

All Tied Up

Step-by-Step Instructions:

1. Talk to the group about what habits are and how they start. You may want to focus on habits in marriage and relationships or parenting. You can even ask for examples of both good and bad habits families may have developed. For example, some families get in the habit of saying “I love you,” whereas others get in the habit of never saying it.
2. Ask a volunteer to come up front and put on the gloves. (Or have each group/pair pick one person to wear the gloves).
3. Have the person wearing the gloves hold his or her hands out comfortably in front of his or herself. Then, you or a person in the group/pair not wearing gloves should wrap one or two stands of thread around the gloved hands, cut the string and tie it off. The gloved person should have his or her hands tied together.
4. Instruct the person wearing the gloves to separate his or her hands in a forceful way and try to break the string. It should be very easy to do. This is when it might be fun to ask who has ever started an exercise program or started a diet, for example. If we just do something once or twice, it is usually very easy to break that habit for better or worse.
5. Now take the string again and, this time, wrap the gloves many times. You may even want to count the number of times. Now ask the person wearing the gloves to try to break the string. If you have wrapped it enough, it cannot be done. Similarly, something that is done repeatedly becomes a habit and is difficult to undo.

Tips for Discussion and Processing

This exercise can be used to reinforce the idea that participants will need to be intentional about using the new skills they are learning in class. They will also need to keep practicing the skills many times until they become habits. This activity also can be used to discuss why it is that when things get tough we fall back into old habits even if they don't work well. You may want to talk about how to undo old habits and why just trying to stop “cold turkey” is very difficult. (It is like trying to break all of those strings at once). Most bad habits have to be unwound one little strand at a time!

Group Size: 11 to 25

Time Needed: 11 to 20 minutes

Goal: To strengthen participants' understanding of how habits are formed and discuss how to build good habits in a relationship

Audience: Couples, Teens, Parents, Children, Singles

Special Considerations: This activity can be done with one person standing at the front of the room demonstrating for the whole group, or you can break into groups/pairs so that more people have a chance to “experience” it in a kinesthetic way. However, the second option will require you to have additional sets of gloves!

Resources Needed:

- ✓ One pair of thick gloves for volunteer or one pair of gloves per group or pair
- ✓ Large quantity of sewing thread