

Poncho Praise

Audience: Squadron Group Size: 20

Purpose

To foster an environment of comradery and personal connectedness that will increase the probability of a stronger sense of Airman identity and trust, loyalty, and commitment within an organization.

Description

Drs. Don Dinkmeyer and Lewis Losoncy stated that encouragement is the key ingredient in all positive and personal relationships. Through a concept of belonging and connectiveness, encouragement activates “social interest” and greater resiliency to face life’s challenges. Simply put, encouragement provides three specific experiences:

- *Positive and realistic view of self.* Encouragement provides an opportunity for Airmen to like themselves and believe what they contribute is useful and provides meaning.
- *Positive and realistic views of others.* Encouragement is a pathway for empathy and allow others to be their “best” self.
- *An openness to experience.* Encouragement allows Airmen an opportunity not to fear making mistakes or failure. They might view mistakes as opportunities for learning and development rather than through a lens of shame, guilt, or discouragement. Encouraged Airmen “fail forward” toward learning.

Execution

- Invite a workcenter or group up to 20 Airmen to share in this PACEsetter.
- Ensure you provide the following items for each Airman prior to beginning the PACEsetter:
 - Large sticky poster paper or large paper that is easy to fold
 - Fine-point markers
 - Sticky pads
- Provide a description of your own personal thoughts about those who have encouraged you and the impact their encouragement had on your personal life or career. You can also summarize the description of encouragement above.
- Let the group know that today it is “raining encouragement” and time to put on their poncho. Have each participant take the poster paper and fold the paper horizontally, then vertically. The paper will be in a square when complete.
- Using the corner with no openings, have each participant cut out a large quarter circle, but not too large. When complete, have each participant open the paper. There should be a large hole in the center of the paper.
- Each participant will place the paper over their head, as if he or she is wearing a poncho.
- With ponchos on, provide the following instructions:
 - Have everyone in the group to stand.
 - Using a sticky pad and marker, write one encouraging comment about each participant in the group and place it on the back of his or her poncho. Do not duplicate answers out of ease.
 - Participants can spend the next few minutes at their desk writing each encouraging note or walk around to the other participants. Remind participants not to peek at other responses.
- When everyone is finished adding their comments, have the group turn their comments to the front of their poncho. Please feel to take a photo of the group at this time...and at least one “silly pose” photo.
- When complete, have each participant take off their poncho and read their sticky note comments.
- Go around the room to ask each participant their thoughts about what was said about them and the exercise.

References

Evans, Timothy. “The tools of encouragement.” *Reaching Today’s Youth* 1, no. 2 (1997): 10-14.