

Joyful Systems Participant Worksheet

Page 1 of 5 — Online Individual String Map

Purpose

Choose one real system from work or life and sketch how communication, reliance, decision-making, and inclusion actually flow.

You will need

- Paper or a notebook page
- A pen, pencil, or marker
- Optional: colored pens or highlighters

Directions

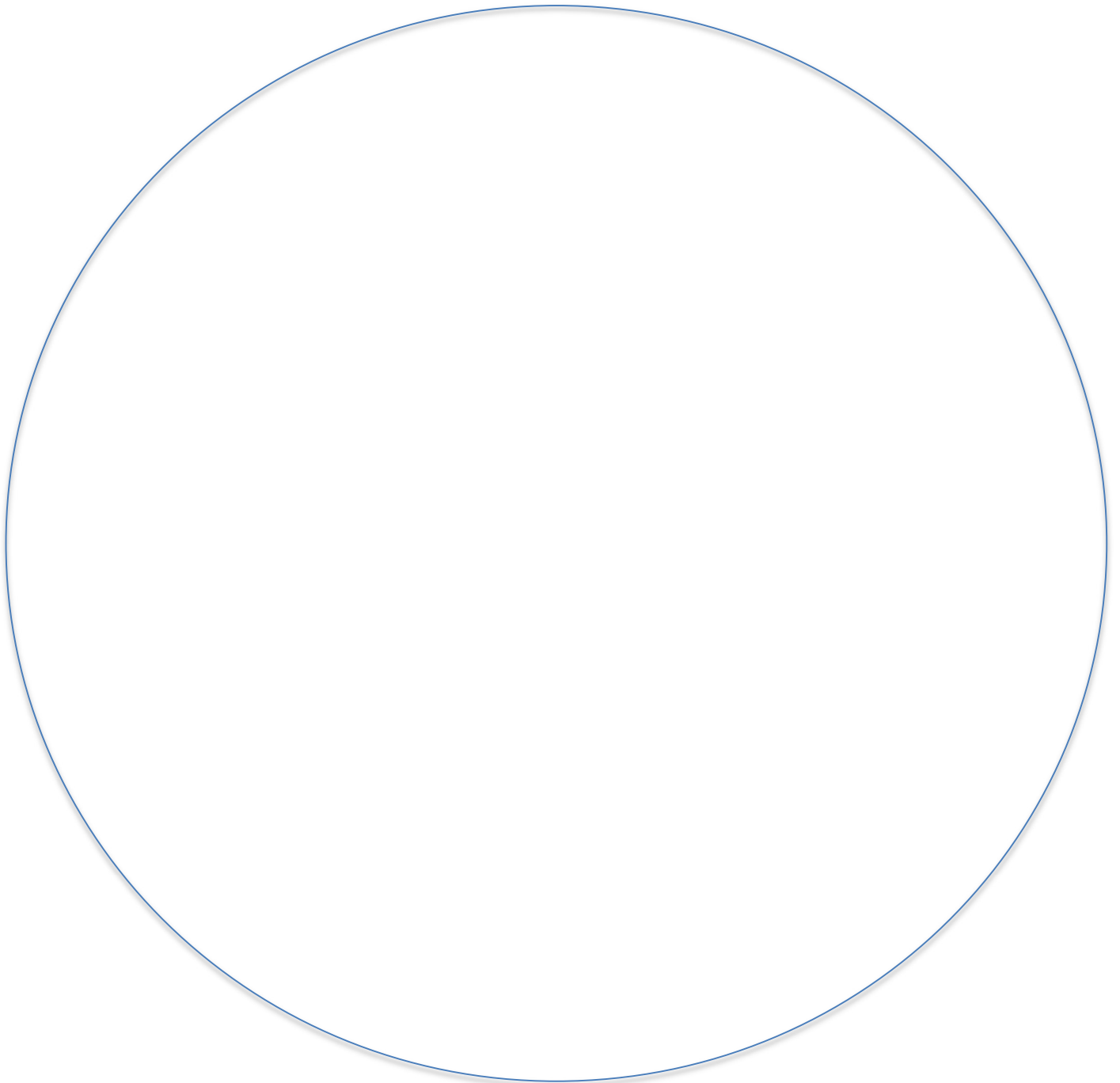
- 1. Pick one system that matters to you right now: team, project, family, volunteer group, or other.
- 2. Draw a circle in the center of the page and label the system.
- 3. Around the circle, write the names or roles of the people in that system.
- 4. Draw lines between people who communicate most often when things are moving normally.
- 5. Add or darken lines between the people others rely on most when things get messy, urgent, or high stakes.
- 6. Circle the people who are most involved in making decisions.
- 7. Put a star next to anyone deeply affected by the system but not meaningfully included in shaping it.

Look for

- Bottlenecks — one person connected to almost everything
- Invisible labor — the person everyone relies on but rarely notices
- Missing voices — people affected by the system without much influence
- Decision disconnects — authority sits far from the work
- Clusters or silos — strong internal ties, weak cross-system ties

Joyful Systems Participant Worksheet

Page 2 of 5 — Online Individual String Map



Joyful Systems Debrief Worksheet

Page 3 of 5 — Online Individual Map Debrief

1. Reaction + Observation

Reaction word:

What surprised you emotionally?

What stands out first?

Who seems most central?

Who seems isolated or less connected? _____

Where do you notice dense links, gaps, or uneven patterns? _____

Who appears to carry a lot of communication or coordination? _____

2. Meaning + Transfer

What recurring pattern does this map help explain? _____

What have you been treating like a people problem? _____

Bottlenecks / invisible labor / missing voices / silos / decision disconnects:

What is this system amplifying? Stress / speed / silence / care / dependency / resilience / other

Where does this show up in real life?

What in this system helps people thrive? _____

What in this system creates drag, confusion, or stress? _____

3. Forward action — One conversation this map suggests you need:

One missing voice to include / one bottleneck to reduce / one pattern to stop feeding:

One safe-to-try experiment for the next 1–2 weeks:

One small thing I will try is: _____

What I can now see more clearly is:

What I will do differently because of it:

Joyful Systems Facilitated Activity

Page 4 of 5 — In-Person Group String Game

Purpose

Use yarn or string to make a relationship system visible in real time and reveal communication patterns, bottlenecks, missing voices, and over-reliance on key people.

You will need

- A ball of yarn or string
- Open floor space for a circle
- A facilitator to guide the prompts and debrief

Setup

- Invite 8–15 participants to stand in a circle.
- Have one person hold the end of the string.
- Ask the group to think about one real team, project, or shared system.

Activity directions

- Round 1 — Communication: “Pass the string to the person you communicate with most often when trying to get work done.”
- Each person keeps hold of their section before passing the ball onward.
- Continue until everyone has passed at least once.
- Round 2 — Reliance under pressure: “Pass the string to the person you rely on most when things get messy, urgent, or high stakes.”
- Add a second line of connection without dismantling the first pattern.
- Pause and let the group observe the web before moving to debrief.

What to notice

- Who is central? Who is barely connected?
- Where are the bottlenecks or clusters?
- Who seems essential but under-seen?
- What voices or roles are missing from the web?

Facilitator reminder

Keep the tone curious, not blaming. The goal is not to judge people. The goal is to help the system become visible.

Joyful Systems Group Debrief

Page 5 of 5 — In-Person String Game Debrief

1. React + Notice

What did this feel like?

What surprised you?

What word describes your reaction to the web? _____

Who held the most string?

Who had the fewest connections?

Where were the dense clusters?

Where were the gaps or missing links?

2. Make Meaning + Transfer

What recurring pattern does this web help explain? _____

What have we been treating like a people problem? _____

Where do we see bottlenecks, invisible labor, missing voices, or decision disconnects?

What is this system amplifying? stress / speed / silence / care / dependency / resilience

Where does this show up in real day-to-day work? _____

What helps people thrive here?

What creates drag, stress, or confusion? _____

3. Forward action — What conversation does this web suggest we need?

One missing voice to include / one bottleneck to reduce / one pattern to stop feeding:

One safe-to-try experiment we could run next:

One small thing we will try is:

What we can now see more clearly is:

What we will do differently because of it:
