**Games that Illustrate the Virtue of Trustworthiness**

from the New World Order Games Manual by Linden Qualls,

**Trustworthiness Tag** This is yet another incarnation of *Get Faith*.

Materials:

Sun sticks (2 or 3 fewer than the number of players)

A large playing field

Four "cones" to mark off the prison

Optional Devil's mask

If there are more than 10 players, there will need to be at least two "bad-guys". After the initial dash of the players to get sun-sticks, one of the bad-guys can guard the prison.

Show the players a devil mask and explain that the mask stands for Deceit, Untrustworthiness, Lying, Cheating, Stealing, etc. Then show them "sun sticks." These are made from wooden sun shapes, double-coated on both sides with yellow paint markers specifically for wood, stuck a sun sticker in the center for extra pizzazz, and glued flat blue craft sticks to the back side -- the side without the sticker. If students have already learned the Verse below, I ask what the sun-stick represents. If they have not, I explain that the sun-sticks represent Trustworthiness.

*... trustworthiness is the sun of the heaven of My commandments ....*

*Bahá'u'lláh, Trustworthiness Compilation, #22, pages 5-6.*

The goal of the game is to get trustworthiness, avoid being jailed in the prison of self (ego)(the prison of the lower nature), and help other players become trustworthy.

To prepare, mark off the prison with four cones (don't make it too big!). Pace off the playing field boundaries with the players, so they understand where 'out of bounds' is. If someone runs out of bounds while being chased, that is cheating (untrustworthy) and that player will go to prison. Place the sun-sticks in the ground at various distances throughout the playing field, some more than half-way up the field, others 2/3 of the way. At one end of the field the players will line up to dash and try to get a sun-stick. At the other end the bad-guys will line up, and at GO! will try to tag the players before they get a sun stick.

If a player has a sun-stick, then "Deceit" cannot imprison him, cannot even chase him. But if the player does not have a sun-stick, then "Deceit" can tag him and he has to go to prison Also, even though a bad-guy cannot chase a player with a sun-stick, if the player gets close enough and is tagged, the player will have to go to prison. Even though the bad-guys cannot chase players with sun-sticks ( = trustworthiness) -- explain to the players that even trustworthy people can become corrupted and dishonest by getting too palsy with, too close to, bad things and immoral people. Bahá'u'lláh alludes to this in several passages such as these:

***Beware! Walk not with the ungodly and seek not fellowship with him, for such companionship turneth the radiance of the heart into infernal fire.***

***Bahá'u'lláh: Persian Hidden Words #57***

To rescue someone in prison, a player with a sun-stick must hand the stick to a prisoner. Once a prisoner receives a sun-stick, that prisoner can run out of prison, but he has to be very fast because if the guard might be close enough to touch him without chasing. AND the sun-stick must be handed by the rescuer, it cannot be tossed. The rescuing player also must try to avoid being tagged by a bad-guy when rescuing a prisoner.

Before the game, when explaining the rules, encourage the players to work as a team -- it is much harder for the guard to prevent rescues if the rescuers are coming at him/her as a group. For dramatic effect, whenever someone escapes, the bad guys can snarl, stomp their feed and have a mini-tantrum. The kids are amused by that.

Also encourage the players to notice that when an untrustworthy person is being closed-in on during pursuit and is getting tired, to run beside that player and give them trustworthiness (i.e., a stick) before the player is tagged. To add interest and make sure that the prison population is constant, I tell players they cannot rescue anyone on the way to prison, only once they have arrived in prison.

(1) You can make a rule that if a player with a sun-stick gets touched, that stick is out of the game for good. I put them in my pocket.

(2) Or you can say the players just have to drop the sun-stick on the spot and others can try to get to it and pick it up off the ground -- which is harder for the bad-guys because there are fewer players to chase because more will have the protection of trustworthiness.

(3) A third way to deal with sun-sticks belonging to those who got touched by a bad guy worked really well. Do not remove them from the game, but don't just drop them on the ground either. Both the stick and the person tagged go to prison. The confiscated sticks were put on the ground, and the prisoners could not pick up the sticks. Only rescuers could retrieve them (while trying to avoid being touched by the bad-guy guard) and hand them to the prisoners. And once a prisoner got one, they had to escape before a bad guy touched them. Chances are they are rather close to a guard, so they would not have to be chased (which is not allowed if one had a stick).

This version allows the rescuer to keep his stick (trustworthiness) while he is trying to rescue another player (by picking up an extra stick from the ground and handing it to a prisoner). I like this version because then rescuers do not have to give up their sticks -- which ruins the metaphor -- because then they become without trustworthiness. If does not make sense that one becomes untrustworthy when trying to help others become trustworthy.

Once the rules are understood, all the children line up at one end of a rectangular playing field. The bad-guy/s (the adults with the masks) stand at the other end, put on the mask and shout "GO!" and run towards the players as they run towards the sun-sticks, frantically trying to get a stick before the bad-guys tag them. The goal is to get trustworthiness (represented by the sun-sticks) before you are caught and imprisoned by Deceit. Once the initial dash is done, the Bad-guy focuses on keeping the prisoners in prison, or if there are two bad-guys, one can guard the prisoners and the other can run about more freely.

**Trustworthiness Tug**

*Cleave ye at all times to the cord of trustworthiness and hold fast the hem of the garment of truthfulness...*

*Bahá'u'lláh: Trustworthiness Compilation, #27, page 7*

*Cleave ye to the hem of the raiment of virtue and keep fast hold on the cord of piety and trustworthiness. Have regard to the good of the world and not to your own selfish desires.*

*Bahá'u'lláh: Trustworthiness Compilation, #19, page 5*

*... We gazed on one of the Beauties of the Most Sublime Paradise, standing on a pillar of light, and calling aloud saying: "O inmates of earth and heaven! Behold ye My beauty, and My radiance, and My revelation, and My effulgence. By God, the True One! I am Trustworthiness and the revelation thereof, and the beauty thereof. I will recompense whosoever will cleave unto Me, and recognize My rank and station, and hold fast unto My hem.*

*Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, pages 37-38*

Every student was to think of a situation in which they struggled to be trustworthy. Then I showed them a long, silky, shimmering blue cloth that was to represent the "cord of trustworthiness." (I did not use a cord because of the potential for friction burns.) I talked about how often we all struggle with our lower nature and its selfish desires when we find it hard to be trustworthy. We feel the pull of our lower natures. I then took out a devil-face mask and said I was going to wear it and I would stand for their lower nature and selfish desires. Then we went outside and formed two teams -- balancing weight and size as best as possible. Each team took a good hold of each end of the cloth. We positioned ourselves in a line between two cones, so that half of the length of each side of the cloth was on each side of the cones. This meant that the starting point was fair and even. I was in the front of the side that represented the lower-nature, since I was wearing the mask and was the strongest. Then we had an old-fashioned tug-of-war game, which of course symbolized the tug-of-war we all have between our lower and higher nature, usually on a daily basis. We did this several times, alternating team membership and numbers, so all could be on both sides and test their strength against different people. I even let two kids tug it out because we had time. The kids really got a kick out of this very simple game. The winning side was the one that pulled the other side past the cones.

**Snakes in the Grass**

The Verse that goes with this game is:

*Characterize yourselves with the characteristics of the people of divine morality. Shun all manner of vices and you shun a poisonous snake ....*

*'Abdu'l-Bahá: Compilation on Excellence in All Things, page 376.*

For a unit on trustworthiness, I altered the metaphor to fit the theme of trustworthiness. The rules are the same. The snakes represent deceit, lying, cheating stealing, breaking promises, etc -- everything that poisons trustworthiness. And in reality, these negative behaviors can become vices. The goal is to get through a month at a time without being poisoned (touched) by a snake. The ideas is that each time one runs through the corridor of snakes without being touched, they have succeeded in being trustworthy for that month. If one is touched, they become a snake. Also, going outside the boundaries to avoid being touched is cheating, and trustworthy people do not cheat, so that also means one becomes a snake. When all were on one side, instead of saying "GO!" I shouted a name of a month. January began the first found, February the next, and so on.

Describe or demonstrate what it is to "shun" something. Then explain that we are all on a journey towards God, but it is easy to become addicted to things or pick up habits that can interfere with and sidetrack that journey. In this game we call these things "vices". Explain that vices poison our souls, as a venomous snake would poison your body. Ask the players for examples, which they probably readily and accurately supply, such as addiction to material things, drug abuse, backbiting, gambling, the habit of putting oneself first instead of preferring your brother or sister or friend, resorting to violence when angry, cheating, lying etc. The snakes in the game represent these vices. I hissed at them like this to make the point: Vissssssssssse Ssssssssssnakes. They naturally mimicked me. I also explained that one of the purposes of religion is to warn and protect us from vices and guide us safely through life. (This game can also go great with a unit on backbiting and gossip -- the snakes represent those vices -- which must be passionately avoided according to Bahá'í teachings. You can then say that the game now consist of avoiding Gossssssssip Ssssssnakes in the sand and Backbiting Bugs in the Bog!)

The playing area is a wide 'corridor' that you can mark out in a large room or outside. A real hallway in a home will likely be too narrow. If you are in a school, the hallways might be wide enough. If not, you may want to demark the sides (walls) of the corridor by laying ropes on the ground.

Players take off their socks so they will not slip and one player lies down in the middle of the corridor on his/her belly. That child is the snake and she cannot get up on her knees or leave the defined corridor. The goal is to leap, jig, jag, run etc past the snake without getting touched (poisoned - addicted to vice). Explain that the distance between the starting point and the safe zone past the snake/s is a year in your life and the goal is to get through each year without being poisoned by a vice-snake. If you get touched you have come in contact with the vice and gotten poisoned and you become a snake too, and join the first one in the snake corridor. I emphasize that snakes cannot grab, pinch or scratch and the runners must be careful not to step or jump on the snakes. The players had to learn to work together and run as a group because then the snakes were not all focused on one person. They learned to take advantage of a snake being distracted.

Obviously, the game gets harder as the number of snakes grows, and the winner is the last one to become a snake. But as with all my games, I never exalt a winner or make a big deal out of it. Also, it is important to explain that you wait until all have gone to run again. When all players have either reached the safe side or have become snakes, a new round begins and players run back again the opposite way. The snakes rotate to face the new direction from which players will be coming each time. It does not work if players are running back and forth from different sides unless you are playing outside and have enough snakes to face both directions. I prefer to have everybody wait to run back until all have crossed, otherwise chaos can easily ensue. It also inspires kids to go quickly if they know that if they wait they may be the last one running and all snakes will be focused on them alone. The width of the corridor will depend on how many kids you have starting as snakes and running. You can also adjust the width as more snakes arrives so that it does not become impossible to cross too soon. Just experiment.