

# The Rope Game

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## **Purpose**

You can use this strategy to help a client who is having difficulties dealing with another person in either a private or professional environment. It requires the usual comfortable setting, plus a length of rope (preferably quite a thick one), about one metre in length. The objective of the exercise is for the client to find a way to let go of the rope and let the other person deal with it.

## **Description**

The Rope Game can help people become more aware of their responsibility and power in relationships or situations. The game uses a physical metaphor to make the obvious point that without their contribution, a problem would not exist. It gives them an opportunity to step out of the 'victim' role and allow themselves to take back control. The game also demonstrates the role the two parties play in a problematic relationship and the realization that they have power and that they can act, instead of reacting; they have power to change the situation.

## **Process**

The Rope Game takes approximately 20 minutes and requires a metre-long piece of thick rope (so the client has something 'real' to hold on to). Ask your client to tell you about his or

her problematic relationship and ask him or her to tell you how it works. Now, ask your client to hold the rope and to pull it. You now play the role of the person with whom the client has a problem. Ask your client to tell you how he/she is managing to keep the rope taut, for example arguing, being negative, etc. Explain to your client that if one of them decides not to 'play the game', then there would be no one on the other side to keep the rope taut. Keep asking your client what he/she is doing to keep the rope taut until a satisfactory explanation is given. You need the client to realise that he/she is part of the problem and can therefore be part of the solution. If he/she accepts responsibility, then he/she can act, and not be a victim any more. You are looking for the client to change his/her attitude in order to change the result that he/she is getting in the relationship.

If you are satisfied with the way the client can change the situation, with the explanation supplied, you can tell your client to take some time and when ready, to let go of the rope. Ask your client to imagine a similar situation in the future and explain how he/she feels about letting go of the rope. Can you see that your client can feel the change, feel his/her responsibility and his/her power to change the relationship? Ask your client to imagine the relationship now that the rope is no longer providing a connection between the two parties. Double check with your client and ask him or her to imagine the relationship now, with no rope connection. Letting go of the rope means accepting not being part of the problem anymore but becoming part of the solution.

### **Pitfalls**

The pitfall in this strategy is for the coach to lose the purpose of the game. The only goal is to help the client let go of the rope or even just realize his or her involvement in the situation.