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Education and learning through outdoor activities

Games and problem solving activities,
outdoor exercises and rope courses for
youth programmes

European Year of Education through Sports 2004
Project Outdoor Sports Education



I. Introduction

Outdoor Sports Education

The DG of the European commission of Education and Culture decided to make the year 2004 “The European Year of Education through Sport (EYES 2004)”. Along with the Department of Touristika, Outdoor Sports and Education at Charles University in Prague, the Czech youth organization Duha prepared a project called “Outdoor Sports Education”. In the name of this project, they have organized several events, courses and an international symposium. Another important part of the project is the book of games that is in your hands at the moment.

This book is devoted to all educators who work with young people, either at schools or in various organizations.

The content of the book aims to popularize outdoor activities and outdoor education among educational and sport organizations. This book offers outdoor games and activities, as well as descriptions of natural or manmade obstacles, which offer a challenge. These are two areas of activities, which are necessarily involved in any outdoor education. They help children develop their skills, raise their self-confidence, tolerance and their sense of fair play. They also support teamwork and communication. Young people are motivated to become parts of an informal education and become young educators. In addition, many of the games and activities may be played by disadvantaged groups. These games offer the same chance of success to people who are very often disadvantaged in many other games due of their weak physical fitness or lack of skills, or because they prefer certain other specific sports. That is why we can prove that overcoming a simple obstacle may be an effective way to raise children’s interest in sports and sports activities. “Project Adventure” is proof that such things happen. There are similar programs in many European countries – either in schools or outside organizations.

We believe that games and positive motivation while overcoming obstacles positively influence the physical and mental development of young people.

We hope this book becomes the first step in an international exchange of information. We expect to find other publications dealing with individual outdoor sports and which describe effective methods supporting the educational activities outdoors.

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II. Outdoor sports and outdoor education

Wider connections of outdoor sports

Outdoor sport and activities are a dynamic sphere of social and economic life in developed countries. It is because many of the activities fulfill the needs of today's people. For example, the need to be in nature, gain new experience, experience adventure and develop fitness and spend free time effectively.

The popularity of outdoor sports and activities is also a reaction to the changes of our lifestyles. We have more leisure time, we care more about our environment and we are noticing the lack of activity in our lives. It is easier to get from one place to another and we are better and more informed than we used to be. However, there are perception barriers. We are stressing the importance of the natural environment in our lives much more these days.

Each society in developed countries reacts to the needs of nature and the popularity of outdoor activities rises. These are countries where there are high living standards and most of the people are influenced by technologies.

From all what was mentioned, we may expect that in many European countries, as well as others in the world, we will solve following problems:

- Expand areas for outdoor activities, so that they correspond to the needs of people.
- Control the development of outdoor activities, in order to preserve our environment.
- Form and realize outdoor education so that people get interested in spending their free time outdoors.
- Develop the interests of people that include varied use of their leisure time, physical activities and relationship to the environment.

While we will be solving these problems, we will look for optimal ways to use outdoor sports and activities in order to educate the young generation.

Educational concepts of outdoor sports and activities

There are many concepts in today's outdoor sports and activities that stress personal development. We can also find different points of views about how to use outdoor activities.

Experience and adventure are the most frequently used terms. In our world of consumption, we even “consume” experience. That is why there is a need to create newer and newer sports and attractions that will attract the mass media. Experts talk about the “society of experiences” (Erlebnisgesellschaft).

Experiential learning and education

We should be aware of the fact that experience is one of the basic words of psychology. Experience is believed to be the inner dimension of our mentality. It includes all mental phenomena – everything that is happening to us, both consciously and subconsciously.

Three against one

A variation of a typical tag game, which requires quick reactions and coordination of small groups

Number: 24

Age: 8

Time: 10

Description:

Make groups of four. Three people hold hands and one of them becomes a target (prey). The fourth player is a pursuer, who stands apart of the group and who tries to catch the prey (the player who was marked as a target). The group of three turns and moves the way so that they do not allow the pursuer to touch any part of the body of the prey. The game is over when the pursuer catches the prey. Then we switch roles. We can evaluate the work of the group and the pursuer in between the activities.

Variations:

- It is easier for the pursuer when the group holds each other at their shoulders.
- We can also have one pursuer for several groups (each of them has their prey marked)
- There can be several pursuers and bigger groups.



Leap over, crawl under, run around

Dexterity, endurance, cooperation

Number: 20

Age: 8

Time: 15

Description:

Participants make pairs. It is an better when people of the same height form pairs. There is an interesting task awaiting each pair. One of the pair is positioned on all his or her four limbs. The task for the other person is to leap over, crawl under and run around his partner's body. The leader of the game or the person positioned on his four limbs determines the number of the individual exercises. For example: 5 leaps, 6 crawls and 12 laps. They switch when the task is finished.

Variations:

- This exercise can be a competition of pairs as well.
- We can complicate the task by determining different people for various activities. (i. e. there is one person we must crawl under, a different one to leap over, etc.). There is commotion and a lot of running in the gym. This task can be given to a bigger group. Then we can watch how are they going to deal with it.
- The exercise gets more difficult, when those on all four limbs can slowly move around in the gym.



A Window of the Earth

Concentration, learning the nature

Number: not limited **Age:** 8 and older **Time:** 30 minutes

Equipment: none

Place: a part of a forest or a meadow

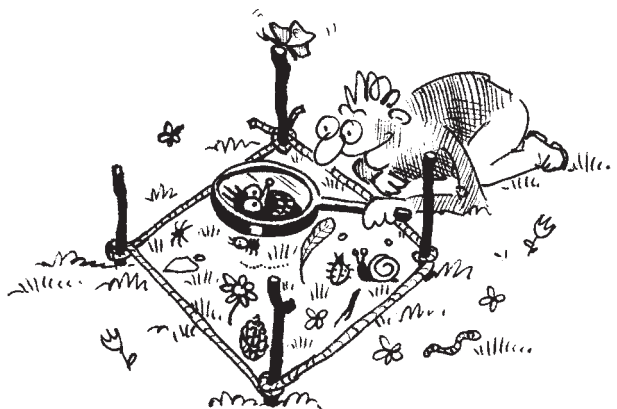
Description:

We never have time to watch the nature during most of the activities in the countryside. We are going to stop and closely observe the life under our feet in this game. We are scattered several meters from one another. Each participant designates a small “window” on the ground (an area 20×20cm) that will lead us to the world of nature. We comfortably sit or lie down to it and observe it for 10 minutes. We observe all the living creatures, we try to count them, think of the meaning and intensity of their activities. Then we meet all again and discuss our observations. We try to find broad interconnections of these tiny worlds.

Variations:

- We can observe two or three places so that we can compare the differences (a meadow, forest, bank of a lake, field).

Safety: In case there are people with allergies to plants in our area, we should find a different place.



II. Low obstacles

Simple rope

Balance, concentration, coordination

Number: 6-16

Age: 10

Time: 15

Materials and construction:

There is a static rope (or a steel rope – diameter of 6mm) stretched between two trees. We will walk on this rope. It depends on what our goals are for this game and accordingly, we have the rope tight or loose.

The easiest way is to tie the rope to the trees by clove hitches. The trees should be at least 3 meters apart, the height of the rope (when weighted) not more than 40cm off the ground.

Description:

Walk on the rope without any help. Climbers often use this exercise to practice and improve their balance.

Variations:

- Walking in various postures.
- Walking at different speeds.
- Stopping and standing at one place.
- Turning and jumping.
- It is possible to loosen the rope for skilled individuals.

Safety: No dangerous objects should be in the area around the log. Members of the group stand close and help in case of fall. No low branches should be on the trees to which the rope is tied. So that we do not scratch the bark of the trees, we use pads (rubber, carpet, etc.) under the rope.

