

Rock Bottom Resilience

Balloon Pop

Spatial Requirements: Regular classroom setup; little or no space required

Activity Type: Movement/group

Grades: 3-12

Group Size: 8 or more

Time: 15 minutes

Introduction: Society is good at telling us that we can't do something, especially when we find ourselves in Rock Bottom situations. This activity uses a resilient balloon to demonstrate that we don't have to "pop" or give up in the face of negativity.

Materials:

- 1 permanent marker for each group of 4
- 1 12-inch balloon for each group of 4
- 1 12-inch knitting needle, sharpened and rubbed with Vaseline

Activity:

To prepare for this activity, blow up each balloon as big as you can. Let out the air until the balloon is about a 9-inch balloon, and has a distinct rubbery area at the bottom and top. Squeeze the balloon so it has a lot of resilience in that area.

Split students into groups of four. Give each group a permanent marker and a balloon. Tell the groups that their job is to come up with a value or characteristic that a person should have in order to be resilient in life – a characteristic that they would want to have when they graduate and go out into the world themselves. They must be unanimous on this word. When they come up with the word, someone in the group should carefully write it on their balloon with the permanent marker.

Give the groups three minutes to come up with their word.

When the three minutes are up, go around to each group and have them present their word and why they chose it. As they give their explanation, they should hold their balloon up so the word is displayed for the class. As the group representative is speaking, interrupt them by popping the balloon with the knitting needle. You might even criticize and make fun of their idea with comments like, "That will get you nowhere! Where did you come up with that?!"

Repeat this with each group until you get to the last group. For this group, hold the knitting needle up to the balloon, slowly put the point of it through the rubbery end of the balloon and rotate it with gentle pressure until it goes through. Continue to push it through until it goes through the balloon knot on the other end. (You may have to practice this in advance so you're confident that it works.)

Processing the Experience:

- How did you feel if you were in a group whose balloon I popped?
- How can this be like reaching a "rock bottom" moment in life?
- How did you feel when your group response was being criticized and put down?
- In life, do we ever let criticism keep us from being resilient?
- How can we be resilient in the face of criticism?
- What were you expecting to happen on the last balloon? Were you surprised?
- How can doing the opposite of what's expected help you get out of "rock bottom" moments?