



Evaluation Techniques

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A number of games and devices can be used to highlight issues when evaluating as well as adding to the experience of evaluating itself.

In practice, discussions are on a Team basis with the Scouter facilitating the process. In the younger sections the Scouter will be the main focus and driver of the evaluation sessions. However, in the older sections this can be managed by the Team or Team Leader with Scouter observation. It is important that the Scouter stop the discussion at different times, to reflect and establish points raised and agree achievements on an individual and Team basis etc. Rather than have a full ranging discussion with no conclusions.

Suggestions to make evaluating fun and rewarding

'How did you get on?'

Short informal evaluation sessions that take place after each activity. To avoid unsatisfactory answers such as 'it was okay' or 'it was good' or 'it was bad', perhaps some leading questions should be asked by the Scouter. At the same time it should not delay the Scouter or young people for more than four or five minutes. It is meant to be a quick method of feedback for the Scouter and the Team and a chance for the Scouts to say what is on their mind. Bearing in mind the short evaluation session should not take long, the leading questions should be of a simplistic nature designed to make the young person think about the activity but not in a very deep-thinking way.

Below are just some examples of leading questions that could be asked at this session. Again, the focus should be on the positive:

1. What did you learn doing this activity?
2. What did you achieve?
3. Did you learn something new?
4. What part of the activity did you do best?

These quick assessments can be undertaken in a relatively casual way – as the Team walk back to camp. As the Team clean up their site before departure or on the bus on the way home.

Team Leaders can also conduct quick evaluations at any time with their Team – sitting around a table for dinner, lying in the Team tent at night or immediately after undertaking a challenge.

The culture of evaluation should be ever present as Scouts and Teams seek to improve and progress onto bigger and better adventures.

Team talk – brought to Team Leaders Council

Ideally once a month, a more in-depth Team discussion takes place which evaluates the events of the month gone by. Examples of questions your Team Leader's can ask:

1. What did you achieve? How?
2. What would you do the same and what would you change next time?
3. What have you learned about your strengths and weaknesses?

4. What do you want to achieve now?
5. How did you find working with your Team?
6. How can the team improve?

An evaluation session normally has 4 cycles – facts, personal responses, lessons learned, future actions and this cycle also indicates how the evaluation progresses.

Facts - are generally statements like – the activity was good, the bus was late, we forgot the tents.

Personal responses to what happened on the activity – I felt left out, I enjoyed working with the Team, I think we made a mess of the dinner, I know I can do better the next time.

Lessons learned - are what have been learnt from the experience. These can be small personal realisations or more general organisational issues. They are also the achievements of individuals and the Team during the activity.

Future actions – are what we are going to do in the future as a result of what we have learnt. The setting of new objectives and goals

General points arising, perhaps related to organisation or new ideas for activities and adventures should be brought forward to the Team Leader Council for further discussion and action.

Recognition

The evaluation process is designed to highlight the learning that has taken place during the programme period. Individual and Team achievements need to be recognised. The achievements might, in the first instance, be recognised by the individual directly– ‘I learned how to light a fire for the first time’ or ‘I lead my Team on a hike’. The Team as a group might also recognise an achievement of an individual that they are not aware of – ‘John, you are a great cook’ or Mary, you organised the Team well and we won the challenge’. Likewise, the Scouter might point out that the Team is working better together and as a result are achieving success in challenges in the programme. All of these achievements need to be recognised and recorded and new objectives decided or issued to individual or Teams. In this way the individual and the Team progress along their journey in Scouting.

Some helpful games and devices to aid the evaluation process

Evaluation needs to be a natural and fun process in Scouting and different to other evaluation processes undertaken on work related or school based training courses. Therefore the use of games and devices is encouraged and makes the process more attractive to young people. Often, young people will find it hard to express how they feel and communicate this effectively to the group. The use of games and devices make this process easier. It also lends itself to other asking questions to clarify why someone feels or thinks this way and often that is an easy way for an individual to express themselves. Try to use a new game at each evaluation session and be creative in coming up with new ways of presenting ‘paper based games’ into physical reactions.

A common problem with group discussions is that they are not group discussions at all. They are discussions happening in a group setting but in which not all of the group are participating. They become more like a panel discussion in front of an audience. A few people dominate, and when quieter people are eventually asked to contribute there may be

not much left to say. Here are some activities to help with this problem:

1. **The Conch:** The 'conch' (any item, but 'precious' rather than throw-able) can be used to control group discussions. To ensure equal opportunities for participation, the rule is that the conch is always passed to the left, and is quickly passed on if the holder has nothing to say. Every few minutes (or after every round), there is random swapping of seats, so that the sequence of speakers is changed.
2. **Matchsticks:** Ask the group to try this for the first part of the evaluation. Each person has (say) five safety matches. Throwing a match into a bucket in the middle stops the speaker immediately and allows the interrupter to speak immediately and allows the interrupter to speak until another match is thrown in. When somebody runs out of matches, decide very quickly whether to (a) stick rigidly to the rules, (b) be flexible and allow the group to revise the rules (c) abandon 'matchsticks' altogether.
3. **Biscuits:** Very similar to matchsticks, but a more entertaining way to even up participation in a group. Each time someone contributes to the discussion they take a biscuit and must eat it all before they take part again.

Using Ropes

Old climbing ropes, washing lines or brightly coloured nylon line make excellent evaluating aids. For some of the methods described below you can draw lines with pen and paper. But in most situations where you have enough space (indoors or outdoors) you and your learners will soon discover that ropes were made for evaluating!

SPOKES

Recommended use: for evaluating progress against group-related goals

Each rope is laid on the ground to make the spokes of a wheel. The outer end of each spoke is the starting point and the centre is the goal. This can be used for individually different goals, but is particularly suitable when looking at goals which have a group dimension or goals that are shared by everyone in the group. For example, the spokes can all be 'listening' spokes. Each person assesses the quality of their own listening during the event being evaluated and then looks around at where others are standing. You could do the same for 'talking', 'supporting others', 'providing leadership', 'speaking up', 'clear thinking' etc.

Tip: Ask people to decide their position for themselves and not to be influenced by others. Once everyone is in position, you can ask if anyone feels that anyone else's self-assessment is inaccurate. Participants usually invite each other nearer to the centre - which (depending on the topic) is likely to be a form of positive feedback. (You must decide whether to allow the moving of others away from the centre - as this may be a form of criticism.) Encourage people to give specific reasons about why they would like to move others.

Alternative: The spokes can be imaginary. Start off with everyone standing in a circle facing the centre. Ask them to imagine they are each standing half way along a spoke that leads into the centre of the circle.

Issue and solution: It can be difficult for everyone to have eye contact with each other once they are in position. This often results in the people nearest the centre paying attention to each other rather than to those further out. This tends to exaggerate the dynamics of the group. Much better for all-round eye contact and group discussion is to have people place an object on their spoke to represent their position. This frees up everyone to stand or sit in a circle around the spokes - making it easier to see each other and the objects representing their positions.

Variation: For the end of the course or the end of a group, reverse the polarity of the spokes, so that the inner end now represents the starting point and the outer end represents future goals. Each person walks into the future (simultaneously or one at a time). Whenever someone turns round to look at their starting point they are also looking back at the group - which may be slowly dispersing as others leave.

HORSESHOE

Recommended use: for exposing and discussing different views

In this method, you simply define the two ends of the spectrum and ask everyone to stand at a point on the line that represents their point of view. The benefit of the horseshoe shape is that everyone is more likely to be in eye contact with each other - which makes facilitating whole group discussion much easier.

For example: One end represents "We were a pretty good team during that exercise", the other end represents "We were a hopeless team during that exercise". Everyone chooses their point on the line and then talks to one or two neighbours to check whether they need to adjust their own position on the line. Once everyone is in position, encourage questions from participants to each other. Everyone should have a chance to explain their position, after which everyone should have a chance to move to show whether or not their views on the issue have changed.

Variation: It may be helpful to choose different points during the activity. E.g. "How would you each have rated this team before the exercise started?" "What was the quality of teamwork like up to the end of the initial planning?" ... "What is your personal prediction for the quality of teamwork in the next exercise?"

Variation: Arrange chairs in a horseshoe with the facilitator in the gap. Have about twice as many chairs as there are people to make movement easier and to allow for different patterns of clusters and spaces to develop.

Variation: This is a useful tool for discussing any issues that can be represented on a spectrum - so it can be used for exploring moral issues or values as well as for evaluating group exercises.

GOLDFISH BOWL

Recommended use: for focusing attention on the evaluating process itself

Make a rope circle on the ground. Divide the group in two. One half sits inside the circle and may talk.

One half sits outside the circle and may only observe and listen. People in the inner circle evaluate the previous exercise. After a few minutes the half groups change places and the new inner group continue with the evaluation or comment on the evaluation process they have just been observing.

Variation: Anyone in the inner circle can leave at any time, but the discussion does not continue until they have been replaced by someone from the outer circle.

Variation: Everyone starts in the inner circle and sits out when they have nothing they want to say.

Anyone can move back into the inner circle at any time they want to speak. The evaluation finishes when no-one is sitting inside the circle.

INDIVIDUAL HAPPY CHARTS

Recommended uses: for discovering the diversity of experiences and for enabling the telling of experience-rich stories Each person makes a line graph on the ground showing their ups

and downs during the experience Ensure that there is no misunderstanding about which way is up and which way is down. Each person now tells their story to a partner or to the whole group. 'Happy Chart' is a useful communication aid that helps people to express themselves emotionally and that brings out the richness of an experience. It is much harder to learn from experiences when they are not expressed and shared.

Variation: Encourage participants to add (symbolic) objects to their chart to help them tell the story.

Variation: Each person draws their Happy Chart on an index card (for one-to-one sharing) or on a flipchart (for sharing with the group).

Applications: Happy charts are useful for bringing out individual differences during a group activity as well as for helping individuals talk about an experience outside the group (e.g. an incident at school or at work).

GROUP HAPPY CHARTS

Recommended use: to discover the degree of individual variation and to increase empathy within a group

The group, stand in a horseshoe all holding the same rope. One end represents the start of the group event being evaluated. The other end represents - the end! Each person in the group now represents a stage in the event (e.g. planning, preparation, first attempt, second attempt, disaster, conflict, re- planning, bright idea, time up). Ensure that everyone is now standing in the order in which things happened. The group, now turn the rope into a Happy Chart. This is the interesting bit. There will probably be some disputes as people learn that there was individual variation in feelings at some points during the event. Allow some conflict to develop if you feel it will be productive, but be ready to offer a second rope. A second rope allows the group to draw two lines - showing the highest highs and lowest lows at each point. (Picture a temperature chart with two lines showing maximum and minimum temperatures.)

SKETCH MAP

Recommended use: for reliving a journey and discovering issues that deserve more detailed evaluation

After any event that has involved a journey, ask participants to illustrate their journey with the help of a rope (or ropes) to trace the route taken. Add labels with words (e.g. tie-on luggage labels) or symbolic objects to mark out different parts of the journey. This is best set up as a creative project in an area (indoors or outdoors) where suitable symbolic objects can readily be found. Much informal evaluating takes place during the making of the map. Once the map is complete it can be used as a means of re-telling the story and/or identifying key moments on the journey for more detailed evaluation.

Variation: Create a sketch map using more conventional materials e.g. paper, pens, paints, and materials for collage.

FORCE FIELD

Recommended use: for helping groups or individuals to get unstuck Symbolic Tug of War.

Safety Note: discourage any real pulling because of the risk of friction burns. Ask the group (or an individual) to set up two tug of war teams. One team represents forces for change and the other team represents forces resisting change. Each individual represents a force named by the group or individual setting up the teams. This is simply an active way of evaluating forces that are in tension. The key question to ask (if change is wanted) is how the forces can

be changed to generate forwards momentum - towards change. The advantage of having individuals representing each force is that they can each think about solutions from the perspective that they represent. Dialogue between forces is also possible.

Issue and Solution: Having your whole group standing in a straight line is neither good for eye contact between group members nor for generating discussion. So have each person tie one rope onto a central rubber tyre or small rope circle. This allows people to pull at different angles. It may be appropriate for some people to pull sideways if they are representing distracting or unknown forces rather than being forces that are clearly for or against change.

Variation: Start and finish with written diagrams. Use the tug of war to bring the diagrams alive and to encourage empathy (seeing, feeling and being the forces) and creative thinking.

ACTIVITY MAP

Recommended use: to find out what makes people tick (or not)

This is an active and game-like way of sharing likes and dislikes and getting to know each other's values. At the beginning of a planning session it can also be a useful way of finding out participants' experiences of (and attitudes towards) activities or processes that you are expecting to use in your programme. Use two long ropes. Mark the ends of one rope 'Past' and 'Future'. Mark the ends of the other rope 'Happy' and 'Sad'. This creates a quadrant in which the zones represent:

- Past/Sad: Activities I'll never do again
- Past/Happy: Activities I like doing
- Future/Sad: Activities I'll never try
- Future/Happy: Activities I'd like to try

Call out the name of an activity and ask everyone to go to the zone where that activity would belong on their own personal map. Keep calling out activities, pausing now and again for comments and questions. To make it more of a game (and more risky), let participants call out names of activities. Define 'activities' as narrowly or broadly as you like.

MISSING PERSON

Recommended use: for helping a group to assess its needs and priorities Create a rope outline of a body in the centre of the group circle. Explain that this represents a person who can join the group. Ask participants to think creatively about the kind of person they would like this to be. The person will probably share some of the characteristics already in the group (e.g. sense of humour, good looks, friendly and enthusiastic) and may also represent some characteristics that are missing (e.g. time-keeping, leadership, telling decent jokes). Try to bring the person alive by asking for a name, their interests, their strengths and weaknesses. Some groups, so like the idea that you will find that the rope body reappears on the ground or that they regularly call out the name of the missing person when they need help.

Some take it even further ... Take care with how the image of the missing person is treated. As in all creative work, it is better if the creators 'undo' their own work in a sensitive and suitable way.

TALKING KNOTS

Recommended use: a temporary gimmick for encouraging more equal participation in evaluations.

VERSION 1: This is a variation on 'rounds' or 'go-rounds' or 'conch' or 'talking stick'. It is a way of controlling participation when people are talking over each other. It is also a way of encouraging participation when it is low or uneven.

Tie a knot in a rope to make a rope circle. Everyone holds on to the rope while standing or sitting in a circle. The circle should be a suitable size for group discussion. There is just one knot in the rope. The person with the knot in front of them may speak. When that person has finished speaking they start moving the rope in a clockwise direction. The knot keeps moving round until someone with the knot in front of them wants to talk. That person calls 'stop' and holds the rope either side of the knot. Make it clear whether you, as facilitator, follow the same rule.

Variation: Tie a second knot in the rope to form a small loop representing the letter Q.

Anyone with the

Q loop in front of them may stop the rope to ask a question. The original knot works the same as before and is not simply for answering questions - unless you want to make it so.

OCTOPUS PIE (ADJUSTABLE PIE CHART)

Recommended use: for increasing awareness of how time was spent

To create an adjustable pie chart with four 'slices', tie four short ropes together at one end to make a four-legged 'octopus'. Spread out the ropes in the form of a cross with the knot in the middle. You now have a pie chart with four pieces of pie. Place a label (or symbol) in each sector. The group task is to adjust the ropes (like the hands of a clock) until they are satisfied that the relative sizes of each sector represents how time was spent.

For example, the labels can be 'Facts', 'Feelings', 'Findings' and 'Futures'. Ask the group to adjust the sizes of the slices of pie to illustrate the relative amount of attention given to these items in a recent evaluation. As people move the ropes around they are likely to explain the reasons why they want to make the adjustment. If they offer no explanation, someone is bound to ask for one. This use of the adjustable pie chart helps to develop facilitators' awareness of how evaluation time is balanced between these four elements.

- For a more thorough version that encourages inclusion, ask everyone to sketch their own pie chart first.
- To make it easy to adjust the ropes hold the knot in place by driving a peg through it (if outdoors on soft ground) or by tying it to a heavy weight.
- Make a sketch of the final chart, so that you can compare results if repeating this method following a later activity.
- Consider adding an extra rope if it turns out that there were other significant ways in which time was spent.
- The 'adjustable pie chart' is best suited to the first stage of the active evaluating cycle - establishing facts. But it may be useful wherever there is a juggling/balancing act between three or more priorities