

Intended for Grades: 4-12 **Estimated Time:** 15-30 min.

Lesson Title: SHAPING UP!

Lesson Purpose: Students will:

- * Practice teambuilding and communication skills
- * Connect to the characteristics and attributes of a leader

Materials & Preparation:

- * *Shaping Up!* Activity Instructions (See below)
- * One or two long ropes: Paracord (parachute cord) works well as it holds its shape.

Considerations:

- *Adjust cord length according to size of group; each person needs about 2-3 feet.*
- *Groups of more than 20 students may need to split into two teams. One group can observe, or both can participate at the same time.*
- *If unable to find Paracord, look for a rope that can hold its shape.*

Background Information:

Shaping Up is an exercise that helps participants develop an understanding of how essential communicating is when working with others. Communication is a skill that we all need to become proficient at in order to have a community of understanding.

Each culture has different practices and beliefs about communication. For example, Hawaiians practiced, “*Nānā i ka maka, ho`olohe pono, hana ka lima*”, which means to look with detailed observation, listen well, and work with your hands.

Other practices were; “*speak when you are spoken to*”, or “*children are to be seen, not heard.*” Although these practices had their purpose and value, we live in a society where texting and Instagrams have become regular means of communication.

But do we really understand where we are coming from? Can we work well together without the right communication skills? How can we build a *pono* community without communication? This activity is geared to build community, practice communication skills, and help participants understand the important position each person plays in working together.

Steps:

1. Facilitate this activity using the following Instructions to *Shaping Up!* (15 min.)
 - a. Tie the rope into a ring large enough for everyone to hold a section of the rope with both hands.
 - b. Everyone stands in a circle facing each other. With both hands, each person holds a section of the ring of rope.
 - c. The instructor gives directions to form the rope into a particular shape, say a circle, square, triangle, etc.
 - d. The group attempts to coordinate their movements and then lay the rope down on the floor with the shape as instructed. Instructor asks if the shape is to their satisfaction.
 - e. The Instructor repeats steps a. - d. with a more complex shape (a dog, flower, etc.), but this time students do this without speaking and only using hand gestures.

f. Next, students repeat steps a. - d., this time without words or even hand gestures. (*You can choose different shapes or repeat a shape*).

2. After the game is over, the instructor can ask the participants about their experience with trying to communicate during the game. Students can use a journal, or you can chart key ideas from a group discussion. Reflection questions are offered below.

Reflection Questions:

- *What did you feel when you could not communicate with your team?*
- *How might this activity help build communication skills with others?*
- *What did you observe concerning the way different members of a group participate?*