

# The Joy of Cooperation

*Jumpstart a conversation about cooperation and teamwork by contrasting ideas across cultures.*

*Time:* 15 minutes

*Materials:* Three Images A, B, and C  
Cooperation Poster

Explain to the group that you are going to give them an opportunity to reconsider a familiar concept from the perspective of another culture. Through the process, people will likely gain new insights that will be helpful for the group going forward.

Find out whether there are any people present who can read Mandarin. If so, ask them to keep their thoughts and comments to themselves until you ask for their contribution.

Explain that in Chinese, characters don't spell out words. Instead, they represent a concept. Show a slide or distribute copies of *Image A*. Ask people to take a moment in silence to think about what concept the image might represent. Solicit a few ideas from people and record them on a flipchart. Possible responses might include a house, a safe place, a person with a hat, eyes and an open mouth, a field or pasture in front of a mountain, etc.

Next, show *Image B* and repeat the same process. Possible responses might be people marching together, a leader and a follower, flags, people carrying something together, birds on telephone wires, etc.

If anyone who speaks Mandarin is present, ask them to share what the individual images represent (but *not* what they might mean when combined). Otherwise, tell people that *Image A* represents laughter and *Image B* represents work.

## TRAINER'S NOTES

- In Mandarin Chinese, “Hézuò,” the word for cooperation or teamwork, is derived from the combination of the word for laughter and the word for work.
- English definitions of cooperation: Working together to the same end; An act or instance of working or acting together for a common purpose or benefit; Joint action.
- English definitions of teamwork: The combined action of a group of people, especially when effective and efficient; The process of working collaboratively with a group of people in order to achieve a goal; Behaviors that facilitate effective team member interaction.



Tell people that Chinese characters are combined to represent more complex concepts. Show *Image C* and ask people to speculate about what concept is represented by the combination of the two previous characters. What would be the English translation of this concept? Record people's responses then share the correct interpretation: cooperation or teamwork.

Complete the learning process by asking appropriate discussion questions from the following list:

Discussion:

- What surprises you about the Chinese understanding of cooperation or teamwork?
- What is most similar and what is most different about the Chinese and English concepts of cooperation?
- How important is laughter and fun in your own concept of teamwork?
- Have you experienced the Chinese concept of cooperation – both laughter and work – in your team? What was the situation?
- What are some ways your team uses laughter to be more productive?
- What are the challenges to including laughter as a regular element of cooperation?
- What are the possible negative outcomes of laughter plus work?
- What are some strategies to promote a balanced approach to cooperation and teamwork?
- If you were to invent two original characters to represent teamwork in your organization, what would they be?

End your activity by distributing copies of the *Cooperation Poster* to individuals or posting it in your work area as a reminder of what people have learned about cooperation.



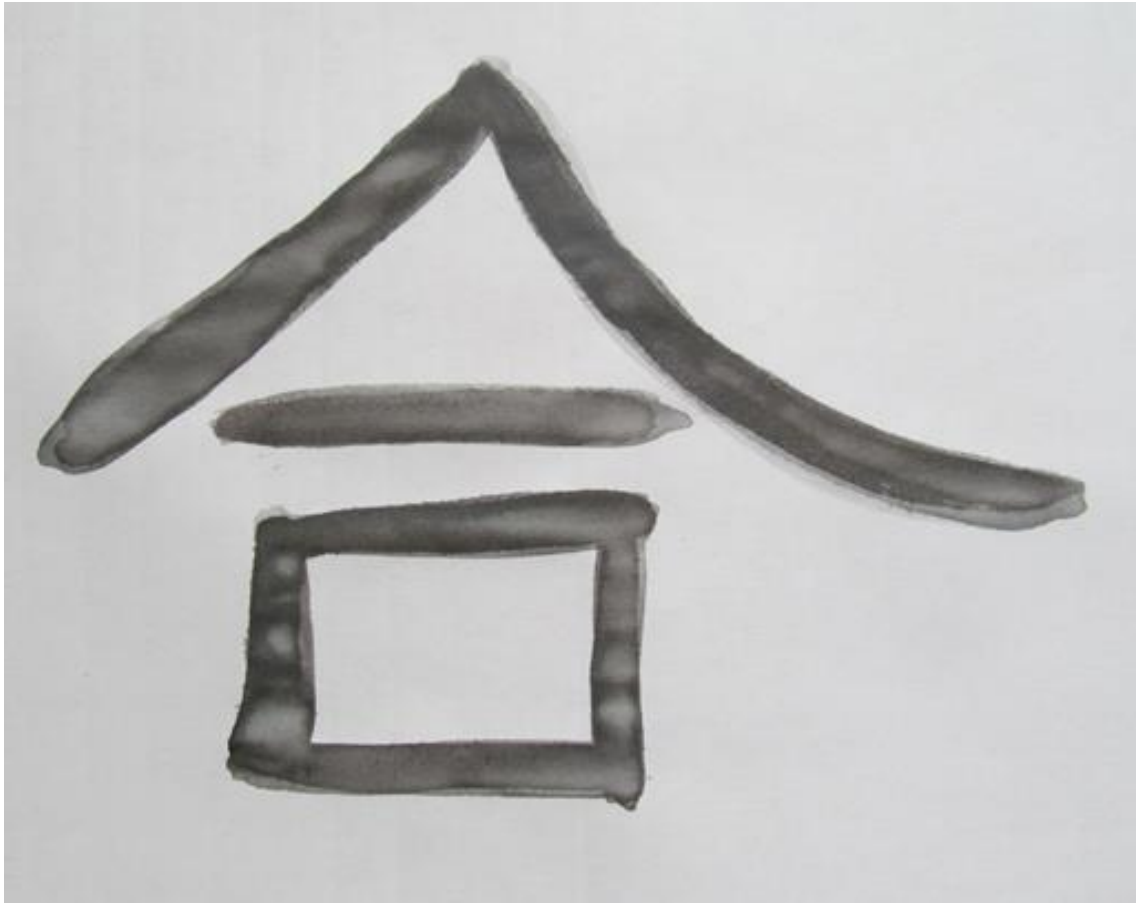


Image A





# Image B





# Image C





# Laughter + Work Cooperation

