

Tips for Team Management: Dealing with Pre-Tournament Stress

ATD Tip for Team Managers

Contributed by Susan Bradfield, ATD Tennessee

This is the time of the season when a team's stress level starts to climb, and the TM is right in there with the same feelings. Often at this point, final touches on props, storylines, and technical devices are not progressing as earlier scheduled. Team members are frequently ill this time of year, and school and other involvements have their own deadlines.

Children, like adults, react to stress in different ways. Some people tend to lose focus under stress, and become careless. Years ago, this former TM glanced over toward the work area on the day before our Affiliate Tournament, only to see a vital part of our vehicle being tossed around like a football!

Others, often the children who have been leaders since the beginning of the process, lose their temper with their teammates and say things that do not exactly promote team effort.

Take heart, TMs. You're not alone. It's happening everywhere! This is a good time to keep things in perspective. Resist your urges to jump in there to just get things done. Turn around and walk away when you feel frustrated or angry toward that one particular personality that's really not helping your blood pressure!

If your team is struggling to stay focused, accomplish and work together smoothly, here is an activity that may help the team members **and the TM** relax, refocus and refresh:

Spotlight

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The team members and TM sit around a table, or on the floor in a circle. Some teams may prefer to do this activity in the dark using a flashlight.

Taking turns, each team member is spotlighted, as he/she listens to his/her teammates as they go around the circle. Each team member makes a statement about a positive contribution the member in the spotlight has made toward solving the Challenge, or to the team experience in general.

This activity helps the team members:

- Appreciate the contributions of each member
- Feel good about how much they've already accomplished
- Recharge to stay on task
- Focus on what needs to be done before Tournament

When all good things have been said about each member, including the TM, bring out the calendar and review and assign tasks.

The last weeks before the Tournament is the most difficult time to keep things in perspective. It may be a good idea to reread pages 2 and 3 in your *Team Manager's Guide*. Remember that the **process** of solving a Challenge, and the memories of the DI experience will be remembered far beyond the results of competition on Tournament day. Good Luck, TMs!