



## Oklahoma 4-H Youth Development Program

# Building Leaders for Tomorrow

Instilling and developing leadership capabilities in youth and adults.

**AGE LEVEL** - Intermediate

**CONCEPT OR SKILL** –  
Communications – accepting difference, conflict resolution, verbal vs. non-verbal

**LIFE SKILL(S)** – **Heart** –  
Communications, Conflict Resolution, Accepting Differences

**Health** – Managing Feelings

**BEHAVIORAL INDICATOR** –  
Concerned about being liked and developing social graces.

## ACTIVITY 6: “Distance Dance”

### THINGS TO KNOW:

Youth at the intermediate level are sensitive and self-conscious about image and appearance. Because of this, they are beginning to be much more perceptive to the multiple forms of communication conveyed by their peers (verbal and non-verbal). As a 4-H volunteer, one of your responsibilities is to model positive/constructive verbal and non-verbal communication. Youth will need positive adult and youth role models to learn how to send effective verbal and non-verbal communications (don't forget dress, hygiene, posture, manners, etc.) that does not contradict what is said with words.

The goal of this activity is to promote self-awareness of both verbal and non-verbal communications. It is important to remember tone and the posturing of comments and responses can often say something different than the intended words or text of the message. Body language, facial features, and eye contact can also result in either in effective communication or misunderstanding. This activity will help youth become aware of their body language and learn alternative ways of responding. We want youth to learn to express what needs to be said and get the desired result without degrading the other individual.



**Materials Needed:** Masking tape or chalk

**Do:** Ask for two volunteer from the club. Ask them to stand about ten feet apart facing each other. Place a marker on the floor to measure their starting distance. They can choose a conflict or situation to role-play where communication is difficult or the adult volunteer can describe a situation for them to act out. Depending on the maturity of and familiarity between group members, the volunteer may ask them to choose a real life situation/ communication problem that resulted in conflict. Each time one person speaks the other must respond with physical movement - forward (if you feel the message is positive) or backwards (if you feel the message is negative). The “message” takes into account words, tone, inflection, body language, facial features, eye contact, etc. The pair is given ten minutes to converse. Place a mark on the floor to indicate each person's final position.

(If you have a large group you may want to divide and have a moderator for each new group. Make sure there are an adequate number of observers.)



**Reflect:**

- 1) Ask volunteers to share what influenced their forward or backward movements (consider content, tone, posture/ gesture, eye contact, etc.)
- 2) Ask each of the volunteers what they were feeling, sensing and reacting to what was being said.
- 3) Ask the group what the marks illustrate about how each person “felt” and “reacted” to the other person’s communications?
- 4) Were you surprised when someone moved forward or backward based on what you heard and saw? As an observer how would you have reacted differently?
- 5) Did the participants realize their body language was influencing the other person?
- 6) In a very non-confrontational manner have the participants and observers question each other to see if the meaning behind what they were saying was heard or if it was lost among conflicting body language signs.

**Apply:**

- 1) How can body language be altered to make sure the intent of the words is truly affective?
- 2) What behaviors are you going to consider and use in the future to make sure others understand your intentions?
- 3) What are some circumstances which could become scary or dangerous if the wrong message is communicated?
- 4) What are things that can happen if someone misunderstands your meanings or intentions?
- 5) Has this ever happened to you before? How was the situation solved or what could you have done to avoid the situation?

