

**TIP #14 – JANUARY 2007 – UNEXPECTED OUTCOMES
CONTRIBUTED BY
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ENTERTAINMENT**

Sharing magical moments can reenergize a group and lend credibility to your facilitation. This is the first in an occasional series from Walt Anthony, who has explored options for magic (*please don't say "tricks"*) appropriate to all The Five Practices and The Ten Commitments of Leadership.

Unexpected Outcomes

Magic for Challenge the Process and Experiment

The facilitator borrows a watch, and ties it onto the end of about a yard of string. A house-key has been tied to the other end of the twine.

The facilitator then hangs the loaned watch over a wooden pencil so it dangles above the floor, holding only onto the key at the other end of the string.

The facilitator releases the key, the watch plummets towards the floor, then, the *magic happens!*

The premise

“Everyone knows how the law of gravity works.

If you drop an object—it falls.

If you drop a heavy object from a height it may break when it crashes.

That's the usual process.

Since gravity is pretty much a universal “law” you may well ask:

“What's the sense in challenging the process, if that's the way it always works? That's what we're about to see.”

Three questions are posed

So, since the outcome is certain, perhaps we can only ask,

- 1- Will I really let go of the key?
- 2- How long will it take for the watch to hit the ground?
- 3- What is the predicted fate of the watch?

Or we could Challenge the Process and ask,

- 1- What if -insert facilitator's name- is not totally nuts?
- 2- Do outcomes always have to be as we assume or imagine them to be?
- 3- Could something “magically” intervene and truly avert disaster?

At this point we're going to Experiment

Take a risk to see if we can either generate a small win, or at least learn from this mistake...

As unbelievable as it may seem the first time (at home with your own watch please), the outcome of letting go of the key and string is completely unexpected- and the process of challenging gravity almost magical to observe (as will be the relief on the face of the owner of the watch).

This bit of magic is a very effective and visual way to demonstrate the letting go of expectations and fears of failure.

It will take some experimentation and practice to get the knack—adjusting how far to let the watch dangle, what angle to best hold the cord and key, etc. (as you rehearse over a pillow), but once you have it down, the outcome will always be the same.

You will need

- 1 A length of sturdy cord about three or four feet long.
- 2 A long wooden pencil, chopstick, or better still, small magic wand.
- 3 A common house key (an old interesting skeleton-key style could also symbolize “the key to successful challenges”)

Securely tie the key to one end of the cord, and tie a loop on the other end so you can quickly and easily attach a borrowed watch at that opposite end of the string.

Borrow a substantial and heavy looking watch from a brave workshop participant, and ask them to join you at the front of the room.

- 1 As you outline the premise and questions above, loop the watch through the cord to attach it to the far end of the string opposite the key.
- 2 Request that your participant grip the end of the pencil tightly, and keep it parallel to the floor.
- 3 Dangle the cord over the pencil so that the watch end hangs about six inches down from the pencil.
- 4 Hold the key end of the cord taut, and running over the pencil, and downward at about a forty-five degree angle to the floor.
- 5 Remind your participant to keep a strong and steady grip on the pencil.

When the process has been challenged (or not) request the group to count to three... and let go of the key!

The watch will not nose-dive towards the floor dragging the string and key along, as you would naturally expect.

Instead the key will wind the cord about the rod very quickly and tightly, wrapping it

around and around the pencil, and leaving the heavy and delicate watch *safely* suspended well above the ground.

Your group will be amazed to see this small win occurred against all odds.

Be sure to sincerely acknowledge and thank the watch's owner for risking a small heart attack as you return their timepiece!

In experimenting and practicing this demonstration, take time to examine how it operates:

Try hanging the watch at different heights, using a slightly longer-or-shorter cord or strings of various thickness.

Practice how taut to hold the cord and at what angles (both to the floor, and slightly left or right of the watch on the pencil) so that the key will not strike the watch as it twirls around the pencil.

If you prefer a kinder-and-gentler approach you may use your own watch and spare the nerves of your participants. Other small objects with lighter/heavier weights can also be substituted, such as a book of matches along with a coffee cup.

Because everyone is so familiar with how gravity always works, this is a very visual and powerful demonstration of what it takes to trust, overcome objections or fears, and be open to experimentation to truly challenge the everyday processes we encounter.