

Eight Arrows

Eight Arrows is an activity that allows participants to acknowledge what they can commit to bringing to the group, and identify the impact of their shared commitment. Eight Arrows falls primarily in the **Ways of Relating** category because youth discuss how they will work as a team and what they will accomplish. This activity was contributed by the Voyageur Outward Bound School.

Why This Matters

- This activity helps groups understand their own strengths and establish expectations for each other. Setting positive behavior expectations in a program is a crucial step for creating an environment for SEL growth.
- This process helps groups identify the collective goal for their time together.

Getting Started

- **Materials:** You will need a board with the Eight Arrows on it, which looks like the template (with four inward arrows and four outward arrows). Each member of the group needs a piece of paper with the template and something to write with.
- **Time:** 30-60 minutes
- This activity is best for an adolescent group that is going to be doing a project together.

How To Do It

- 1) Explain that the purpose of this activity is to talk about individual strengths and resources and how they affect group outcomes. Use the analogy of baking a cake to talk about the parts that make up a whole. (Ask: "What are the different ingredients we bring to make a cake? What is the outcome when all the ingredients come together? What happens if one ingredient is missing?"). Use this example to emphasize that in order to work together as a group, it is important that each individual commits to bringing their own strengths and resources.
- 2) Ask the group to spend a few minutes brainstorming individually. First, on their own sheet of paper, each participant should write a few things that they are willing to contribute to the group project at hand. Participants should think about the following questions to spark their brainstorming:
 - Think of a successful team you have been a part of in the past (e.g., sports team, a play). What helped you succeed? What did you contribute to the group?
 - Be sure to give some examples. Some ideas include: organization, honest feedback, creative ideas, support to others, positive attitude.
 - Those items should be identified in the inward arrows.
- 3) Ask the group to then identify things they believe will result from their contribution. Those items should be identified in the outward arrows. Some questions to consider:
 - What do you hope will be some of the outcomes of this group? (i.e. successful camping trip, service learning project, new friendships)
 - What are some of our group goals?
- 4) Spend five minutes having participants add ideas to their individual sheet of paper. After everyone has had enough time, bring the group together and have each person share what they wrote. As each person talks, write down their contributions on the poster board. By the end of this process the group will have a visual representation of the group's strengths and their desired outcomes.

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- 5) This can be used as a reflection activity throughout the project or it could be the start of a group contract, mission statement, or purpose.
- 6) Reflection Questions:
 - a. What did you learn about the resources in your group? How can you use this information to help accomplish your group goals?
 - b. Where do our group strengths lie? What other skills do we need to accomplish our goals?
 - c. What do we do if we notice someone is not offering what they committed to bring?

Take It Further

- Use this as a start to a group contract or mission statement.

Template: Eight Arrows

