

# Tied In Knots

**Team Building Event**



*Creating Transformational Experiences*

[www.BuildingTeams.com](http://www.BuildingTeams.com)

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# Tied In Knots

## Table of Contents

Introduction to Be Legendary and <a href="http://www.BuildingTeams.com">www.BuildingTeams.com</a> .....	3
<b>Complete Instructions to Run a Successful Event</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Purpose .....	4
Length of Exercise and Short Agenda .....	4
Safety Tips .....	4
Equipment You Will Need .....	5
Storyline .....	5
Setup .....	5
Variations .....	6
Dynamics to Watch For:.....	6
Questions for Group Discussion .....	6
Tips and Tricks from Our Professional Facilitators .....	7
<b>Facilitative Tools</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Maintenance Tools .....	10
Clarity Tools .....	11
Learning Cycle Stages .....	12
The Miracle 10% - One Idea for Closure .....	13

# Tied In Knots

## Be Legendary .

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### Introduction to Be Legendary and [www.BuildingTeams.com](http://www.BuildingTeams.com)

Be Legendary . was founded to help organizations build successful teams through individual discovery and experience.

A real team requires many attributes to be successfully implemented:

- Common Goals
- Leading and Leadership
- Communication
- Trust
- Accountability
- Problem Solving
- Decision Making

As a company, we focus on every aspect of a 'real' team. We have developed 'team building' products and workshops to help your team successfully implement the attributes we have listed above.

We have created these products to be as easy as possible to run and still achieve your desired outcomes. You could have purchased, or may own, any number of books on team building activities with hundreds

If you are like most of our customers, after looking through the team building activity book, you are wringing your hands and wondering,

*'Which one of these activities is ACTUALLY going to work!?'*

We are here to help.

You did not simply purchase this activity, you purchased our professional expertise. You can call and speak with any one of our facilitators about your specific needs, your group and your environment to make sure this event is going to work for you and how to possibly tailor it to fit your group.

Many times, we all simply need to talk to someone and be reassured that the activity IS going to work. We are more than happy to talk you through the activity as many times as necessary.

This the same approach we take with our workshops so you may want to consider giving us a call for your next workshop, event, retreat, meeting or conference and find out how we can help you.

Make it a great day!

Be Legendary Facilitative Staff.

# Tied In Knots

## *Complete Instructions to Run a Successful Event*



### **Purpose**

This is a very simplistic exercise designed help groups practice consensus building and decision-making. It will encourage group members to participate and is a great precursor to more complex problem solving exercises or workshop (60-Minute Version).

This exercise can be run equally well inside or outside. It has been designed to run on a conference room table or in any small room. This is a great event to start off a meeting in which the group will have to make a decision together or solve a problem. (15-Minute Version).

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### **Length of Exercise and Short Agenda**

Total time is roughly 30 to 45 minutes and should not exceed 60 minutes. This depends largely upon how quickly your group accomplishes the task and how much discussion is generated.

- 5 Min. Introduce Activity & Cover Ground Rules, if any
- 15 Min. Activity
- 20 Min. Group Discussion
- 5 Min. Wrap up and Set Expectations – Miracle 10%

The discussion is the most important piece of this agenda as that is where the knowledge learned in the activity is transferred back to life, work, etc.

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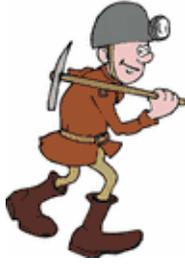


### **Safety Tips**

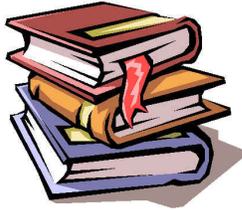
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# Tied In Knots



## Equipment You Will Need



## Storyline

21 Pieces of webbing total

7 of one color

7 striped

7 various colors

1 miniature sample – a metal ring with 4 loops of colored string to demonstrate how it works

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You and your team of bomb experts have been called in once again to save the day.

It is a bomb unlike any you have ever seen. The connecting wires are a confusing mess, but you know there is one wire you can cut to separate the connecting wires and defuse the bomb. Since you will all die, you **MUST** make this decision as a team.

Once you have identified the correct wire, tell your bomb squad leader (facilitator) which wire to cut. Oh, and if you touch any of the wires, the bomb goes off.

(Note: When the group identifies which rope to be cut and is wrong, say 'BOOM!' and you can either stop the exercise or let them continue, depending upon how it is going.)

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## Setup

1. In the grab bag are 21 independent ropes tied into loops. Decide your level of difficulty and select the appropriate color and number of rope loops.
2. You will need to untie one of the knots, slide the end of the rope through the others and retie the knot.
3. Make sure only one rope connects the rest of the independent loops.
4. Lay the ropes down before the group is in the room. You can make this easy or hard, depending upon how messy you lay down the ropes.
5. Try it before the group enters the room so you gauge the difficulty.

# Tied In Knots

6. Use the metal ring prop as an example to make sure everyone understands how the ropes are attached.

## Difficulty Levels:

- a. 5 ropes all different colors (easiest)
  - b. 5 ropes all same color (moderate)
  - c. 5 ropes all striped (hard)
  - d. Increase the number of ropes to increase the difficulty in all three areas.
- 



## Variations

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- Give the team 60 seconds to make a decision. This will completely change the dynamics of the decision, even for experienced teams.
  - Have each individual decide for themselves which is the right rope before opening up to discussion.
  - Tie additional knots in the ropes to confuse the ropes.
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## Dynamics to Watch For:

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- Ideas and comments being discarded by the group without acknowledgement.
  - Watch to see how the group strategies, if at all, make a note and share the observation in the debrief. Ask if the strategy, or lack thereof, helped or hindered them.
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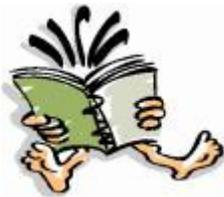
## Questions for Group Discussion

1. Did the team stop to plan any strategy before attempting the task? Why or why not? Would that have helped? Do you see this same pattern at work, where we jump in too quickly without planning?
2. If you were frustrated, what caused it and how did you overcome it?
3. Were you able to decide on your own which rope was the right one?
4. What was your first thought about this event and

# Tied In Knots

what do you think about it now?

5. How does what happened in this exercise relate back to your life at work?
6. What do the ropes represent to you (each person)?



## Tips and Tricks from Our Professional Facilitators

1. On the same-color exercises, make sure you tie a special knot or otherwise identify for yourself the correct rope so you can help the group if you want.
2. If you have 10 or more people, break them into smaller groups of 2-3 to analyze a single rope to determine whether their rope is the correct one. This will help show the group how a large problem can be broken down into smaller pieces and solved. You may want to wait and see if they strategize this way first.
3. The ropes can be used as metaphors for almost any difficult task: computer networks, paperwork or processing flow, individual tasks of a large project, independent departments of the same organization, etc. Be sure to have a good metaphor in mind, if you plan to use one. Alternatively, ask individuals what the ropes represent.

### How to discover the best decision-making technique.

- a. Have the group run the first set of 5 different color ropes and then discuss what worked and what didn't. Brainstorm ideas that might have worked, but were not tried and may work next time.
- b. Increase the difficulty and encourage the group to use the techniques that worked well on the first set of ropes. After they are done, discuss what worked and what didn't.
- c. Increase the difficulty again and use the techniques that worked well the second time.

Be sure to have the rope sets ready to run so the group is not waiting for you to tie the new ropes together. Alternatively, while they are discussing what works, you can attach new ropes to the current

# Tied In Knots

set, but be sure to change the connecting rope.

## **How to build group consensus speed.**

Use a series of increasingly complex variations of ropes to help build consensus speed. To do this, see the difficulty levels above.

- a. First help the group discover what is their best decision-making technique, as above, unless they already have a great process for decision-making. If they don't, you will find out when trying to build consensus speed.
- b. Provide them with another series of ropes, but this time enforce a time limit. The limitation is up to you based upon your assessment of their capabilities. I frequently make it as short as 60 seconds and tell them that they must have group consensus within that time (give a countdown to increase time-pressure). You may want to increase the time for larger groups or more difficult rope combinations.
- c. *They may or may not get the correct answer, but coming to a consensus is the win this time, not a correct answer.* You do not want to get bogged down in a discussion of quality until later. However, make a note of how many they get right.
- d. Continue to provide them with a series of more difficult rope combinations and see how the speed does or does not improve. Remember, with more difficult combinations, you should not expect the speed to necessarily improve, but you will see improvement on the communication and the actual speed of the communication to get to consensus.
- e. After the group goes through enough rope combinations, take them back to the first level of difficulty and see how quickly they solve it.

This is now the time to move onto a business problem they need to solve at work. The process should be incredibly smooth and productive.

# Tied In Knots

# Tied In Knots

## Facilitative Tools

The key to a good facilitation is to let the group discover the learning that is appropriate. As the facilitator, do not try to manipulate the questioning to get the group to discover what YOU feel is important.

Below are some tools to help you in your questioning to help the group discover their own learning without manipulating the conversation.

### Maintenance Tools

#### Throw-Back:

Team Member: *"How can we possibly get through this obstacle?"*  
Facilitator: *"If it was possible, what would need to happen?"*

#### Share Observations:

Facilitator: *"It is very quiet. What does the silence mean?"*  
Facilitator: *"It seems that not everyone is actively participating. Is there a reason for this?"*

#### Review Group Agreements:

It is very important to review when the group becomes disinterested, when rule violations are occurring without thought, and if the group is attacking each other personally.

Facilitator: *"Remember the ground rules we discussed as we begin to talk about this event."* (If there are any)

#### Check-In:

If a group is really struggling or people are becoming very frustrated, interrupt the activity and ask:

*"So what are you doing right now that is working?"*

*"What is not working? Why?"*

#### Accept/Legitimize/Deal With or Defer:

Create a safe environment for participation by:

- Responding neutrally to a speaker whose ideas are "out of synch" with others in the group
- Legitimize his or her contribution
- Agree together how to move forward

#### Facilitator:

*"You're not convinced we're not getting anywhere? That's OK, you may be right. Would you be willing to hang on for fifteen more minutes and see what happens? Yes? Thanks."*

#### Facilitator:

*"The issue you just raised sounds like an important one to you. Can we finish debriefing this event, before we move on to discuss your issue?"*

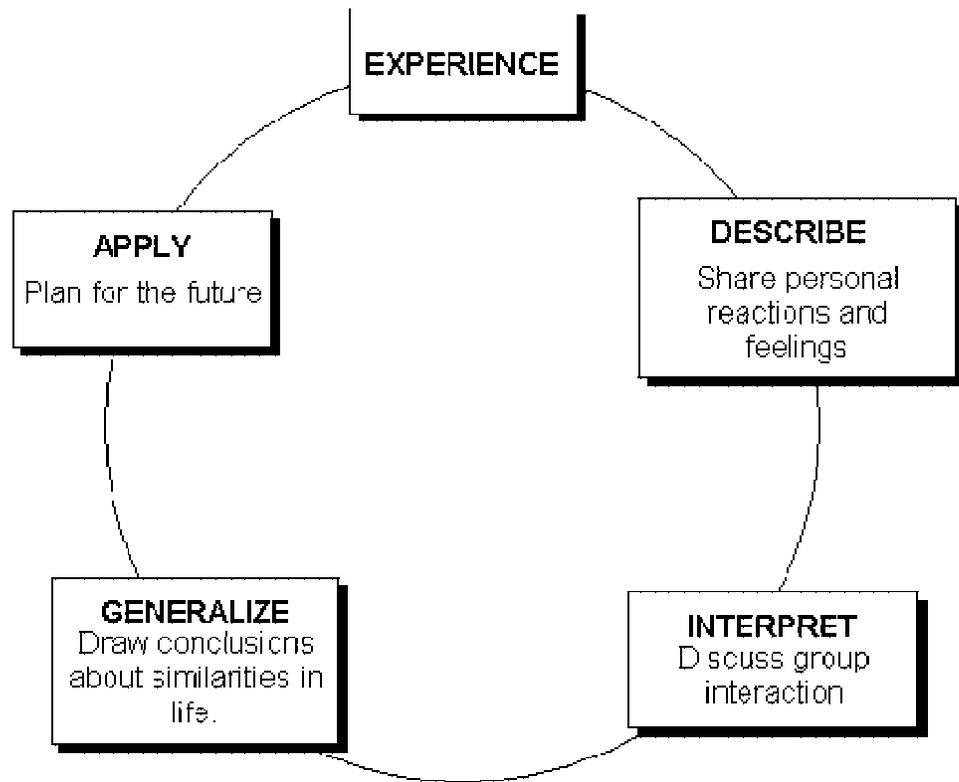
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## Clarity Tools

	When You Hear:	Respond With:
<b>Universals</b>	All Every Never	"All?" "Every?" "Never?"
<b>Rules</b>	Should Shouldn't Must Can't	"What would happen if...?": "What causes or prevents...?" "Must?" "Can't?"
<b>Non-Specific Verbs</b>		"How specifically?"
<b>Non-Specific Nouns</b>	We  It	"Who specifically?"  "What specifically?"
<b>Quantifiers</b>	Too Much Too Many Too Expensive	"Compared to what?"
<b>Statements</b>	I Don't Know That Is Impossible	"Well, if you did know, ..."  "If it were possible, what would need to happen?"

# Tied In Knots

## Learning Cycle Stages



*1975 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators, University Associates*

### Stage 1: Experience

The experience forms the basis for the rest of the cycle. A structured activity, new game, or community service project can all be good experiences from which to draw learning.

### Stage 2: Describe

In this stage, the facilitator asks the participants about their feelings and reactions to the experience. The focus in this stage is on the individuals' feelings and experiences. Ask questions such as:

*"How did you feel?"*

*"What did you do?"*

*"What happened to you?"*

### Stage 3: Interpret

In this stage, participants discuss what went on between group members during the exercise. To process individual reactions into collective ideas, good questions to ask include:

*"Why do you feel the way you do?"*

*"What caused that particular result or feeling?"*

### Stage 4: Generalize

# Tied In Knots

In this stage, the group generalizes from this experience to see how it might be reflected in other areas of their lives. Participants are asked to focus on situations in their personal or work lives that are similar to those in the activity. The task is to identify similarities and state principles that they can apply to other situations. Some questions that could be asked are:

*"What did you learn from the experience?"*  
*"What other similar situations have you experienced?"*  
*"How does this relate to your work life?"*

## Stage 5: Apply

Finally, participants can decide on a course of action for the future. As a facilitator, ask questions such as:

*"What do you want to remember from this experience?"*  
*"What would you do differently in a similar situation?"*

## The Miracle 10% - One Idea for Closure

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### The Miracle 10%

This is quite possibly the easiest method of participant buy-in for change we have in our arsenal.

In front of the group simply ask:

*"Who feels they cannot improve <insert topic, i.e. communication> 10%?"*

99.9% of the time, everyone will raise their hand. (This is not saying that the same people are not trying as hard as they can. Many are giving the 100% effort, but that does not mean they cannot improve. Sometimes you need to make the distinction.)

*"Does everyone agree that improving 10% is a reasonable goal?"*

Everyone will agree. After all we are not asking for a HUGE change, just a small one.

*"There are 'X' (i.e. 15 in the workshop) number of you here. So if each person improved 10% that is a 150% improvement. What would work be like with that improvement? How much better would our communication be? (Open up for discussion and create a specific list)*

*"So it sounds like everyone agrees that with just a small effort to improve from each person, we would all be much happier."*

# Tied In Knots

*"Each person will be responsible for their own improvement. You will each need to hold yourself accountable."*

Set the right expectation.

*"We all agree 10% improvement is a reasonable goal but I want you to think for just a moment what that REALLY means."*

*"After we leave today, we will be expecting to see a difference in <insert topic>. But a 10% improvement means that 9 times out of 10, you will see me (use yourself as an example) doing the same old crap I always did."*

*"And the one time I actually do the right thing, you may not be around. So you may see me do the same old crap 15 or 20 times before you actually see me improving. It is important to have trust in me and the fact that I have agreed to work on improving and that I am consciously doing so."*

*"Each person here must have that expectation and when you do see the right change, make every effort to point it out to the person who did it and to everyone else. It is hard to become tired of praise, regardless of how well you handle it."*

At the end of the workshop, you can have everyone spend 15 minutes and write out how they will improve the 10%. Not simply "improve communication" or something generic, but the behaviors that will improve communication.

For example, ***"I will focus on and listen to what the other person is saying and not on how I will respond"***.

Help them drill it down until they have something that they can act upon every single day.