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### Encouraging Thought, Cooperation and Team Work

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**Nature of Activity:** A class based activity which offers the opportunity to develop learning skills, thinking skills, team work skills, negotiation, planning and evaluation skills.

**Target group:** The activity can be adapted to work with any level of educational achievement.

**Subject area:** Generally for group tutorials, induction, one of sessions to introduce students to such concepts as equality, diversity, differentiation, needs, negotiation and short and long term planning.

There are times when it is important to remember that we should be looking to help our students develop the skills they need to learn and study as well as giving them the knowledge and skills they need to pass the exam at the end of a course. A holistic approach to education should be a fact of educational life rather than a simple emphasis on how to pass the course.

Tasks which involve thinking activities, including elements of analysis, negotiation, short and long term planning, comparison, evaluation, linked to the moral and human implications of such activities can be used not only to help develop students thinking skills but also to enhance their team working skills and their ability to cooperate with others.

With a group of twenty students, divided into four groups of five students each, it is possible to set up small group planning, cooperative working and research, negotiating, problem solving and decision making.

## The survival task

### The Activity

Each group elects a chairperson and scribe.

Each group is randomly allocated an animal group which they become for the duration of the exercise.

### Initial task

1. Once you have been identified as a certain type of animal, you must join the other animals who are the same species as you.
2. Together you will read the following information.

*“Lions, elephants, gazelles, and hyenas live in a mountain locked river valley. There are a few other animals around but any that do present no threat to the four species that form the main inhabitants of the valley. There are a wide range of trees, shrubs, grass, and other plants including fruit trees and cacti. During the day it can be very hot and the nights can be exceptionally cold. In the valley there is a wide range of vegetation including occasional clumps of tall succulent plants and although they look like green grass they are in fact highly poisonous. There is an abundance of fruits and many root vegetables. Two colonies of soldier ants lie in the forest and when they march they devour anything in their path. In summer the river’s water level is quite low especially during the day but crocodiles have not yet visited this river. In the colder months, part of the valley soaks up water and forms dangerous mud pits and sinking sand, and sometime snow storms can be quite brutal. Occasionally, groups of human beings enter the valley on hunting trips but when*

*they have collected enough meat they leave and are not usually seen again for a number of weeks.”*

## **Instructions**

It is your task to ensure that your species survive forever and that you work to ensure that the quality of your life together is the best possible. Together you must form a survival plan for your group identifying how you are going to ensure your survival in the valley. At times life is random and unpredictable, if you do not identify potential dangers and plan to deal with them along with the normal everyday demands, you will be unable to survive. You have to think about your short term needs and identify medium and long terms goals. At the end of this exercise you are going to have to show how you are going to survive the dangers you are going to encounter and the dangers revealed by the other animals. Remember it is in your benefit to protect the world in which you live.

## **Feedback session**

After the group discussion period the chairperson for each animal group will describe the species plans to ensure continuity and quality of life. When finished the other groups can ask questions to identify any flaws or areas of importance that were omitted.

A general discussion takes place trying to identify the needs that all groups have in common and the individual different needs that occur for individual species.

The class may try to work out a way in which all animals could co-exist (It is important that animals which are a food source for others do not die out of the predators will starve).

This could be used to look at Maslow's hierarchy of needs and think about the needs of people in a school or college.

This could be used to consider competing needs within the school or college incorporating issues to do with equality, diversity, differentiation and rights and responsibilities.