

# Web of Interdependence

**Activity:** Web of Interdependence

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**Level:** Middle School - Adult (Ages 12+)

**Materials:**

- Large ball of yarn (or multiple balls)
- Name cards or stickers for community roles
- Scissors for cutting yarn
- Optional: printed corporate offer cards

**Sources:** Inspired by “Web of Life”

## SEL Competency

- ✓ Self Awareness ✓ Self Management
- ✓ Social Awareness ✓ Relationship Management
- ✓ Responsible Decision Making

## Lifeskill(s):

- ✓ Citizenship ✓ Collaboration ✓ Common Sense
- ✓ Communication ✓ Cooperation ✓ Decision Making
- ✓ Perspective Taking ✓ Problem Solving ✓ Relationships
- ✓ Responsibility ✓ Stewardship ✓ Teamwork
- ✓ Trustworthiness ✓ Resourcefulness

## Framing Questions & Activity Lead-in:

"What holds communities together? What makes them fall apart? Today we're going to explore how self-sufficient communities work and what happens when external forces offer 'easier' alternatives. You'll experience firsthand how individual choices can impact an entire interconnected system."

## Suggested Procedure:

**Setup (5-10 minutes):**

1. Form a circle of 12-20 participants
2. Assign each person a vital community role (gardener, farmer, builder, weaver, carpenter, healer, cook, etc.)
3. Introduce 1-3 volunteers as "external corporate agents"

**Building the Web (10-15 minutes):**

1. Use yarn to physically connect participants based on interdependencies
2. As each connection is made, participants state: "I rely on you because..."
3. Continue until a complete web of local interdependence is formed
4. Observe and discuss the strength and beauty of the interconnected system

**Introducing Disruption (10-12 minutes):**

1. Corporate agents walk around offering alternatives:
  - "Buy cheap food from us, no need to farm"
  - "Get instant furniture online, skip the carpenter"
  - "Here's an app for everything you need"
2. Participants choose whether to accept offers
3. Those who accept must cut their yarn connections
4. Observe how the web begins to unravel and create instability

**System Collapse Observation (5-10 minutes):**

1. Continue disruption until significant web breakdown occurs
2. Discuss immediate feelings and observations
3. Identify ripple effects and unexpected consequences

**Debriefing/Processing:****Reflection Questions:**

- How did it feel when the web was complete and strong?
- What emotions arose as connections were cut?
- Why were the corporate offers tempting? What made them appealing?
- What was lost that wasn't immediately obvious?
- How did individual choices affect the whole community?
- What parallels do you see to real-world situations?

**Discussion Points:**

- Balance between convenience and community resilience
- Unintended consequences of individual decisions

- The value of interdependence vs. independence
- How to protect community systems while embracing beneficial change

## **Connections/Extensions:**

### **Real-World Applications:**

- Local vs. global food systems
- Small businesses vs. chain stores/online shopping
- Community services vs. app-based solutions
- Open source software vs. proprietary platforms

### **Follow-Up Activities:**

- Research local businesses and community organizations
- Design hybrid solutions that balance convenience with community support
- Replay scenario with collective decision-making processes
- Explore rebuilding strategies: mutual aid, cooperatives, local governance

### **Curriculum Connections:**

- Social Studies: Economics, community systems, globalization
- Environmental Science: Sustainability, local ecosystems
- Civics: Community engagement, collective decision-making

## **Facilitation Notes:**

### **Key Facilitator Moves:**

- Emphasize that there are no "right" or "wrong" choices during the activity
- Avoid being preachy; let participants experience the complexity
- Encourage honest reflection about the appeal of convenient alternatives
- Help participants see both benefits and costs of different systems
- Guide discussion toward nuanced solutions rather than binary thinking