"Teamwork" Lesson plan - exercises, for any level

A. Goal of the lesson

By the end of the session, the students must be able to:
- increase team cohesion
- identify team-healthy behaviours
- identify unhealthy team work behaviours

*The exercises presented in the lesson can be used for a plethora of goals from identyfing tension in a group, to adopting more creative midframes, to developing better attitudes towards failing – The same brief applies while the debrief can be suited to whatever need arises.

B. Activities

1. Marshmallow Challenge (40 min)

Intro (10 min)

Divide participants into teams of 3 – 5.

Explain that they will all receive the same kit. Explain that the kit contains spaghetti, tape, string and a mrashmallow. Explain that the goal of the exercise is to build the **tallest freestanding structure** using only the items in the bag (the kit). The structure will be measured from tabletop to marshmallow via a measure tape/ruler. They may use all or part of the kit and may break the spaghetti or cut the tape&string but no harm must come to the marshmallow.

Tell them they have 18 minutes to finish the structure.

Give them the kit

Start the timer.

Actual exercise (18 min)

At the end of the 18 minutes ask everyone to stop touching their structures, measure them up and declare a winner.

Debrief (12 min)

Guide the debrief via the following questions:

a. Was the task harder than you initially thought? Why?

b. Did you make any assumptions during the exercise? (About the weight of the marshmallow? About the fragility of the spaghetti? About the usefulness of the string?)
c. What was the timeline of your emotions during the 18 minutes?
d. If you could do this task again, would you do anything differently? What exactly?
e. What lessons does this challenge present to us?

2. Lost at Sea (40 min)

1. Provide the Brief from page 1 in the Lost at Sea booklet (found in part F.Theory), then provide a 'lost at sea ranking chart' for every member of your group.
2. Ask each person to take 10 minutes to decide their own rankings, and record the choices in the left-hand Step 1 column.
3. Invite everyone to get into teams of 3-4. Encourage the group to discuss their individual choices and work together to agree on a collaborative list. Allow 20 minutes for this section. Record the group rankings in the second column (team rankings).
4. The correct answers were suggested by the US Coastguard. Display the 'expert' rankings on a PowerPoint presentation, whiteboard or photocopy. Compare your individual and group answers with the correct answers and determine a score.
5. For each item, mark the number of points that your score differs from the Coastguard ranking and then add up all the points. Disregard plus or minus differences. The lower the total, the better your score.
6. Conduct the debrief by asking the following questions:
   • Did you agree with your teamembers initially? How did that make you feel?
   • How did you come to agreement? Describe the process.
   • Where your individual scores lower or higher than the group scores?
   • What could you learn from this experience?

C. Preparation
1. For The Marshmallow Challenge, prepare a kit for each group plus one extra just in case (for 4 groups prepare 5 kits). Each kit should be placed in a paper bag and should contain:
   • 20 spaghettti sticks
   • 1m of string
   • 1m of tape
   • 1 marshmallow (make sure it's the fluffy white kind)
It is good practice that you also have child-safe scissors with you
Make sure each team has their own building place – chairs are not needed

2. For Lost at Sea, print as many charts as you have participants (and a few to spare as well)
Make sure the participants have desks they can work at (when they decide both as smaller and as bigger groups). A classroom with moveable desks is best

D. Hints

1. For The Marshamallow Challenge:

a. cheating could be part of the process. Allow the participants to cheat and ask about it in the debrief process. Why did they need to cheat? Was it really cheating? Was it information gathering – discuss the ethics of it as you see fit

b. make sure you tell the participants to not try to abuse the marshmallow in any way (people have attempted to make it lighter by eating half)

c. you can use crescendo music to make the atmoshpere more tense during the exercise (and look for how groups handle stresfull situations)

d. give everyone marshmallows as a job well done (you could also try with apples for the healthier alternative)

2. For Lost at Sea

a. have a dictionary handy or pictures of the objects, as not everyone knows what all the objects are

b. don't be afraid to explain how some of the items work if you are asked – this is not a general knowledge test, but workshop where minds are put together

c. regardless of if they survive or not, everyone can get marshmallows (or apples... sigh...)

d. alternatively, add another stage for the game by having the smaller groups group up once more

E. Verification

The debrief process will be able to tell you whether and what students have learned

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F. Theory

1.   For   The   Marshmallow   Challenge:
https://www.ted.com/talks/tom_wujec_build_a_tower

2. Fot Lost at Sea: full tutorial, explanation and charts by the inventor of the game:
http://insight.typepad.co.uk/lost_at_sea.pdf