

Team Building Games & Tips

In order to motivate girls, they need constant positive reinforcement. If there is a certain skill that the team needs of a girl, it needs to be fully explained to her, demonstrated, and reiterated how important she and her skills are to the team. Then, she needs to be given ample practice time and lots of positive reinforcement and encouragement. The more the Sponsor, Cheer Coaches, and other cheerleaders encourage, the more likely girls are to learn and keep the skills presented to them. Positive interaction between all members creates unity and a safe, positive, learning experience.

A team that plays together stays together. That's why team building is so important. In order to assure that everyone can schedule get-togethers, Sponsors should set aside a day that is usually reserved for practice, that way no one can have an excuse not to attend. It is conceivable to say that one good team bonding experience can be worth 10 practices. You can't achieve if your team is not motivated, and if they're not motivated, they won't motivate themselves. It's up to the Sponsor and Cheer Coaches to take an active part in the motivation of every person on the squad.

Never resort to punishment that humiliates, such as making girls run laps after a game. Young girls don't respond well to this type of coaching, and it does not motivate them; it just makes them hate cheerleading! **Fun motivates!**

Trust is perhaps the most important component in stunting, whether the girl is a flyer or a base. Just about every squad has that one girl who has a horrible fear of stunting or catching. In most cases this is easily fixed just by strengthening her trust in her fellow squad members. Below are some of the best techniques disguised as games to gain trust:

Trust Falls this is a really fun game to play, it helps especially with girls who don't like cradles or basket-tosses. You can split into groups if you have a large squad, but a minimum of six girls works well. To start off, have all the girls stand in two lines facing each other. Have them link arms where one girl's hands are holding onto the other's elbow. Go out in a yard and have one girl stand in front of the "tunnel" of girls with her back facing them. The girl in front says, "Catcher's ready?" If they are ready they respond, "Catcher's ready, fall when ready." The front girl says, "Falling" and the catchers respond, "Fall." The girl then falls back into the other's arms, much like a cradle or basket-toss. Make sure every girl takes a turn. After the last person has gone on ground level, move onto something higher up (i.e. a tree stump, chair, table, porch, etc). Keep moving the fall point higher until the faller is as high as she would be in an extension.

Paper Bag Grab Get a paper bag (a grocery bag works well). Then, figure out the order of girls from heaviest to lightest. The heaviest girl goes first. All the other squad members grab a hold of her and pick her up, and then they lower her down towards the bag. The girl has to grab the bag in her mouth and is not allowed to move by herself. Once she gets the bag in her mouth she is put back on her feet. Cut off the top part of the bag. The more girls you have on your squad, cut off less of the bag so everyone has a chance to go. Keep working your way down until you get to the smallest girl. By the time it is her turn there should only be about an inch left to the bag.

Circle Fall This works best with more people, no less than 9. One girl stands in the center and crosses her arms across her chest. Everyone else sits down with their legs straight out. They all put their feet up against the center girl's ankles. She shouldn't be able to move her feet for safety reasons. She then falls backwards and those sitting catch her and toss her from person to person.

Girls who are friends are more likely to trust each other!

Each of these exercises allows for trust, communication, and fun!

These games are a great way to reward girls at the end of practice, or to just have a “break” when they’ve been working hard. Sometimes a little break from doing the same routine over and over is all they need to get back on track and regain their focus, whether they are 8 year olds or 12 year olds. Or if they know they can look forward to playing a game at the end of practice they will hang in there. These games also encourage teamwork, even though they may seem silly!

Little Sally Walker The girls stand in a large circle with one girl who is “it” standing in the middle. The person in the middle walks around to each girl in the circle as the group sings and claps: “Little Sally Walker, walking down the street (clap clap) she could not find a partner, so she stopped in front of me” (clap clap). The girl who is “it” stops in front of another girl as the group sings: “She said, Hey girl, do your thang, do your thang for me” (clap clap) and at this point the girl who is “it” makes up a silly dance move. As the group repeats the verse the girl chosen has to mimic the dance. The group sings, “Hey girl do your thang, do your thang for me” (clap clap). The chosen girl is now “it” and moves to the center of the circle as the singing continues. The game is over when everyone has had a turn to be “it”.

Ships and Sailors A fun game to get girls motivated, similar to Simon Says. The Leader calls out commands and the group must follow the command. If at anytime someone misses the command, falls, or does not assemble in the proper group, they are “out”. Commands are as follows: SHIPS! Girls run to the left. SAILORS! Girls run to the right. THE CAPTIAN IS COMING! Everyone must stand still and salute. The only way participants can stop saluting and continue to follow commands is if the leader says, AT EASE. (So if the leader suddenly says, SHIPS! All those who run to the left are “out”.) Other commands: CHOW TIME! Everyone sits on the ground and pretends to eat. HIT THE DECK! Everyone lies on her tummy on the floor. MAN OVER BOARD! Everyone pairs up in twos with one person on their tummy and the other with their leg on their back and hand over their eyebrows as if they are looking out to sea. (Any girls not able to pair up in time are “out”.) TORNADO! Everyone twirls around. NORTH STAR! Everyone points to the sky. THREE MEN TO A ROW BOAT! Girls get into groups of three and pretend to row. (Any girls not able to get in a group are “out”.) You can mix it up by adding other commands such as FIVE NORTH STAR meaning that girls need to get into a group of 5 and point to the sky. The game continues with the commands called out randomly and quickly until there is only one player left who is the winner.

The Tangle Game There needs to be at least 6 girls to play this game. Everyone stands in a circle holding hands. One by one the girls move their positions without letting go of the girls whose hands they are holding, causing them to become one big tangled mess of arms and girls. When they can’t stand it much longer, they try to untangle themselves. If anyone falls, or lets go, the game is over.

For Younger Girls the old games like Duck, Duck Goose, Simon Says, and Red Light, Green Light are just as effective and fun.

When The Girls Can't Focus

It's impossible to know what happened at school or outside of your cheer time that has some of the girls on your squad at odds with each other. But these kinds of conflicts do arise and can have an impact on the whole team if they fester. There may also be times when a few girls have lost focus and are being overly goofy, which can frustrate everyone else. It's better to take ten minutes out of practice to "regroup" and clear the air, than to let it drag on. Below are two quick games that can help your squad see eye to eye and get back on track.

Feeling Cards While sitting in a circle on the floor set out Feeling Cards. These can be created by using index cards. (It's best to have these made up before hand and ready if you should need them so you don't spend valuable time making them on the spot.) Label each card with positive and negative emotions that the squad could be experiencing. Tell the team members to reach out and take one card that has the emotion that best describes them at the moment. Once all members have a feeling card they will, one at a time, explain why they are feeling that way. Each girl will have only 1 minute to speak. Cards can read: *Angry, Satisfied, Unable, Silly, Tired, Energized, Hurt, Happy, Proud, Frustrated, Inspired, Confused, Stressed Out, Determined, Unsure, Excited, Left Out, Scared*, etc. Once each girl has had the opportunity to speak, provide the group with a constructive way to move past the problem and get back to cheering. Most times the problems will go away just because each girl has had the opportunity to be heard! It's just that simple.

Ball of String While sitting in a circle, pass a ball of string from one member to another. The rules are only the person with the string can talk. After everyone has had their turn to speak and share their thoughts and feelings, there will be a web of string. This web illustrates the interconnected nature of group process. Everything they do and say affects the team. Set the rules prior to starting the activity. Use "I" statements to demonstrate feelings. Keep restating that it is the behavior that is making others uncomfortable, not the girl herself.

Never allow girls to verbally attack each other, or go off into small groups to whisper.
These two things can be damaging to the team as a whole.

Use Practice Time Wisely!

- Practice should always begin on time.
- Make sure that the boom box, cds, and all other things you might need are in place and ready to go.
- Have a designated spot for girls to place their water bottles and other gear so that it's not in the way.
- Start with warm-up stretches. Some fun music on the boom box makes stretch time a lot more fun.
- Practice jumps, and/or tumbling.
- Work on formation, and proper stance.
- Teach proper cheer terms for jumps and motions.
- Run through known cheers and chants.
- Teach new cheers and chants.
- Go over Jenks fight song dance.
- Practice half-time routine / add on to routine.
- Work on stunting.
- Play a team building game.
- Always take water breaks as needed.