

## Puzzle Activity

A structured group activity for ESL children

### Topic:

This activity will help children learn how to more effectively communicate and cooperate/collaborate.

### Synopsis of Activity:

Prior to the session, the group leaders will need to construct three large puzzles out of cardboard. An alternative to this is to invite the group members to make pictures on large pieces of cardboard and then have the leaders make them into puzzles. The actual puzzles' appearances and origins are secondary to their function to allow the children to work together. Before beginning the activity, the group leaders should lead a psycho-educational discussion of communication. They should address the issues of verbal/nonverbal communication and barriers to communicating effectively. Ask the children to assemble the puzzle using different conditions in a series. First, ask them to complete the puzzle communicating only in their first languages. For the second puzzle, ask the children to use only nonverbal communication (no talking!). And finally, instruct the children to assemble the puzzle using communication in English. This activity can be varied to include puzzles of various difficulties. It can also be modified as to who handles the pieces of the puzzle; perhaps one person could be assigned to place the pieces, or perhaps each person is given 1 or 2 pieces to place. Use a creative mixture of these conditions (language, difficulty, and puzzle handlers).

### Discussion:

Following the series of tasks, invite the children to discuss how they felt during each condition of the exercise. Invite them to talk about the communication barriers they experienced and what they learned about effective communication.