

Woman from Mars

Impact:	Illustrates how easily the most basic comments, directions or statements can be misunderstood
Risk:	Medium
Group Size:	Unlimited
Time Required:	10 to 20 minutes
Materials:	Shoes with laces

Directions:

- Participants stand in a circle. In the middle of the circle stands the facilitator (or a group member who understands the game). This individual is the "Woman from Mars."
- The group then shouts out directions for how to tie a shoe. The alien, however, only understands the exact (literal) meaning of words. If the group's directions are not precise, the alien intentionally misinterprets the instructions. For example, "Put your hands on your shoes," may lead the alien to put the backs of her hands on her feet or her palms around the toes of her shoes.
- The alien should actively look for ways to "misinterpret" the directions. Some "misunderstandings" may be:
 - Not bending down, but lifting a foot up behind you
 - Using the wrong parts of hands (e.g., only thumbs, or only pinkies)
 - Using two hands for the same job (e.g., dropping one lace to grab the other)
 - Grasping the middle (laced-up part) of the laces instead of the free ends
 - Taking off a shoe
 - Wrapping laces around the ankle; tying laces under the shoe or behind the ankle
- Once the group understands the importance of communicating clearly, have them break into pairs. Each person teaches his or her partner how to perform a "simple" action such as snapping, whistling, or doing a jumping jack. The partner, like the alien, should also intentionally try to misinterpret the instructions.

Discussion:

- Do you often assume when you talk to someone that your words mean the same thing to the person you are speaking with?
- Share a story about a time when an assumption or misinterpretation lead to confusion or even anger.