



Fisher Handshake: A Moving Metaphor for Connection

[Virtual]

Time: Approx. 5-10+ minutes

Summary: Participants are guided to greet one another and synchronize using specified hand/arm movements and a playful yet meaningful fishing metaphor.

Group Size: 5-100+

Technology Requirements: Zoom or other online video meeting platform. Spotlight facilitator to start if group size exceed one screen.

Materials Needed: None

Game Play: Start with facilitator framing something like...Remember when we used to shake hands physically? How that simple gesture of reaching out was a way to instantly connect and acknowledge our common humanity. It could be a colleague, close friend or even a rival or stranger. Shaking hands at a minimum showed our willingness to show up and perhaps most often that we were present and ready to engage. At times it also communicated non-verbal caring for the other while affirming our own presence, dignity and inherent worth.

There was always a lot of meaning in a handshake - overt and simple on the one hand though often fused with subtle gestures and facial expressions sometimes difficult to interpret. Handshakes also vary by diverse cultural adaptations still evident today in COVID-safe techniques (continue with the narrative here OR ask the group to share what they have experienced. NOTE: elbow bumps into the camera are especially simple, fun and visually interesting) such as air hugs and 'smiling eyes' to the cautious yet enthusiastic masked dual elbow-bump.

This morning to help kick off the year I'll share an on-line adaptive hand shake. It is based in the fishing tradition – one that I first witnessed as a child among Portuguese fishermen off the rocky coast on the Massachusetts north shore. Back in those days they would extend a hand as if to shake, but rather than grasping they would start a waving motion (I start to demonstrate with my hand and forearm swishing close to my camera). It was as if to mimic or perhaps embody the fish they sought and the undulating sea into which they would cast their hook, line and sinker. Not surprisingly I learned a few years ago that when fishermen gathered early mornings in the ports here in Jersey City they also once greeted in this manner! (Expect some laughter as participants know this to not be true – insert name of program location)

When more than 2 gathered, which was frequent, and as is the case for us this morning, (I invite everyone to join me with hands approaching the camera waving side to side like fish)



they would make an effort to synchronize their movements in amplitude, rhythm and attitude as if a school of fish... a synchronized school. Notice how in its deep attentive presence there is still room for individual expression (encourage the occasional celebratory flourish of waving hands). Unity was embraced in fishing communities but not so much to cause conformity.

The school, as it were, would sometimes bunch close together (invite hands to move close to the camera) and sometimes pull apart (invite them to pull arms away from the camera and even push the body back from one's screen), but still willing to come close again while always aware and motion informed by other members of the community....

As you carry yourselves into this extraordinary school year I invite you to pause at times, ungulate your arms and check with others to discern when you are swimming apart and when in synch – either way consider swimming in community as a school fish inspired ...

Variations: This is framed around the context of school but of course can be readily adapted to many other settings. There are endless handshakes with metaphors to explore using this format and an on-line video setting. In this structure consider this next level of fun and chaos:

- Invite everyone (or selected groups for a large group) to unmute, call out a neighbor and shake hands. They may greet just one person then quiet down or continue to mingle meeting several people. Trios and 4-somes may even spontaneously form. Note that some will relish the chaos while others may have limited patience.

Reflections and themes:

Sample Themes...

- Practicing empathy by noticing the style and pace of other people's motions
- Exploring necessary tension between desire for autonomy and synchronizing with others
- Recognizing the diverse range of 'fish styles' thereby appreciating similarities and differences
- Considering the how luck, serendipity or chance – all sometimes equated with catching a fish – factor into life and work

Source: The 2020 Project Adventure training and consulting team and '5 Handshakes' in the PA publication, *The Hundredth Monkey*