Traffic Jam

(pages 18 & 19 in *iThrive*)

Objective:

Traffic Jam is designed to help participants focus attention on applying a growth mindset to challenging situations. In its basic design, the activity is a math problem which presents some challenges to each team. Through the facilitation process, participants will increase their knowledge of the concepts of a growth mindset.

Time:
30 minutes or more

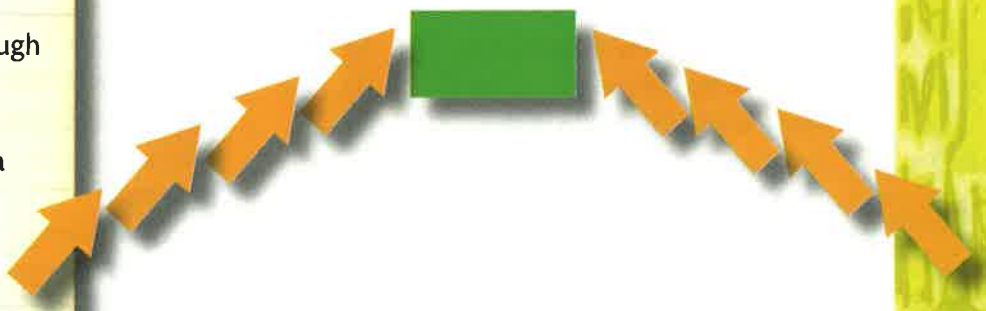
Materials:
Gym spots or other spot markers on the floor (foam, non-adhesive shelf liner, cut into 12" x 12" squares work great)

Preparation:
Collect gym spot markers ahead of time or cut spot markers

Safety Note:
Pieces of paper on the floor are a slip hazard. While paper is readily available, it is not a safe spot marker!

Facilitator Tips:
Arrange spot markers in a U-shape, as diagramed, so that team members can see each other to maximize participation. Do not modify the set up or instructions of this activity in any way.

Directions:



1. Break up into teams of 6-8 people—everyone in the group is a team. If you have an odd number of people, you can use an object to stand in for a person. Some one will need to move the object when it has a turn.

2. Give each team member a place marker, plus one extra per team. Arrange the place markers on the floor in a slight u-shape.

3. Instruct team members to line up on either side of the middle place marker and face the middle (in the diagram above, start out with one person in each space marked with an arrow, facing that direction).

4. Tell your teams that the object of the game is to legally move players on the left side to the right; and players on the right side to the left. A player can only move to an unoccupied space in front of them.
   a. You may move past a player facing the opposite direction to get to the empty space behind him/her.
   b. You may not move past more than 1 player (remember, you must be facing the opposite direction).
   c. You may not move backwards nor turn around.
   d. You may not move around anyone facing the same direction.
   e. Only one person can move at a time.

Facilitator Tips *Continued...*
Traffic Jam is a solvable problem. What happens during this activity is much more important than the solution—it is for this reason that we have not shared the solution to the problem. It is not necessary or even desirable to know the solution to the puzzle. In fact, there is great learning in the discovery of the solution even if that happens at a later time.

Ready? Go!

5. Allow about 12 minutes to solve the puzzle and then stop action.

6. Bring the whole group back together to debrief and apply what was learned. Ask:

   What Happened?
   How did you decide what strategies to use? What kinds of messages were you saying either out loud or to yourself about this activity?
   So What?
   Which statements were more "growth mindset" oriented? Did you find yourself responding more in one way over another? As the activity progressed, did it become easier or more difficult? Why do you think that is? At each new attempt did you move more quickly or slowly? Why do you think that is?
   Now What?
   What would you do or say to another person to help nurture a growth mindset? How would you support the efforts of others to help them make stronger brain connections?

Wrap Up Statement:

Research shows that people with a growth mindset don't have to be perfect! It's about learning something over time—confronting a challenge and making progress. People with a growth mindset thrive when they stretch themselves.

Rohnke, Karl. (1989). Cowstails and cobras II. Dubuque, IA: Kendall/Hunt.