



Meerkat Escape

This is a divided work activity that focuses on observation. This is high-challenge activity works on problem solving and communication.

The Materials

- A map of a zoo (time to bust out the crayons); add some landmarks, twists and turns. Don't make it too complicated, because this divided work is plenty challenging.
- Blank paper and crayons



The Backstory

You are a happy meerkat family – or were a happy meerkat family, until you were rounded up and taken to a zoo. And it isn't a fun and fancy zoo. It is one of those crooked zoos run by evil zookeepers. It is dangerous and sad, and you want out. It is a big place, and in order to escape, you'll need to find the way out without attracting too much attention.

The Challenge

It is lunchtime. Half of the meerkat family snuck through the ventilation system into the head zookeeper's office while she was off grabbing lunch from a local food truck. Inside the office is a map of the entire zoo. You can't take the map with you – that would raise suspicion. But you can make a copy. Back in your meerkat habitat, below the surface, you have paper and pencil to make a copy of the map. The two groups cannot communicate with each other. Except...one meerkat from each group can meet at the viewing area of the habitat. The meerkat from the office describes the map, and the meerkat from the habitat relays this information to the others making the map. Only two meerkats can meet in the viewing area at any time. The two can talk freely, but no props of any kind can be used, or anything communicated in writing.

The goal is to make the most accurate copy of the map possible in 25 minutes or less (when the head zookeeper returns from lunch).

One more thing: meerkats are intensely observant. One meerkat from each group is tasked with intensely observing this activity. Encourage them to share their observations as valuable insights to the group ("I noticed only two people are involved with the planning", "I can see we are sharing a lot of ideas but not discussing which one to try") Share observations without judgment and without following the observation with a suggestion.

The Conversation Afterwards

There is a lot to discuss here. Your group may not have finished the map, or may have finished early. Focus on learning from the experience regardless of the outcome. Start by asking What did they do? What was their process? After you've given folks the opportunity to share this, ask How did this feel? We are emotional beings, and emotions play a large role in how we work together. Sometimes our emotions are clear during the activity, and sometimes they are not. Finally, invite the group to discuss what they would Do Differently – bring the experience from the activity back into their larger lives.



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