Everybody’s It

(More than just a game of tag)

Here’s a unique opener that at first might seem like it fits better on a grade school playground than as an activity with adults. But I encourage you to try this with any group as part of a training exercise. Granted, it is a game that requires some physical activity so it won’t work for every group. However, I’ve used this activity with people of all ages allowing those with physical challenges to opt out.

The game itself first appeared in “The New Games Book” published in the 1970’s.

**The Rules:**

* Everybody’s it
* When you’re tagged, you’re frozen

This game is played until one person remains who has not been tagged. No matter the size of the group this game takes less than a minute to play.

**A Variation on the Game:**

After one round of Everybody’s It you can introduce a variation of the game called ‘Hospital Tag’. The rules for this version are:

* Everybody’s it
* The first and second time you’re tagged you must hold the spot where you’ve been tagged (think wounded)
* The third time you’re tagged you’re frozen

This is played until one person remains who has not been tagged three times. It takes a bit longer to play but not much longer.

Once you have played the game have participants sit in groups of four to six to discuss the game. In the groups ask them to discuss this question:

* What were you thinking/feeling when you first heard the rules of the game?

Give time for discussion, then ask:

* What was your strategy to win the game? How did it work for you?

At this point you have the option of soliciting some responses from people to find out what they thought of the game and some of the strategies used. Then ask them in their groups to discuss this question:

* Upon hearing that everybody was it, was your immediate reaction to tag or avoid being tagged?

Allow just a minute, at most two minutes, for them to answer that question. Then ask:

* How is the way you played this game like how you deal with conflict at work with your team?

Allow for discussion then ask for answers from each group. These answers get to the heart of your presentation as you talk about team dynamics. Invariably there are those who jump into a conflict and work to resolve it and those who avoid conflict and try to run from it. This game opens the conversation about those two approaches. Those who instinctively see themselves as pursuers in this game are most likely to be the ones who address conflict head-on. They are the ones who are willing to tackle any problem. Those who instinctively see themselves as pursued are most often the ones who will hide from conflict.

Neither approach is good or bad. However, when you can identify who is who on your team you have good information on how to interact with team members. Someone who naturally attacks a problem can overwhelm those who naturally run away. Those who naturally run away need to be sought out and invited into the process of finding solutions. On a healthy team everybody is empowered (it). This exercise helps everyone take ownership of that. From this opener you can have a very good conversation about team dynamics and encourage everyone to fully participate.