

Hula Hoop Challenge: Influence vs. Control

This simple exercise lets you feel, in a fun way, what it is like when your goals are blocked, or you feel resistance. RAGE gives us energy to overcome obstacles, but that same energy can quickly become controlling when another person seems to be standing in our way.



You'll need a hula hoop (hopefully you have one somewhere in your house). If you don't have one, borrow one from a friend or neighbor.

As illustrated in the image below, stand across from your partner and extend both index fingers horizontally. Rest the hula hoop lightly on top of all four fingers. Start with the hula hoop at waist level. For an extra challenge, start the hula hoop at chest height.

Your goal is to lower the hula hoop to the ground - **BUT, you must accomplish this by not allowing the hula hoop to ever lose contact with either of your fingers. Both of you must maintain contact with the hula hoop at all times. You also cannot use any other fingers or thumb to grip the hula hoop.**

This sounds simple, but you'll likely find it challenging. Don't be surprised if the hula hoop rises or veers to one side as you both try to lower it. Here are a few keys to success.

1. Focus first on your own fingers and movements rather than trying to manage your partner.
2. Go slow and pause if needed.
3. Be patient with each other and allow yourselves to laugh.

In this exercise, it's not uncommon for one or both partners to snap in frustration at each other over what they perceive as a lack of effort or cooperation in completing the task. Once you succeed, take a moment to discuss:

1. **When did you feel frustrated or out of control?**
2. **Did you ever assume that your partner was causing the problem?**
3. **When did you feel tempted to control the outcome rather than coordinate with your partner?**
4. **What helped you two shift from resistance to cooperation?**

RAGE gives us energy to create movement. The challenge—in this exercise and in marriage—is learning to use that energy for influence, not control.

Most importantly, let laughter be the core experience.