

## KOOSH® BALL CATCH

### OBJECTIVE

Students play and modify a ball game to discover the power of group deliberation in society.

### MATERIALS

Koosh ball or other easy-to-catch ball; three other small balls; stopwatch/timer

### GET READY

- Gather all four easy-to-catch balls and the stopwatch/timer.
- Arrange all class members in a circle.

### INSTRUCTIONS

- Say: *Each person will throw the ball to another person across the circle. Once you have received the ball, raise your hand so that you will not get it twice. Add: There are only two things to remember: Who threw the ball to you? To whom did you throw the ball? Let's start with "Jill."*
- Make sure each member of the class has received the ball. The last person sends it back to "Jill." Practice the same passing pattern twice. (Hand raising is only for the first passing sequence.) The process should quicken.
- For the third practice run, warn the class that it's going to get livelier this time. After the first few passes, start a second ball with "Jill," and then a third and a fourth. The class will have no problem repeating the pattern, even when all four balls are in the air at once.
- Say, *You are getting really speedy! I am going to clock you this time – with just one ball.* Announce the results (probably about 30 seconds for 30 students). Practice and time it more than once, especially if someone drops the ball.
- Say, *Raise your hand if you think the group can do this in less than 15 seconds. (Pause) Under 5 seconds? (Few, if any, will keep their hands up.) Say, I will give you exactly two*

*minutes to figure out how to do it faster. Now gather around and talk to each other. How can you do this in under five seconds?*

- At this point, the students confer. One may say, "Let's stand in the order we threw in and pass the balls down the line." Another may suggest that they need only touch the ball in order. Some groups may pile their hands on top of the ball, pulling each hand away swiftly. All methods will reduce the time greatly.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**Students return to their desks and discuss:**

- *Did you believe that the group could succeed when you were thinking about the task individually? What happened when you conferred?*
- *When groups discuss civic problems together, they often find and attempt solutions they never would have tried alone. What are some examples of this? (The Committees of Correspondence, Seneca Falls women's suffragists, the Jacobin Club, Home Rule in India, Mothers Against Driving Drunk.)*
- *A paradigm is a pattern of thinking that is so ingrained that it limits our ability to think creatively about a subject. Which paradigms did you break at the end of the game?*
- *What problems in our society may need paradigm breaks to be solved?*
- *Is anyone working on those problems?*
- *Why might young people be particularly good at breaking paradigms to solve problems?*

### ASSIGNMENT

Research a group in history that started small and changed a society. Write a two-page paper about that movement.

Activity adapted from Igor Ovchinnikov, *Golubka* (The Dove), Center for Experiential Education for Social Change and Democracy, Moscow.