

# GIFTS: Great Ideas for Teaching Servant-Leadership

*A project of the Center for Spirituality & Leadership at Marian University*

**Activity Title:** Two by Two, Tie Our Shoes

**Group Size:** Doesn't matter as long as you have an even number.      **Time Needed:** 20-30 minutes

**Servant-Leadership Attribute addressed:**

- |                                                        |                                                                |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Active listening              | <input type="checkbox"/> Coaching and mentoring                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community building            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Facilitating collaboration |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Foresight and vision          | <input type="checkbox"/> Fostering growth                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Self awareness                | <input type="checkbox"/> Stimulating creativity                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): _____ |                                                                |

**Objectives / Goals / Purpose of the activity:**

- To put participants in a situation where they must cooperate and collaborate to complete a relatively simple, every day task.
- To demonstrate the importance of communication in the process of collaborative task completion.

**Materials Needed:**

Enough shoe 48" shoe laces to accommodate every two persons in your group. Or, use the tie-able shoes on participants feet

**Directions for the Activity:**

- Ask participants to pair up (or assign partners) and to situate their chairs so that they are sitting side-by-side
  - Participants need to sit very close to one another so you may need to make sure that participants are comfortable in that situation.
  - Left-handers may want to sit on the left, and right handers on the right, but this is not at all a requirement.
  - (If you don't have an even number, assign some folks to serve as observers)
- If one or both of the participants are wearing tie shoes, ask them to untie their shoes, but to leave their shoes on
- If participants are not wearing tie shoes (or they have a preference) distribute one shoe lace to each pair.

- The participants will need to tie the shoe lace around something. This could be a book, or coffee mug handle or other items.
- After each pair is situated in their chairs, and has a shoelace, and something to tie it around, give participants the following instructions:
  1. You must tie a bow using the shoe lace you were given or on one of your shoes.
  2. Each partner may only use **ONE** hand, and one hand only
  3. When you have completed the task, please stand
  4. This isn't a contest to see who finishes first. So you may want to encourage pairs to take their time and allow enough time for each pair to succeed
- Allow the pairs to struggle a bit
- Observers and/or facilitators should
  - Keep track of why some pairs are more successful than others.
  - Note those that talk to one another before jumping into the task.
  - Watch for those that easily become frustrated and why.
- After each pair has completed the task, debrief the process using the following questions.

### **Questions or Process for Debriefing the Activity:**

Keep track of responses so you can look for patterns among the answers.

#### Basic Debrief Questions:

1. Given that we tie our shoes every day, what were the challenges involved in this task?
2. What did you do as a pair to make the task more / less difficult?
3. Did you assume the other person knew how to tie his/her shoes? Why? Why not?
4. Did you talk about how you were going to proceed before you jumped into the task?
5. Were you trying to complete the task before others in the group? Why? Why not?

#### Consider the need for cooperation / collaboration:

1. What specific steps did you take in order to collaborate in completing the task?
  - a. How did you communicate?
  - b. How did you strategize?
  - c. What assumptions did you make about the other person?
2. If you were to repeat the task, or change partners how would you proceed differently? What things would you do the same?
3. What are the implications for servant leaders?
  - a. With regard to assuming that others have the same goals as we do?
  - b. With regard to assuming others know how we want to proceed?
  - c. About the need to communicate effectively before proceeding, while working on the task, and in evaluating task completion?

**Describe when the activity is best utilized:**

1. At some level, this activity works best with very little preparation. It's effective when folks are not prepped with a lengthy discussion about the importance of collaboration and cooperation. Let that realization come out of the discussion after the experience.
2. The activity can be used as an ice breaker (but remember participants have to sit close together) or as way to introduce the group to the concept of collaboration.
3. The activity could be used to begin a meeting in a group that has had some difficulty cooperating. But in this case, the facilitator needs to be fully prepared to debrief and process the activity with some care and a readiness to for careful listening.

**Variations and/or Helpful Hints:**

1. Tying one another's shoes is a nice touch if participants are wearing tie-able shoes.
2. Conversation about when one learned to tie shoes or tie bows, etc. is a nice way to ease into the discussion.

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