

Dream Catcher (water knot and girth hitch are illustrated at the end of the description)

Focus: Risk taking, physical/emotional trust, trustworthiness, goal setting

Materials: 1-inch **tubular** webbing: 10 or 12-foot pieces (can be found in climbing stores like REI or Eastern Mountain Sports)

Levels: Grades 1 and higher

Sources: Dream Catcher is an adaptation to Dr. Tom Smith's "Raccoon Circles", which are described in Karl Rohnke's FUNN Stuff III on p. 60 under the title, Miniature Yurt Circles. Tom also has co-written a book with Jim Cain called *Raccoon Circles*.

Suggested Procedure

1. Find a large space free of furniture and have everyone pair up.
2. Give each pair a piece of webbing. This should be pre-tied in a circle using a water knot, or teach the participants to tie the water knot themselves (see figure 5.1) As an alternative they can overlap the ends and tie an overhand knot around each end so that the knots back onto each other when tension is pulled.
3. Have some extra webbing circles available.
4. After doing Everybody Up, ask students to figure out at least three new ways to sit down and stand up together by using tension. They may choose to use the webbing as a prop. Teach the girth hitch as a way to put two or more pieces of webbing together.
5. After people have tried this for a while, have volunteers show their creations to the class.
6. Then take one of the webbing circles and girth hitch enough pieces of webbing on it so that everyone has a place to hang on – one or two people per piece of webbing. This now looks like a circle with spokes extending from it.
7. On an agreed-upon count, everyone should sit down and stand up together.

Sample Processing Questions

- How difficult was it for you to trust the large group as opposed to just your one partner?
- Did your responsibility change when more people were added to the dream catcher?
- What would have happened if even one person had let go in the middle of the activity?
- Have you been affected by the actions of someone else? Have you affected others by your actions?
- What dreams do you have? What are your goals?
- What are some goals for this class? What do we want this place to be like? What do we want to accomplish?

Facilitation Notes

During a Project Adventure workshop in Vermont, we were doing an activity called Raccoon Circles (developed by Dr. Tom Smith). Without warning, the participants took their webbing and girth-hitched them all to one circle, so it looked like a wheel with spokes. Then everyone hung on to a spoke and we all sat down together. It looked like a Native American dream catcher, so the name stuck.

There is a natural sequence to Dream Catcher which is quite engaging. Once everyone gets the hang of sitting down and getting up together, come up with a cheer that can be yelled while doing the activity. You can also use the cheer as a transition after a debriefing session later on. After a period of talking, bring out the dream catcher. Yell your cheer as you sit down and stand up together. Now you're ready for another activity.

This activity offers a wonderful time to talk about dreams and goals while one is part of a human dream catcher. What are students' goals both here in class and later on in life? What do we want to accomplish as a class?

Remind students never to let go of their webbing while doing the activity. Cause and effect are very real here. If someone lets go, the others will have no way to hold themselves up. This is a great metaphor for community – what one person does affects everyone else.



Water Knot



Girth Hitch