The Five Finger Contract
A recommended tool from Lindsay Walton, Owner and Lead Facilitator of Open Door Development.

There are many variations of the Five Finger Contract out there. This just happens to be the way that we present it. What we love about this contract is that it is simple, straight-forward, and the reminder of the contract is attached to each participant’s body!

While the principles associated with each finger are simple, simplicity can be a beautiful thing and open up opportunity for deep and rich discovery. We have seen teams revolutionized by the reminder to stop putting each other down, even if they were ‘just kidding’, and individuals grow when they make a commitment to see a challenge through to the end. Do not underestimate the power of a simple piece of wisdom! The following contract is a reminder of five simple principles that will help any team to experience higher levels of success...

Hold out your left hand in front of you and take a good look at it. Attached to your body is a reminder of five principles that will help our team to be successful.

**Thumb:** When somebody holds out just their thumb, what does that usually mean? [Good job! Thumbs up! Way to go!] We are usually offering encouragement to someone. This finger is a reminder to us to encourage our team mates and to actually say it out loud! It’s no good if I think to myself, “Wow, John did a really great job during that last challenge.” I need to go over to John and say, “John, that was amazing! If you hadn’t shared your idea we never would have finished that challenge. You rock.”

**Pointer:** When somebody holds out just their pointer finger, what does that usually mean? [Hey you! Over there. Come here.] We are usually giving directions of some kind. This finger is a reminder to us to give directions to our team mates. And just like encouragement, we need to share them out loud. You might have the solution to a problem and the only way the team can act on your idea is if you share it!

**Middle:** When somebody holds out just their middle finger, what does that usually mean? [F you! Back off! Other not so nice things.] We are usually angry with someone and trying to insult them. Instead of sticking this finger up we’re going to turn it towards the ground and use it as a reminder to ‘put down the put downs’, making the choice to stop putting down our team mates and to stop putting down ourselves. Be real about the things you say to put down other people and yourself and make a conscious decision to stop.

**Ring:** When somebody holds out just their ring finger what are they usually showing off? [An engagement or a wedding ring.] We are usually showing off a symbol of a commitment that we have made. This finger is a reminder to us to stay committed to two things: the team and the...
challenge. Life is going to be hard sometimes and knowing this ahead of time we can choose now how we will react when those tough times hit. We can choose now to stay committed to the team and the challenge and decide now what that will look like.

**Pinkie:** When you are playing the ‘Little Piggy’ game on your toes, which little piggy would this one be? [The little piggy that cried ‘wee wee wee wee all the way home’.] This little piggy cried wee wee wee. This finger is a reminder to us to watch out for the ‘wee guy’ in our group. That doesn’t mean we are all watching out for the shortest person in our group! It means that we all have strengths and we all have weaknesses. You’re a human being. Welcome to the club! So if you realize that you are doing well and another team mate is struggling during a challenge, what could you do? And if you realize that you are struggling while your other team mates are doing well, what could you do? We all have the ability to offer help and to ask for help when we need it. We are not taking on these challenges alone!

The Five Finger Contract isn’t carved in stone. Participants can add to it, adjust it, and take items away. Sometimes participants come up with secret handshakes that are meaningful to them or signals they can flash at each other.

Example: One team came up with the “double thumbs-up cheezy grin” sign. It was their way of reminding themselves to have fun encouraging each other. It was sincere in a fun and wacky way.

Example: Another team would flash their hands at each other in two sets of ten when they saw someone starting to disengage. It was their way of reminding each other that they had made a team commitment to not just give 100%, but to give 200% for each challenge. Because it meant something personal to that group, it only took one double-flash from a team mate to get that person back in the game and giving their all.

Have fun with this contract! It is powerful and flexible and ready to help your team move to the next level!

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- Conflict Resolution Training
- Bullying Prevention Training
- Leadership Development
- Facilitation Training
- Independent Living Skills
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