

## Broken Squares

**PURPOSE:** To provide you with an opportunity to explore the results of cooperation and competition among group members in solving a group problem. (This exercise comes from Johnson & Johnson, Joining Together, 1998.)

**EXERCISE TIME:** Approximately one (1) hour.

### GROUP MATERIALS NEEDED:

1. Broken Squares pieces (15), separated into five different envelopes. (one set per group).
2. Instruction Sheets for Cooperative Group (5 for each cooperative group).
3. Instruction Sheets for Competitive Group (5 for each competitive group).
4. Instruction Sheets for Observers (enough for all observers)

### GENERAL PROCEDURE:

1. This exercise focuses upon the way in which goals are defined by members of a group. It consists of completing a group task involving a puzzle.
2. This exercise is carried out in groups of five (5) participants and two (2) observers. Half the groups will be classified as Competitive Groups; the other half will be classified as Cooperative Groups.  
(At least four groups are recommended, but two may do in a pinch. NOTE: This exercise can be conducted with only one group by leaving out the instructions about cooperative and competitive orientations and the difference between cooperative and competitive groups. The emphasis would then be on goal structure.)
3. Group members should be seated around a table with room for five. The tables should be placed far enough apart so that members of one group cannot observe the activities of the other groups.
4. Groups will receive puzzle pieces and instruction sheets. Goal: Complete the puzzle(s).
5. Observers should observe and complete their observation sheets.

### PROCEDURE-EXERCISE:

1. Each participant within each group receives an instruction sheet and an envelope containing pieces of the puzzle. Observers will also receive an instruction sheet. The facilitator will review the instructions to make sure all participants and observers understand.
2. When given the signal to begin, the groups are to work until all of them have solved the puzzle. Each group should be carefully timed by its observers. If a group becomes deadlocked for more than 25 minutes, this phase of the exercise should be ended.
3. At the end of the exercise, the facilitator collects the observation sheets and records the results.
4. During the data recording time, the groups should pair off (a cooperative group with a competitive group) and share their experiences with each other. Group observers are to participate fully in this discussion. By the end of the discussion, the groups should have recorded their conclusions about the differences between working in a cooperatively-oriented and a competitively-oriented problem-solving group.

### PROCEDURE: EXERCISE PROCESSING PHASE

1. Hold a discussion involving all participants and observers to determine discoveries.
2. Discuss data from the observation sheets.