

Ice-Breakers and Team Building Activities

Birthday Line Up

Goal: To develop communication skills and group problem-solving skills.

Have the group line up against a wall or stand on a line, or all facing forward.

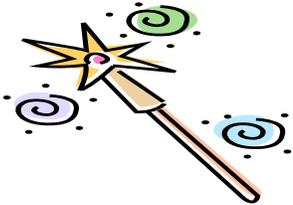
Instruct the group that they need to get into a line in order according to their birthday by month and date, without losing contact with the wall or going off the line.

The leader (facilitator) then checks the order that the group is in to see that it has the correct order.

Variations

Ask the group to line up in order without talking

Line up by alphabetically by the street you live on, or height, or shoe size, etc.



Bippity Boppity Boo

Goal: To increase the student's ability to identify his/her peers within the group.

Have your group place themselves in a circle. The group leader stands in the middle of the circle. Explain the game and do a couple trial runs of the game.

Point decisively at one of the students in the circle and say that person's name with conviction, then state, "me (or) you" followed by "bippity boppity boo."

The person you pointed to is to say either the name of the leader (me) or their own name (you) before you finish saying "bippity boppity boo" IF they don't accomplish this then that person takes your place in the middle of the circle.

Variations

Once the group has grasped this you can add "right and left" to the choices. Now the leader can say "Me, you, right, or left" and the person selected will have to say the name of the leader, themselves, or the person to their right, or left.

Group Juggle

Goal: To have the group begin to get to know each other by learning each others names and to increase group interaction skills.

Have the group in a circle. The leader will toss a ball to another person (not the person next to him/her) and say that person's name. They will then toss the ball to another person that has not yet received the ball and not next to him/her. This process will continue until everyone has caught the ball. The last person will toss the ball back to the leader that began.



The leader will start the activity again by tossing the ball to the same person as before and the cycle begins again. This time the leader can add two, three, four, or five balls until the group can toss all the balls at the same time to one another.

Variation

Use other objects i.e., rubber chicken, bean bags, rings, stuffed animals
Change up the order by calling out Reverse

Where in the Circle am I?

Goal: Get to know one another, learn how to communicate with a group, nonverbal communication.

Arrange group in a circle. Have group members shout out their first names (or mother's name, or favorite food, etc.) in unison and then remain silent.



Instruct the group that they must now arrange themselves in alphabetical order (according to name, favorite food, etc.) in a circle in as few tries as possible and without talking. Ignore queries as to where the circle "starts" or "ends". After they have attained some semblance of order, have people announce their name beginning from where they chose to start. Do not let them adjust their positions.

After the order has been announced and the group sees where they need to move, repeat the name shout and have the group move again. Continue until the group has achieved the correct order (most groups will actually be successful in 3-4 attempts).

My Neighbor

Goal: To cooperatively participate in the activity, processing the best way to stay out of and/or get out of the middle of the circle. Getting to know each other and what we have in common and different.

The group leader has all the students stand in a circle in front of chairs (the group leader removes his/her chair from the circle). The group leader stands in the middle of the circle.

The group leader explains they are going to play a game in which they will begin by stating "I have a neighbor who....." The person in the middle can then only say something that is true about him/her. For example..." I have a neighbor that is wearing tennis shoes." Or "I have a neighbor that was born in Milwaukee." Every person who fits the description or the statement is true for needs to find a new spot to stand. Players can not return to their previous spot or to a spot next to them.



Variations

Once the group has grasped the game, remove another chair from the circle, so there are 2 people in the middle. The 2 people then have to come up with something they have in common before they say "I have a neighbor who...."



Guess Who I Am?

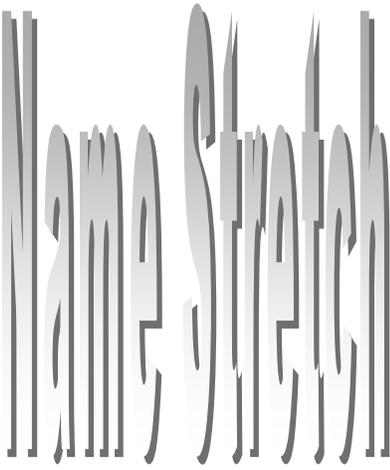
Goal: To promote group awareness, trust, and appreciation of individual differences.

Come up with a list of personal achievements, characteristics, interests, hobbies, goals, favorite foods, etc. Make the items something that participants would want to easily share.

Have each person fill out the list on an index card.

Collect the lists. Read the answers to the questions from a list. The group then has to try to identify the person whose list is being read. Give them a limited number of chances. If they fail let them come back later. The process continues until everyone has been identified. This atmosphere for this activity should be one of fun and play.





Goal: Learn each other's name and some physical warm up

Have students in a circle; make sure that there is enough space for movement. The group leader gives the directions and models as follows: introduce yourself by saying, your first name and an action word that starts with the same letter as your first name. For example, "My name is Laughing Lou" then make an action motion demonstrating the adjective laughing.

The next person in the line has to say and mimic the name and action by saying, "this is Laughing Lou and I am Jumping Jenny." The next person in line then says, "that is Laughing Lou, Jumping Jenny, and I am Swimming Sam." This continues until all have had an opportunity to introduce themselves and the people before them.

Assure the students that it is the responsibility of the entire group to help the person remember the names. Therefore, if one person can not remember all the names and action words the group can help them out. Remind students to think of an adjective along with the motion that starts with the same letter as their name so they are ready when their turn comes.

Ask students if they are having a hard time thinking of an action word and have the group help them prior to starting the activity. Encourage silly adjectives along with silly or goofy movements.

Puzzled People



Goal: To be used as an alternative way to divide students into groups.

Cut indexes cards into two pieces. Cut each differently so that each piece only pairs with one other piece. Distribute half a card to each student. Have each student find the person who has the piece that fits his/her piece.

The facilitator can now easily have the group work with a partner in a related activity.

Variation

Once a match is made have the partners talk about what they have in common. Use for community building or for a classroom project.

Speed Rabbit

Goal: To help students let down their inhibitions and have fun with a large group without placing judgment on them.

The group should form a circle. The facilitator stands in the middle first, and teaches motions that include three people at time, i.e.:



Elephant- the person pointed to makes a trunk, and the people on either side make ears.

Moose- the person pointed to makes the moose nose; people on either side make the antlers.

Airplane- the person in the middle make the pilot goggles, people on either side make the airplane wings.

Rabbit- the person pointed to taps (or thumps) their foot on the ground quickly, people on either side make rabbit ears.

Jell-O- the person pointed to shakes like Jell-O, the people on either side make a bowl around the middle person.

Roller Coaster- the person pointed to holds up their hands and yells, the people on the sides make a roller coaster waving motion with their hands.

Statue of Liberty- the person pointed to holds up one arm above their head like they are holding a torch, the people on either side bend at the waist and bob like they are pigeons pecking the ground.

The person in the middle of the circle points to someone and calls out a character such as elephant then says bippity boppity boo as fast as they can. If the 3 people make the elephant before the person in the middle says bippity boppity boo the game continues. If not, then the slowest person (of the 3) takes the pointer's place. The pointer has the final decision as to whether the participants completed the motions prior to him/her saying bippity boppity boo.



Start with 2 characters to do and as the group grasps the activity start to add additional character. (You can think of your own characters to add as well.)

Impulse

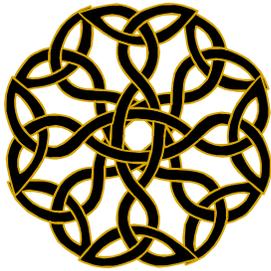


Goal: Working together for a common goal

Have the group stand in a circle where they can comfortably hold hands. Have one individual start an impulse (gently had squeeze the person on their left) around the group. Have that individual (the one that started) call stop when the impulse reaches their opposite hand. Time the impulse and have the group best their time and/or predict a time goal. The group can challenge themselves by clockwise vs. counter clockwise, eyes closed, time or sending impulse out in both directions.



Human Knot



Goal: Team building, Cooperation, Communication

Have the group form a circle (best with groups of about 10 people), or form multiple circles if you have many people. Instruct everyone to lift their left hand and reach across to take the hand of someone standing across the circle. Next, have everyone lift their right and reach across to take the hand of another person standing across the circle. Make sure that no one is holding hands with someone standing directly beside the person.

To play, the groups must communicate and figure out how to untangle the knot (forming a circle of people) without ever letting go of any hands. If you wish, this icebreaker can be played competitively, in which the facilitator says "Ready.. Set.. Go!" and has all the groups race to become the first group to finish. If any group member lets go of a hand (breaks the chain), then the group must start from the beginning.

This game typically takes 15-30 minutes to complete. You can impose a time limit if you wish to make the game more challenging. When you are done with the Human Knot activity, you can ask some debrief questions if you wish, such as "How well did you group work together? What strategies did your group adopt? How did it feel to solve the game? Etc.

Variations

To increase the difficulty level, you can either (1) blindfold some of the players or (2) require that the game be played silently (no talking).