

Trust Fall Exercise

Creating an element of personal risk (albeit minimal) can help build trust and break down barriers within a group.

This exercise requires no materials and is easy to explain – though it may be useful to demonstrate at the front of the group to gain trust in the activity.

The steps in this team-building exercise are as follows:

1. Ask the group to split into pairs – one will be the *catcher*, and the other will be the person who will *fall*.
2. The catcher stands half an arm's length behind the person who will fall. They position one leg slightly in front of the other, in a strong, stable position, ready to take the catch.
3. The person in front closes their eyes – arms are either folded or down by their sides. They gradually lean back until they over-balance and fall into the arms of their partner standing behind them.
4. The catcher will need to lean into the catch to ensure that person falling does not hit the ground.
5. Once caught, hold in that position for a few seconds before pushing back to the upright position.
6. If the one in front finds it difficult to trust the *catch*, they can proceed with the fall with their eyes open or with the catcher closer behind.
7. Swap roles between the catcher and the person that falls.
8. Once performed several times, and only if confident, the distance of the fall can be increased while ensuring that there is no risk of injury.
9. It is essential during the exercise that the pair remain focused on what they are about to do and recognize that trust works in both directions.

Regularly mix the pairs back within the group.

For a more advanced exercise, repeat the steps with a circle of catchers. One person gently pushes the person falling in the middle with their eyes closed to each person around the circle until everyone has caught them. Each member of the group takes a turn in the middle.

Dr. Jeremy Sutton