

# CHAOS

## Toss

### CHALLENGE (GOAL, OBJECTIVE):

To manage in the face of chaos, to focus, stay alert, communicate, and pay attention to others.

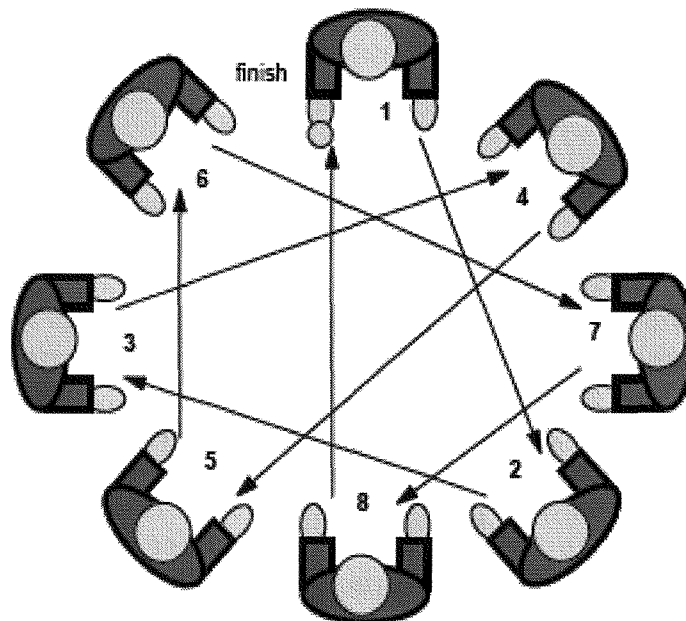
**GROUP SIZE:** 6-15 per facilitator

**TIME:** 30 minutes

**EQUIPMENT:** 5 balls, 1 plastic spider (or other artifact)

### PROCEDURE AND RULES:

The group and facilitator stand in a circle facing one another. The facilitator tosses one ball to someone in the circle. Each person then tosses it to another until each person has received the ball once (similar to illustration below). The facilitator is the last one to receive the ball. The group is told to pass the ball in this sequence without dropping it. Practice this order until the process is smooth and the ball is not dropped. Then repeat the exercise, but after the first ball is tossed, the facilitator adds the other balls and the spider to the sequence without warning. The added balls and spider must be passed in the same sequence as the first ball. The group must decide how to manage these items in the same order without dropping a ball or spider.




## VARIATIONS:

- Instead of balls and a spider, you may use objects that are relevant to your group. For example, for school you might use items that represent topics or issues students must manage or avoid: a paperback book, a sneaker, an apple, or an alarm clock. For corporate groups you might use a cell phone (one that has been retired), car keys, an apple, a sneaker, and a child's toy. When debriefing, discuss ways of managing work, relationships, health, exercise, family, and other challenges. In alcohol and drug rehabilitation applications, this activity can represent AA step-work, family, job, meetings, and relapse temptations/opportunities (spiders).
- Hold up a glass ball and ask how things would change if this were used.

## DISCUSSION /DEBRIEF:

Life can be chaotic, too many irons in the fire and multiple things demanding your time and attention. Focus, prioritizing, and concentration are valuable for managing chaos and time.

- Quality, innovation, and service are vital to the success of an organization. What is needed to make sure that the whole team focuses on these? What happens when they do?
- Paying attention is important to effectively perform most tasks. In this challenge, individuals must pay attention to how they throw the ball to others and how others throw the ball to them. There are many reasons why an individual does not pay attention.
- If each person focuses on sending the ball the way he or she wants to receive it, each person is assured a good pass that is easy to catch. Since each person is focusing on the person to whom they will pass the ball, each receiver is free to focus on the person they are passing the ball to and their relationship to the team rather than worrying about just themselves.
- Most people focus on their own needs and what is urgent (catching the ball) versus what is important (throwing the ball properly). Success in this activity requires that individuals pay attention to the needs of others' first (the person receiving the ball), and then focus on doing their task correctly. Focusing only on what is urgent can generate mistakes, chaos, and rework. Carefully doing what is important prevents these things. Mistakes, chaos, and rework create a climate that is stressful. A situation that is free of these things is calm and less hectic with more predictable outcomes.
- When active and busy, it is important to pay attention to the immediate task at hand. Do it, pass it along, and prepare for the next task. An individual's primary contribution to the team is to do his or her job well.
- We often encounter unexpected events/objects (spiders). While not always welcome, they must be dealt with as they occur.

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- Assist someone who needs your help. In this activity, adjusting how you throw or catch the ball demonstrates flexibility or adaptability that can help others. Helping others requires sensitivity to their needs. Not everyone prefers to throw or catch the ball the same way, and individual ability to catch a ball can vary significantly in a small group (lessons in diversity, i.e., capabilities, preferences, styles, habits, etc.).
  - While no one is told he or she must pass the spider, most individuals respond by treating it like another ball. Normally, no one takes the initiative to stop the spider or even considers it to be a different object that could harm others. The spider may represent the unexpected, an opportunity to develop, or something that needs to be eliminated. Stopping the spider requires courage to act and draws attention to the individual (peer pressure). Many individuals make assumptions about what they should do based on the behavior of others. Many focus on the process while not paying adequate attention to the content (i.e., the spider).