

# Towers of Hanoi

## Objectives

- To illustrate group problem-solving skills and challenges
- To provide group with a challenging problem to solve that supports communication, trust building, team involvement, analytical thinking, and planning
- To experience EQ elements, Type preferences, conflict, and reversals in action when used in conjunction with the corresponding organization development instruments

## Trainer Instructions

**Note:** The minimum possible number of moves varies with the number of rings being used (2 rings = 3 moves, 3 rings = 7 moves, 4 rings = 15 moves, 5 rings = 31 moves, 6 rings = 63 moves, 7 rings = 127 moves, and 8 rings = 255 moves).

1. All rings begin stacked largest to smallest on one post. The two other posts are empty.
2. The facilitator places one set of Rocker Rings in one of the 3 marked spaces on the table and places one post (WITHOUT rings) in each of the other spaces.
3. By moving rings back and forth between the three posts, the team must replicate the stack of rings on one of the other posts.
4. At no point can a larger ring be on top of a smaller ring.
5. A ring off a post is a move, and ONLY one move at a time is allowed.
6. When a ring comes off a post, no other rings can be moved until that ring is placed back on another post.
7. The task is for the group to disassemble the rings from the original post and reassemble them on another in a minimum number of moves.

### Processing Questions Specific to This Activity

- In what ways does this exercise reflect your daily work?
- What worked well – what are best practices – in getting the task completed?
- Was there any confusion or difficulty in communication?
- What does this remind you of in a work context?
- Can you demonstrate the solution again?
- Can everyone in the team perform it accurately?

## Category

Group Problem Solving

Post Introduction to Type, EQ-i, or other organization development or psychometric tool

## Exercise Stage

Basic stand alone, as part of a half day to a full day of experiential activities

Post-intro to an organization development instrument

## Number of Participants

Minimum: 5 (possible for a small group to engage with this content—but the benefits of group-level interaction are missing)

Ideal: 10

Maximum: 12

## Time Required

Minimum: 20 minutes

Maximum: 45 minutes

(larger groups need more sub-groups, which takes more time, and the amount of discussion/process of exercise output is a variable affecting time)

## Materials Needed

- 3 sets of Rocker Rings or similar stacking objects



- A suitable table space with 3 designated sections marked off

## Debriefing Instructions

1. Ask the processing questions above throughout the exercise or after the task is completed.
2. Ask the group if everyone's ideas were heard.
3. Ask how welcoming the group was to new ideas.

## Additional Debriefing Questions Related to Type

**Note:** This is a great activity to see how Extraverts and Introverts manage issues around communication as well as how J and P issues surface around planning. This activity can highlight other issues around the Data Gathering Function and around the Decision Making Function.

1. Was everyone heard?
2. Were everyone's ideas included/implemented?
3. Was there enough "airtime" management?
4. Was there a cohesive plan? Was it followed? Did it change or evolve throughout the exercise?

## Additional Debriefing Questions Related to EQ-i

**Note:** This is a great activity to see how behaviors associated with many EQ elements manifest. Most commonly encountered behaviors associated with EQ elements on this activity are: Emotional Self Awareness, Emotional Expression, Assertiveness, Independence, Empathy, Problem Solving, Social Responsibility, Impulse Control and Flexibility. The list of questions to ask around EQ elements are numerous, but some common ones are:

1. Did anyone feel frustrated at some point?
2. Were you able to identify the feelings experienced and what was causing them?
3. How did you express or deal with that?
4. Did anyone dominate the conversation or the process?
5. Was anyone inhibited from voicing their opinion about how you should solve this problem?
6. How assertive were you?
7. Did people think of new ideas that had not been brought up before? Did they voice that?
8. How did your emotions, as you experienced them, help or get in the way of working together on solving the challenging environment of varying opinions and perspectives?
9. How flexible were you in adopting an idea and changing your views/emotions about it?
10. Were you able to approach the changing directions with an open mind or were you stuck on the "old way of doing things?"