No Man is an Island

One person alone can do only so much. A team of people, however, can accomplish a lot by combining their ideas, talents, strengths, and efforts. In this activity, youth will have the opportunity to perform a task by themselves and then with a team. They will take a close look at teamwork and how important it can be to collaborate with others.

Youth Will Learn

*Workforce Skills*: Teamwork, thinking skills, and communication

*Success Indicators*: Youth will explain how a combined effort benefits a team and understand personal roles in a group.

**What You Need**:  
Time Involved: 60 minutes  
Suggested Group Size: Any size  
Materials Needed:
- Drinking straws (see Facilitator Tips below)  
- Masking tape (one roll per person)  
- Paper (10 sheets per person)  
- Two chairs  
- Book

**Facilitator Tips**:  
It works best to have one package of straws per person for Part 1 of the challenge and one package of drinking straws per group for Part 2 of the challenge.

**The Activity**

1. Have the teens do the first part of this activity by themselves. Give each teen his or her own set of supplies (package of drinking straws, roll of masking tape, paper, two chairs).

2. Instruct the teens that using only the supplies provided (drinking straws, paper, tape) build a bridge between two chairs that is strong enough to hold a book. The bridge should not touch the floor. Do this without talking to anyone or getting help of any kind. You have only 20 minutes to complete this challenge.
3. After the 20-minute time limit, for those who were able to construct a complete bridge, use the book to test the strength of the bridge.

4. Next, group teens into teams of 2-3 people. Instruct teens that they are going to do the activity again however, this time they are allowed to talk with team members and work together to build a bridge. The team will have 20 minutes to complete this challenge.

5. After the 20-minute time limit, for those who were able to construct a complete bridge, use the book to test the strength of the bridge.

**Talk It Over**

**Share**
- How did you feel when you had to work alone on the challenge?
- How did you feel when you got to work as a team on the challenge?
- How did your results differ from the two different attempts?
- What things were easier to do by yourself?
- What things were easier to do as a team?
- Did being able to communicate with others help you achieve your goal?

**Process**
- How important was it to be able to communicate with your team members when trying to build the second bridge?
- Why do you think communication in a team setting is so important?
- Why do you think it is important for teams to work together?
- What happens when teams do not work well together?

**Generalize**
- How does building the bridge in this activity compare to your daily work or as a member of this group?
- What things do you do at home, school, or in other activities that are easier to do alone?
- What things do you do at home, school, or in other activities benefit from having the help of a team?

**Apply**
- How does this activity relate to teamwork in the workplace?
- If everyone in the workplace takes responsibility for doing his or her job, how do you think this helps the employees contribute to the company’s overall goals?
- What things can you do better as a member of the teams you are a part of at school, home, work, etc.?

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.”
- Helen Keller