work well together in order to accomplish a common goal

Context: It took a great deal of practice and teamwork for the cheerleading squad to perform a flawless routine.

Togetherness (n.)

Definition: the feeling a person has when he or she is a part of a group of people who have a close relationship with each other

Context: Inez says that being a part of the student council and spending time with people she can relate to gives her a real sense of togetherness and belonging.

Source: *Longman Advanced American Dictionary*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited. 2000.

Activity: Breaking Down Barriers

Objectives:

Students will be able to

- Identify personality traits in themselves
- Compare personality traits between themselves and their peers
- Match similar traits between themselves and other students
- Discover the similarities between themselves and their peers through conversation

Materials:

- Pens, pencils
- Paper
- Chalkboard, overhead projector, or interactive whiteboard

Procedure:

1. Begin this activity by listing 10 interesting facts (beliefs, characteristics, etc.) about yourself on the chalkboard or overhead projector. Then, ask your students to read the list. If students have something in common with you, ask them to raise their hands.
2. Explain to your students that you have two tasks. The first task is to learn the common fact that exists between you and the student you select. The second task is to discover three additional characteristics you have in common with the student you select.
3. Of the students with their hands raised, call on one and guess the fact that you have in common. You should begin this by asking your student questions. However, you may not ask him or her to tell you the common fact. You may ask the student to elaborate on his or her answer if necessary. Based on the answers to your questions, try to guess which of the facts you have in common and include the three additional facts you have in common with your student in your answer.

Note: The idea of this activity is for your students to learn about each other through a conversation. Therefore, the example you model should occur in the form of a conversation and not a question-and-answer session.

4. Begin a discussion about differences and barriers by asking the following questions:
 - How many times have you seen a person and wondered what you might have in common with him or her?
 - What do you think would happen if you just started talking with that person and began to learn more about him or her?
 - Why is it unusual for a person from one group or clique to begin talking with people from another group or clique?
 - What are some barriers that keep people from getting to know each other better? How can stereotypes hinder communication?

5. Instruct your students to take out a clean piece of paper. On their papers, have students write 10 interesting facts about themselves. When all of your students have completed their lists, tell them to stand next to their desks. Explain that they will leave their lists on their desks and visit other students' desks to read others' facts. If students notice that they have something in common with the author of the list, then they should write their full names at the bottom of that list. If the list already has three names on it, then no additional students may add their names.

Note: Allow your students to move about the room in the manner most suitable for your classroom. You may choose to have your students spend two minutes at a desk and then move to the next desk in an organized manner. Or you may choose to allow your students to randomly move to desks around the room. If you choose the second method, instruct your students to visit the desks of people they do not know very well.

6. Once students complete their visits, direct them to return to their desks and look over the names on their lists. Explain to your students that they have the same two tasks that you had earlier. The first task is to learn the common fact that exists between themselves and the three students whose names appear on their lists. The second task is to discover three additional interesting facts they have in common with each student whose name is on their lists. Remind your students that the goal of this activity is foster togetherness by learning about each other through conversation, so they should strive for more than a question-and-answer session.
7. If time permits, you may decide to allow your students a few minutes to begin their tasks. If no time is available, assign the tasks for homework to be completed in two to four days.