



Adders are Amazing! Gwiberod Gwych!

1. SNAKES - SAVVY, NOT SURE OR SCARED?

INTRODUCTION



When you first start working with any new group, it is important to find out how much the participants know about snakes, and how snakes make them feel. Inevitably, there will be keen 'experts' actively participating, but there may be others who are scared or phobic, and many more that are not sure how they feel. We have developed an 'ice-breaker' activity to encourage everyone to join in and tell us what they know and how snakes make them feel. This is a delicate area so it is important to praise children for what they know (especially if they are scared), and ensure that those with fears or concerns do not feel isolated or mocked. Empathise! Maybe use an example of other fears we may have - we are all different and they are not 'wrong'. Encourage those who are unsure to join in and find out more.

MATERIALS:



- Any sized group of participants
- Adult helpers (e.g. parents, teachers) if working with children
- Small area of open space (indoors/outdoors)
- Lifesize props of UK snakes (optional)
- Printed and laminated pictures of snakes from the locality of the group and other native UK reptiles OR a slideshow using large pictures of these animals
- Lengths of rope cut to match the lengths of our native snakes and slow-worms, hidden inside a bag. Include an 8m long reticulated python for amusement! (optional)

DO IT!



1 Print out large photos of UK snakes and other reptiles. Laminate for durability. Alternatively create a slideshow if facilities allow. Images are available for use through ARG UK (see 'Resources').

2 Ask participants to rank how strongly they feel about snakes. Ask them to line up, with those loving snakes at one end, not sure in the middle and those disliking them at the other end. This works best with children, but also works with adults! Count how many fall into each category (dislike, not sure, like).



DO IT!

3

Tell the group, it's 'quiz time'! You are curious to see if they can identify our UK reptiles. Hold up / display each picture slowly. Leave the adder until last as most children and adults assume the grass snake is an adder – this makes it fun and is very revealing!

5

If you have snake props, ask for different volunteers to come out to bring them out of a bag or container. Talk to the class about identification features. Use the props and/or photos to help show differences between the sexes. Here are some leather Adders we had made for the Adders are Amazing project.



4

Next ask for four volunteers (if you are working with a school group, it can be helpful to ask the teacher to help choose). Ask them to reach in to the bag of ropes and show the class. The whole group have to guess which rope is which snake or slow-worm, based on length. Get them to vote. They almost ALWAYS choose the grass snake length as the adder! We used grass snake (1m), adder (60cm) and slow worm (35cm) and an 8m long reticulated python (longest recorded snake) to see if they know what it is!

6

After carrying out your activity work with the group (e.g. a reptile walk, a food chain game or creative artwork such as clay adders or amulets), ask the participants to think again about how they feel about snakes. Ask them to line up again to see if anyone has moved category – did any of the 'not sure' group move to liking them? This is the usual result and great to confirm and celebrate with them!

