

**NAME:** Mission Impossible

**SOURCE:** James Hill 2018

**INTENTION:** This is a lovely metaphor to explore workability, creative hopelessness, and the consequences of rule governed behavior.

**MATERIALS:**

1. Instructions
2. Clear bottle 1/10<sup>th</sup> filled with equal number of 2 different colored beads. Seal the bottle with glue.

**CHALLENGE FOR LEADER TO PRESENT TO THE GROUP:**

**Setup:**

We are going to use this bottle with beads as a metaphor to explore the impact of relating in different ways to our thoughts, feelings, and body sensations. When things happen, we react with a variety of thoughts, feelings, and body sensations. They show up in us like beads in this bottle in “reaction” the cues around us. Some reactions we like, others we don’t, and many are fairly neutral. What may be less obvious is that our mind automatically takes on a mission about what to do in response to the reactions that show up. It reflexively decides what to do. It is rarely aware that it is doing this and almost never considers a full range of optional responses.

I want to suggest from the beginning that this unconscious decision about what to do about our reaction is often a root cause of our suffering and ineffective behavior.

**Challenge:**

I am going to ask you to work in pairs (small groups or individually works as well) in an effort to complete different “missions” the mind might try to accomplish.

1. MISSION 1: Eliminate unwanted reactions (get rid of “bad” thoughts / feelings)
  - Without opening the bottle, do what you can to get rid of the (pink) beads.
2. MISSION 2: Control unwanted reactions (learn to control thoughts / feelings)
  - Try to get all the (blue) beads on the left side of the bottle and all the (pink) beads on the right side.
  - Try to get all the (blue) beads on top and all the (pink) beads on the bottom.
3. MISSION 3: Mindfulness - Play around with the bottle and notice how reactions respond and change as you take different actions (notice how thoughts and feelings change in response to doing this and doing that and doing something else).
  - Let go of the agenda to arrange the beads in any way. Just play around and notice what happens. Spin the bottle, tip the bottle, shake the bottle, turn the bottle, and notice what happens to the beads. See what you can get the beads to do. Notice and learn how they react to different actions.
4. MISSION 4: Find value in the way things are.
  - Work with your partner to think up as many different ways you could use this bottle exactly as it is. How could you use it for something constructive?
5. MISSION 5: Find ways to coexist with challenging reactions and participate in life.
  - Pretend you had to wear this bottle around your neck for the rest of your life. You could not avoid people seeing it, or making judgements about it. It would get in

your way at times and cause you physical and emotional pain. It might make it hard to sleep, or swim, or make friends. You would have times when even simple things like dressing and cooking would be more complicated. Try as you might you would not be able to explain to people why you have it or why you cannot just get rid of it.

- What kinds of things would still consider “worth doing” (making friends, dating, swimming, going out, going to school, getting a job, traveling?)
- How might you have to participate in life differently than if you did not have this bottle around your neck?

**FACILITATION:** Possible directions to take the discussion.

- It can be helpful to write the missions up on a board with a brief description or heading to help people track the conversation. You can also spend time processing after each “MISSION” experience.
- Most people, given MISSION 1, will work to get the lid off of the jar so they can remove the “bad beads”. This is an opportunity to notice the wasted effort required. You might ask if people were caught up in this kind of struggle what kind of more constructive actions might not be happening.
- In most cases during MISSION 1, the idea of destroying the bottle will emerge. It is sometimes powerful to note how this mission will often lead to the idea of self-destruction.
- During MISSION 1 AND 2 you can help people to notice what happens to their attention when they are caught up in this kind of struggle. What more constructive things might they do with their energy, time, and attention?
- What mission is your mind giving you? Is that mission impossible?
- MISSION 3 is mindfulness. How might that look if you were to apply that to your life? How could that be useful? What might you learn?
- Can you identify an example of when you were on MISSION 4 in your life – you found value in the experiences you had, and ways to use your experiences constructively?
- Can you identify an example of when you were on MISSION 5 – you decided to participate in life despite some negative reactions, because you decided it was worth doing?