



Activity: Silent Squares Puzzle Problem

Format: Team challenge
Grouping: Whole advisory in groups of five
Scheduling: One time

Directions:

This activity can be used to explore problem-solving tools and group member roles and responsibilities. Divide your advisory into groups of five students each. If the numbers are uneven, several students can be observers. Explain to the group that this is a PUZZLE PROBLEM that they will solve without speaking. You will need to use **Handout 1** as a guide for making sets of puzzle pieces for each group.

1. Create an envelope for each group, each filled with all of the puzzle pieces. Give each group their envelope. Ask for a volunteer per group to give three pieces to each group member. When everyone has received the pieces, ask students to leave their pieces on the table without touching them.
2. Explain the goal of the activity: "At the end of this exercise, your group goal is to have five completed puzzles on your table. Each completed puzzle should be exactly the same size and each completed puzzle should have three pieces."
3. Here are the rules:
 - You may not speak.
 - You may only give pieces away to another member of your group.
 - You may not take pieces from any member of the group.
 - No finger pointing, grabbing, grunting, or groaning!
4. You will have about seven minutes to solve the problem.
5. If groups get stuck, ask the group if they would like one clue. If they communicate a YES to you nonverbally, take one piece that is placed in the wrong puzzle and place it in the correct position in the puzzle where it fits.
6. Debriefing:
 - What did you notice about yourself and your group as you worked on this puzzle problem?
 - What feelings came up for you — at the beginning of the exercise, during the exercise, and at the end of the exercise? (This is a good opportunity to name the different comfort levels, experiences, and feelings we bring to specific learning experiences. Check out students' reactions when they heard the word PUZZLE or saw the puzzle pieces. Some students may have shut down immediately, while others couldn't wait to begin. How we approach a new learning experience is often shaped by the feelings associated with prior similar experiences. Emotions drive our readiness and motivation to learn; we bring various kinds of comfort and competencies to different learning tasks.)
 - What are the tools, skills, and attitudes that helped you solve the puzzle? (Students will probably say things like: cooperation; trusting that if I gave you a piece, you would give me a piece; letting go of my original plan; observing what others were

doing to see if one of my pieces fit in someone else's puzzle; give and take; negotiation; experimenting; patience and perseverance; thinking about the whole group and not just about me and what I needed.) Chart advisees' responses to use for the next two questions.

- In what ways are these same skills and tools useful to you as a student, a friend, and a family member?
- In what course or activities does it feel particularly important to apply and use these skills regularly?

HANDOUT 15

**When it comes to conflict, you always have choices.
You can ...**

- Take charge, force, demand, protect yourself or others
- Accommodate, give in, let it go, smooth it over
- Avoid it, ignore it, drop it, or exit
- Postpone, pause and reflect; return to the problem later
- Seek out a trusted adult, a level-headed friend, or a mediator
- Problem solve:
 - .. CHECK IT OUT, notice, observe, and ask questions before you decide what to do
 - LISTEN AND DEFUSE when someone's upset
 - ASSERT your feelings, needs, and "No's"
 - NEGOTIATE ("Let's talk it out and reach a solution that works for both of us.")

Aggressive, Assertive, and Passive Behavior — What's the Difference?

HANDOUT 17A

<p>Aggressive ~ I get what I want and need at the expense of others — by dominating or hurting others physically or emotionally</p>	<p>Assertive ~ I take care of myself by expressing my needs, thoughts, and feelings, while showing respect and concern for others</p>	<p>Passive ~ I allow others to take advantage of me. I choose not to act. I don't express my feelings, needs, or thoughts honestly.</p>
<p>Sounds like You put down the other person, attack, and accuse: "You're such a ...," "You always ..."; "You never ..." You blame, assume, stereotype; you're argumentative and interrupt a lot. Your voice is loud, dramatic, hostile. Your language is often mean, negative, rude, abusive, sarcastic.</p>	<p>Sounds like You share your needs, requests, and opinions honestly and openly: "I need to ..."; "I feel ... when ... because ..." You listen attentively even if you disagree, and appreciate others' efforts to listen. You speak up. You take responsibility when you mess up. Your voice is even, calm, friendly. Your language is respectful, neutral or positive.</p>	<p>Sounds like You never really say what you feel, want, and need: "Whatever, it doesn't really matter to me", "I guess so..." You're silent or withhold information; you speak so softly others can't really hear you; you apologize a lot and blame others. You go along even if you really don't want to. You whine and wear people down.</p>
<p>Looks like Getting in someone's face; eye-rolling; threatening, confrontational posture; invading someone's personal space; dramatic arm movements; pointing fingers Payoffs You get what you demand most of the time; you stay in control; others see you as powerful; you protect yourself Costs Your behavior can be dangerous and destructive; you may alienate and use other people. People may not like you. You fear not being in control and then lose control when you don't get what you want. You put on a front for others and can isolate yourself.</p>	<p>Looks like Relaxed; open expression and posture that invites conversation; matching how the other person is sitting, or standing; side by side rather than eyeball to eyeball Payoffs You keep your dignity and self-respect; you get your needs met more often; you maintain respect for others; you value others; you use your power positively Costs It takes time. You may experience more conflict, although you have more tools to handle it effectively. Even when you're sensitive to others' needs and feelings, they can still feel uncomfortable with your directness and reject what you're saying.</p>	<p>Looks like Shoulder shrugs; you look weighted down; you don't make eye contact; you look withdrawn, like you're trying to hide; you pout, frown; you look flustered Payoffs You avoid confrontation or taking responsibility. You don't get blamed. Using the silent treatment, you can ruin someone's good time without being aggressive. Costs You don't feel in control of your emotions very often; you get anxious, resentful, angry a lot. Instead of expressing it, you seethe inside; you lose your self-respect; you give up being yourself. Other people walk over you. You don't have many real friends.</p>

HANDOUT 14A

Criteria for Making Good Decisions

- Does it meet an important need in my life?
- Does it feel reasonable to me and others? Given who I am, does it make sense to me and others?
- Is it do-able? (Am I asking myself to do something that might be somewhat challenging, but is not impossible to do? Do I have the time, skills, and resources to do it? Does it take into consideration any constraints or limitations?)
- Is it moral? (Does it hurt anyone? Is it fair and just? Is it destructive in any way to property or the environment?)
- Is it safe?
- Is it a healthy choice?
- Is it responsible?
- Is it legal?
- Does it respect the rights and needs of other people involved in the decision or affected by the decision?
- Is it smart? (Does this decision help me stay on the right track or get me on the right track? Does it help me create a positive future for myself?)
- Does this decision make me a better person, a better student, friend, or family member, a better worker, a better citizen?