

HIDDEN NUMBERS

Overview: Life can be a matter of perspective at times. Some of us may only see the things that get us down, while others see opportunities for growth and success. This lesson helps show the importance of looking at problems from different perspectives to find a solution.

SD Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success:

K-12 College, Career, and Life-Ready Competencies for Every Student:

- B-LS 4. Self-motivation and self-direction for learning
- B-LS 7. Long- and short-term academic, career, and social-emotional goals
- B-SMS.5. Perseverance to achieve long- and short-term goals

Estimated time: 10 minutes

Materials:

- A shoelace

Instructions:

1. Begin by kneeling down on the ground with the group in a semi-circle facing you. (You could also arrange this on a table if necessary.)
2. Tell the students that you are about to show them a number between zero and ten.
 - a. If you suspect some of the students have done this activity before, it will be useful to say something such as, "If you've done this before, just go with it for now," so they know to play along and not spoil the fun.
3. Place a shoestring on the ground (or table) in any shape at all.
4. Use some theatrics by acting like you are trying to make a particular shape. (In reality, the shape makes no difference to what you're really doing, but the group begins to think it does.)
5. After you've arranged the shoestring on the ground, place your hands on your thighs (or on your hips or the table).
 - a. Ask, "What number is this?"
6. The group will look at the shape you've created with the shoestring and make a guess.
7. Ask for a couple of answers, and then tell them the answer.
8. Here is the trick: You must show the "number" with your fingers, which are on your thighs (or on your hips or table). If the number is 10, then you keep 10 fingers out. If the number is zero, then you keep two fists on your thighs. If the number is 7, then you would have 5 fingers on one hand and 2 on the other with the "extras" folded under.

9. After the first guess by the group, make another design with the shoestring on the floor (or on the table). You can even act like you are making a pattern if you want (serving to distract the group further).
10. When you are done with the design, place your hands on your thighs (or hips or table) again and ask, "What number is this?"
11. If the group is slow to pick it up, confirm that the "number is right in front of you."
12. If the group really has a difficult time solving this puzzle, tell them you will make it more obvious as to what the number is. After fiddling around with the shoestring, REALLY emphasize putting your fingers on your thighs (being somewhat theatrical). You may even wiggle your fingers so that people will notice them. If they still don't get it, take the shoestring away and ask the group, "What number is this?" while emphasizing your fingers.

Processing/Application Questions:

- How long did it take to figure out the puzzle to find the hidden number?
- What was it like when you couldn't figure out the number?
- When in life do we allow ourselves to be distracted by outside factors (such as the shoestring) when the answer to the problem – or a wonderful opportunity – is right in front of us?
- How does this relate to school?
- Consider if there are any problems you're faced with right now that have an easy solution you're not allowing yourself to see.
- Similarly, consider if there are any opportunities presented in front of you that you haven't noticed or taken advantage of.
- What will cause us to gain clarity when we are distracted?
- What will change when we gain clarity?

Variations:

- Use pencils or other random objects instead of a shoestring. The whole meaning is to create a distraction from the hidden number.
- For a larger class size, it may be easier to show PowerPoint slides in front of the class in lieu of the shoelace. Each PowerPoint slide will have random images on it, and you still will use your fingers on your thighs to signal the number.

Adapted from:

Heck, T. (2006). *Team building games on a shoestring: How to use two normal shoestrings to lead 8 fun and engaging team building activities*. Retrieved from: <https://www.teachmeteamwork.com/teachmeteamwork/free.html>.