



## Energizer, Icebreakers, & Team Builders

### **Icebreakers:**

*Whether you're teaching a class, facilitating a meeting, hosting a group, or attending a casual summer party, getting to know the people around you can be intimidating or very fun. Break the ice! Click for a list of Icebreakers and Name Games. All ice breakers are printable!*

### **Chaos**

Material Needed: 3-4 soft small objects (stuffed animals, koosh balls, bean bags)

Time Required: 10 minutes

Group Size: 8-20

Purpose: Physical Energizer, Name Game

Organize participants into a circle

One person begins by tossing one of the objects to someone else, saying, "Hi, Name of Person!"

The person who catches the object then says, "Thanks, Name of tosser!" and repeats by tossing to someone else in the circle.

Names must be said each time the item is tossed or caught.

3-4 items may be in place at once, but make sure to space them 30-60 seconds apart from each other.

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### **Concentration**

Material Needed: None

Time Required: 10-15 minutes

Group Size: 10-20

Purpose: Energizer, just for fun

Arrange participants into two equal lines facing each other.

Once group turns around while the other gets 30 seconds to change 10 things about them (switch jewelry, change hair style, untie shoelaces, switch watch to other arm, trade clothing, etc.) as long as they are all things in sight. The first group turns back around and must identify the 10 changes.

After they identify the changes, or time is up they swap so they other team gets to make changes while they guess.

Source: Holden Leadership Center. (2009) *University of Oregon*.

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**Do You Love Your Neighbor?**

Material Needed: Place markers (half sheets of paper, tape, name tags).

Time Required: 10-15 minutes

Group Size: 10-40

Purpose: Physical energizer, getting to know you

Organize group members into a circle and have them put their place markers behind them at their feet.

The facilitator should be in the middle explaining the game and should not have a place marker.

Tell participants that in order to get out of the middle the people surrounding them in the circle need to ask in unison, "Name of person in middle, Do you love your neighbor?"

The person in the middle will then respond by saying one of two things.

The first thing they can say is "No" in which case everyone needs to move from their spot and find a different one. They may not take a spot directly next to the one they are already at. This gives the person in the center time to take a spot and escape from the middle.

The second thing the person in the middle can say is, "Yes, especially those who are wearing blue jeans". And then only those people wearing blue jeans must move and find a different spot.

The person in the middle may say anything within reason to get people to move. For example: I especially love my neighbors who have ever been to the beach, eaten spaghetti, been to a baseball game, watched cartoons, etc.

Source: Holden Leadership Center. (2009) *University of Oregon*.

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**Grab Bag Skits**

Material Needed: A bag of 5-6 random items for each group

Time required: 15 -20 minutes

Group Size: 10-50

Purpose: Physical energizer, just for fun

Organize people into groups of 3-6 people.

Hand out bags filled with random items.

Explain that each group must come up with a skit that uses all of the items in the bag.

Encourage the groups to be creative with the items in their bag. Objects can be whatever they imagine them to be (i.e. a hairbrush can be a microphone, a roller skate can be a time traveling device, etc.).

As a facilitator you can create pre-made skit topics for each group, or you can give all of the groups a vague topic relating to your organization/ company/ conference.

Give groups 5-7 minutes to create a three minute skit.

Have each group perform their skit in front of all the other groups.

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**Green Glass Door**

Material Needed: None

Time Required: 5-10 minutes

Group Size: 2-20

Purpose: Ice breaker, time filler

Tell participants that we are going on a picnic and in order to come on the picnic, they need to go through the green glass door.

To get through the green glass door each participant must bring something to the picnic.

What they can bring to the picnic depends on the first letter of their first name. Each person may only bring objects to the picnic that start with the letter of their first name.

For example: The facilitator (whose name is Sam) would start by saying. "I am going through the green glass door and I'm bringing Sandwiches, but I am not bringing the watermelon. What are you bringing Larry?"

Larry might respond by saying I'm going to bring the potato salad, but I am not going to bring the juice. In which case the facilitator might say, I'm sorry Larry, you can't bring the potato salad, but Patty, you could bring the potato salad. Continue doing this until everyone catches on to the rule.

Variations:

If everyone catches onto the rule quickly, you can create more difficult rules.

Suggestions are:

Participants may only bring items that have double letters in them, (i.e. balloons, food, berries, jello, cheese, etc.), participants may only bring items that start with the first letter of their last name, etc.

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**Have You Ever?**

Material Needed: Place markers. A half sheet of paper or tape works really well depending on the floor surface.

Time Required: 10-15 minutes

Group Size: 10-30

Purpose: Physical energizer, getting to know you, getting to know your better. Especially for big groups.

Organize participants into a circle.

Give each person a place marker and have them put it behind them on the floor at their feet (the facilitator should be standing in the middle of the circle directing this activity, not taking part).

Have each person step on their marker.

Explain that there is one more person than there are spots on the circle and the job of the person in the middle is to take one of the spots so that they can get out of the middle.

How they get people to move is by asking the question, "Have you ever..." and then fill in the blank with something they have done. For example: Have you ever been to a concert?

Everyone who has been to a concert will then move to a different marker on the circle that is not directly next to the one they are already on. Once people start to move the person in the middle tries to take a free space.

The last person in the middle without a spot then has to say, "have you ever..." and the game continues.

**Note:**

It is a good idea for a newer group to have people introduce themselves before saying "have you ever", for example: My name is Sam and have you ever eaten sushi?

You can add rules to the game as it progresses, such as if you have already been in the middle and get caught a second time, you may choose somebody else to be in the middle who hasn't yet.

If everyone has a chance to be in the middle you can change, "have you ever" to the phrase, "I would like to...." to focus on future ambitions and goals. For example, my name is Sam and I would like travel to Europe. Everyone with the same goal would then move to a different spot.

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### **Mingle**

Material Needed: None

Time Required: 10-15 Minutes

Group Size: 10-50

Purpose: Physical energizer, getting to know you

Teach participants the mingle song, which goes, "Mingle, mingle, M I N G L E" (the mingle song is open to interpretation, dance moves may be incorporated depending on the creative mind/ coordination of the facilitator.

Explain that while the mingle song is being sung, participants must move about the room.

After participants have mingled to the satisfaction of the facilitator, the facilitator will yell out a number, and the participants must then stop mingling and get into groups of that number. For example: After participants have mingled, the facilitator will yell out, "GROUPS OF 3". Participants would then make groups of 3 as quickly as possible.

After giving participants about 15 seconds to make groups. The facilitator then yells out 2-4 questions for everyone to ask their group members. The questions should be get-to-know you questions decided by the facilitator.

After giving participants adequate time to ask and answer the questions, the facilitator then starts singing the mingle song, everyone should join in and the game starts over.

The group size and questions should change throughout the game. For example on the second round, participants may need to get into groups of 5 and they have to answer 2 questions instead of 3.

#### **Note:**

After a round or two, the facilitator should say that participants can't be in a group with more than 1 or 2 people (depending on the size of the group) they have already been in a group with.

I would also suggest that if it is a new group, always making one of the questions: What's your name?

If you have trouble making up questions off the top of your head, you may want to come prepared with a list of questions.

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**Move it Laverne!**

Material Needed: Chairs or place markers

Time Required: 10-15 minutes

Group Size: 10-40

Purpose: Energizer, getting to know you

Organize participants into a circle either standing or sitting. Make sure there is one less place marker or chair in the circle than there are people.

The facilitator should start in the middle and give participants 30 seconds to learn the first, middle and last names of the people on both their left and right.

The person in the middle then approaches anyone on the circle and says either "right" or "left" and then begins counting to 5.

The person must then recite the person's full name on their right or left before the person gets to five. If they say an incorrect name or can't do it before the person counts to five they need to become the person in the middle.

At any time someone can yell, "switch!" and everyone must get up and change places, giving the person in the middle an opportunity to take someone else's chair.

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**Name Tag Grab**

Material Needed: Sticky- back name tags, marking pens

Time Required: 10 minutes

Group Size: 8-50

Purpose: Physical energizer, name game

Organize participants into a circle and hand each person a name tag.

Tell each person to write their name on the name tag.

The facilitator then takes all the name tags and redistributes them at random to the participants. (You may not have your own name tag or the person to your right in the circle).

The facilitator then instructs the participants to place the name tag they are holding on the back of the person to their right.

On the "go" signal everyone must move among the group members and try to locate their own name tag while avoiding someone finding the name tag that is on her or his back.

Once a person finds their own name tag, they grab it off of the person's back and place it on their chest for all to see.

Each person stays in the game until they find their own name and the person whose name was on their back finds her/his name.

Source:

Jones, A. (1999). *Team -Building Activities for Every Group*. Richland, WA: Rec Room Publishing. P. 22-23.

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**Psychiatrist**

Material Needed: None

Time Required: 20-30

Group Size: 10-20

Purpose: Physical energizer, getting to know you

Participants are all in a circle, seated or standing.

Explain that one person needs to volunteer to be the psychiatrist and leave the room. While they are gone the rest of the group will create a pattern of how they will be answering the questions the psychiatrist will ask when they come back into the room. For example: Everyone will answer the questions as if they were the person on their left.

Once the group members have created a pattern they bring the psychiatrist back into the room and the psychiatrist must begin asking people questions in order to figure out the pattern.

If the psychiatrist asks a question to someone and the person answers correctly nothing happens and the psychiatrist moves on to ask someone else a question. If the person answers incorrectly, someone in the circle must say "psychiatrist" and everyone gets up and switches places. For example: If the psychiatrist asks Sam, "What color eyes do you have?" and Sam says, "blue" and then Katie, on Sam's left really has green eyes, Katie would say, "psychiatrist" and everyone would get up and switch places.

It is important to keep with the pattern once places are switched. Meaning that if you are answering as the person to your left, you will have a different person on your left when you switch places.

The game ends once the psychiatrist figures out the pattern. If the game goes on for a long time and the psychiatrist can't figure out the pattern give them hints or eventually just tell them the pattern.

**Note:**

It is a good idea to start with a really easy pattern for the first round so that everyone can get a handle on how the game works.

In addition to answering like the person, you can make it so people have to gesture or physically mimic the person they are supposed to be as well.

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**Salt and Pepper**

Material Needed: Quarter sheets of paper, tape, writing utensils

Time Required: 20-25 minutes depending the size of the group.

Group Size: 6-40

Purpose: Physical energizer, getting to know you

Prior to starting the activity, the facilitator should take the quarter sheets of paper and think of obvious things that go together in pairs, for example: salt and pepper are a pair of items that go together.

Using the paper, the facilitator should write these things on separate sheets. The facilitator should make as many of these are there are group members, but they should all be different items.

At the beginning of the game the facilitator will tape one of these on the back of each participant without letting them see what it is.

When the facilitator gives the "go" signal the participants must walk around, asking only yes or no questions to find out what is written on their back and who their matching partner is.

Once they successfully find their partner, they must sit down with them and do an interview, finding out 3-5 interesting facts about them.

Variations:

Write specific interview questions on the backs of each of the quarter sheets of paper before placing them on participant's backs.

Have pairs introduce their partners to the rest of the group, sharing what they learned about them.

Instead of an interview right then, tell them they must then go out for lunch or coffee with that person to get to know them better.

Possible Pairs:

Salt and Pepper, Ketchup and Mustard, Mickey Mouse and Minnie Mouse, Right and Left, Romeo and Juliet, Christopher Robin and Winnie the Pooh, Black and White, Coffee and Tea, Bread and Butter, Milk and Cookies, Moulder and Scully, etc.

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**Silly Scrumple**

Material Needed: Writing utensils and quarter sheets of paper

Time Required: 10-25 minutes

Group Size: 5-50

Purpose: Physical energizer

Pass out paper and writing utensils to the group.

The facilitator does not participate.

Each participant writes something silly to do on the piece of paper. (i.e. bark like a dog). They then crumple up the paper.

The facilitator tells the group to start passing the paper around the circle, then tells them to stop after a given time.

The facilitator then picks people to do the action described on the piece of paper.

The facilitator can tell as many people as they want to do their silly action.

Note:

A variation of this would be that the people doing the action could not laugh. If they laugh, they're out and repeat the process until only two people (the winners) are left.

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**Slack Jaw Dance Off**

Material Needed: None

Time Required: 10-20 minutes

Group Size: 2-100, game works best with even numbers, but can be played in a group of three by alternating partners.

Purpose: Physical energizer, getting to know you

Phase One: Choosing a partner

Ask participants to choose a partner, making sure it is someone they don't know well.

Phase Two: The Slack Jaw Stare Off

Participants may not smile or laugh (but they may blink).

Participants begin by staring eye to eye with their partner without laughing or smiling.

After about 30 seconds the participants must lower their jaw and continue staring.

Students are not able to laugh or smile and if they do, they lose and must start over.

Phase Three: The Slack Jaw Dance Off

If nobody laughs or smiles after about a minute of the slack jaw stare off, students can then begin to make funny faces and dance about to attempt to make their opponent laugh.

While making faces or dancing, students must continue to stare with a slacked jaw.

Again, first person to make their opponent laugh or smile wins.

Phase Four: Get to know your partner

After playing 3 rounds of slack jaw with their partner ask participants to interview their opponent. Prompt your students with questions to ask. Sample questions are: Their partner's name, age, 3 things they would bring with them on a deserted island, etc.

Note:

You may skip phase four and ask participants to find a different partner and play Slack Jaw again.

It is also possible to have a Slack Jaw Dance Off competition and have winners play winners and then have a Slack Jaw Dance Off champion.

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### **Squeeze**

Material Needed: Coin, empty plastic water bottle

Time Required: 10-20 minutes

Group Size: 10-40

Purpose: Energizer, demonstrate teamwork

Divide group members into even teams

Have teams sit at opposite sides of a rectangular table, or stand in two straight lines, shoulder to shoulder facing the other team.

Instruct team members to hold the hands of the people next to them.

Place the water bottle at one end of the table.

Explain to participants that, at one end of the table a facilitator will be flipping a coin. When the coin lands on tails, nothing happens. When the coin lands on heads, the team member at the end of the line closest to the coin will squeeze their team member's hand setting off a chain reaction all the way down to the end.

Once the person on the other end, next to the water bottle feels their hand squeezed, they need to grab the water bottle as fast as they can before the other team.

You cannot grab the water bottle unless you feel your hand squeezed.

If your team is successful in grabbing the water bottle before the other team, your team members rotate, so the person nearest the water bottle will move down to be nearest the coin.

If for whatever reason you start squeezing when you shouldn't be (accidentally squeezing the person's hand next to yours, the coin lands on heads) and you grab the water bottle out of turn, your team rotates backwards a person.

#### **Note:**

There should be no talking during the game, and it is a good idea to have everyone's eyes closed except for the person who needs to see the coin. You can make a rule that they can only look in the direction of the coin and not toward the other end of the table.

Also, at any time you can ask for a "hand check". Meaning if the groups are seated at a table and their hands are underneath the table you can ask them to lift up their arms to show that they are all holding the hands of the person next to them.

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### **Take What You Need**

Material Needed: A roll of toilet paper or 2 depending on the size of the group. If you are concerned with waste you can also use poker chips or bingo markers or small squares of paper, etc.

Time Required: 10-25 minutes

Group Size: 10-30

Purpose: Getting to know you

Ask participants to form a circle either standing or sitting, whatever is comfortable.

Bring out the roll of toilet paper and tell participants to "Take as much as you think you'll need".

Pass it around the circle, and give everyone a chance to take some.

If anyone asks any questions about what they will be using the toilet paper for, or anything like that, just repeat, "take as much as you think you'll need".

Once everyone has some, ask participants to count their squares of toilet paper.

Then go around the circle and for every square of toilet paper they took, participants must tell a fact about themselves to the group. For example of you took 7 squares, you must tell 7 facts about yourself to the group.

If you have a really large group and somebody took half a roll you can limit the number to 5 or whatever seems appropriate to stay within your time limit.

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### **The Gift**

Material Needed: None

Time Required: 10-15 minutes, depending on the size of the group

Group Size: 5-40

Purpose: Energizer, just for fun

Organize participants into a circle either sitting or standing.

Tell participants to turn to the person on their right and give them a verb or action.

Then tell participants to turn to the person on their left and give them a noun.

Go around the circle and have everyone tell what they were given. For example: If I were given the words jump and toaster. I would say I was given a jumping toaster.

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**Question Ball Toss**

Material Needed: Rubber Ball or Beach Ball

Time Required: 10 minutes

Group Size: 5-25

Purpose: Getting to know you

A ball is pre-divided with random questions written on it.

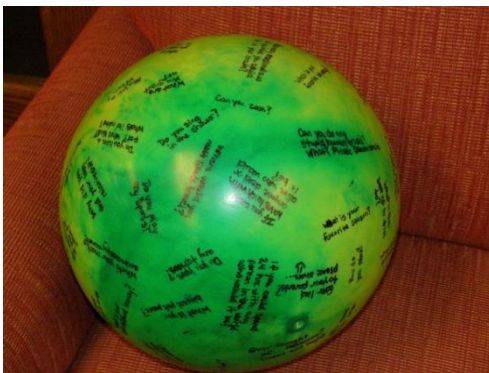
Ask the group to pre-determine right or left thumb

The participants toss the ball around the circle introducing themselves and answering the question closest to their chosen thumb.

Variation:

Allow participants to choose which question to answer

Example Question Ball





**Energizers:**

*Do you feel your group's energy level is dragging?! Maybe it's early. Maybe it's late. No matter what the circumstance, we have provided a list of energizers to get your group moving. Click for a list of Energizers. All Energizers are printable!*

**Animal Roundup**

Material Needed: None

Time Required: 10 minutes

Group Size: 5-50

Purpose: Physical energizer

Tell group members to silently think of their favorite animal.

Then tell group members that without talking, they need to arrange themselves from largest to smallest animals.

Group members can only make gestures and the noise of their animal.

After they have finished, have group members go around and say the animal they were supposed to be to see if it was accurate.

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**Balloon War**

Material Needed: Different colored balloons, String, a large open area

Time Required: 10-15 minutes

Group Size: 8-50

Purpose: Physical energizer

Divide participants up into even teams.

Give each team as many balloons of all the same color as there are members, and some string. Make sure you give each team a different color of balloons.

Have each team tie the string to their balloon and then to their ankle.

Explain that when you give the "go" signal each team must attempt to pop all of the balloons that are a different color than their own.

Participants must work in a team to pop other team's balloons without getting their own popped.

Once your balloon is popped you must step outside of the playing area.

Once only one color of balloon is still in the game, that team wins.

**Note:**

A variation of this game is that after 5 or 10 minutes the team with the most members with balloons still attached wins.

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### **Butt Head Tag**

Material Needed: A large open area, a field or a room with few obstacles.

Time Required: 10-20 minutes

Group Size: 15-100

Purpose: Physical energizer

Make sure everyone feels comfortable with either running or fast walking.

Set parameters for the playing field

Divide the group in half either by numbering off or another more creative way. (Example: asking who prefers chocolate ice cream to go to one side of the room and everyone who prefers vanilla to the other. You can then even out the numbers by asking one or two people to join the other group. Also, numbers do not have to be exactly even for the start of this game.

Once you have two groups, ask all of one group to place their left hand on their head and the other group to place their left hand on their butt.

Explain that everyone is "it" in this game. Once the game begins all of the people with their hands on their head must attempt to tag the people with their hands on their butt and vice versa. You must tag people with your free hand, and may not remove your left hand from its respective location.

If you are tagged you must change your hand to be the opposite of which it had been. For example if your hand was on your head you need to move it to be on your butt.

You can change back and forth as many times as you are tagged.

The game ends once everyone has either their hand on their head or their hand on their butt.

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### **Clothespin Samurai**

Material Needed: Pool noodle, 5-10 clothespins, blindfold

Time Required: 10-15 minutes

Group Size: 10-30

Purpose: Physical energizer

Arrange group members in a circle with one person in the middle who is blindfolded.

The blindfolded person in the middle has several clothespins attached to their clothing (back, arms, legs shoes, etc.)

The blindfolded person is handed a "sword" (inflatable or foam pool noodle).

The other group members must remove the pins without getting whacked by the "sword".

If you are whacked three times, you're out.

Note:

You as the facilitator should not be participating monitoring safety for the participants and keeping track of how many times people have been hit by the "sword".

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### **Contemplating the Universe**

Material Needed: None  
Time Required: 10-15 minutes  
Group Size: 10-50  
Purpose: Physical energizer

Organize participants into a circle.

You as the facilitator should be standing in the middle of the circle explaining the game.

Explain that as someone on the outside of the circle, you must ask the person in the middle what they are doing. You do this by at any time saying, Hey insert name of person in middle!, What are you doing?!

The game begins with the facilitator doing a continuous random action in the center of the circle (for example, pretending to juggle, dance, do yoga, go fishing, etc.).

Eventually someone on the outside of the circle will say, "Hey! What are you doing?!" The person in the middle will then make up something off the top of their head. For example: I am playing Ultimate Frisbee with alligators.

The person who asked, "What are you doing" must then come into the middle of the circle and pretend to play Ultimate Frisbee with alligators until somebody else says, "Hey! What are you doing?!"

After someone else says, "What are you doing?" The person playing Frisbee with alligators must then need to make up something else for that person to be doing. For example: I'm knitting little hats for my 74 cats.

Note:  
It might be a good idea to make up the rule that everyone needs to ask What are you doing? To the person in the middle at least once before anyone can be in the middle a second time.

Personally, I enjoy ending the game by being the person in the middle and then when someone asks me what I am doing, I say, "Contemplating the universe. Hence the name of the activity."

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### **Earthquake and Eviction**

Material Needed: None  
Time Required: 10-15 minutes  
Group Size: 12-200  
Purpose: Physical energizer

One group member stands alone to start, the rest of the group members need to join groups of three.

The groups of three have two people making a house with their hands and one person standing underneath.

The lone person calls either "Eviction!" in which everyone in a house must leave or find a new one.

Or the person may call "Earthquake!" in which all houses collapse and everyone must form a new threesome of house and resident.

Either way, the lone person tries to get into one of the threesomes, so the person left becomes the new "caller."

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### **Elbow Tag**

Material Needed: A large field or room with no obstacles

Time Required: 15-20 minutes

Group Size: 15-100

Purpose: Physical energizer

Make sure all participants are comfortable with either running or fast walking.

Set the parameters for the playing field.

Have all of the participants pair off and link arms at the elbow with their partner.

Have one the pairs volunteer to begin the game as the chaser and the runner. (One person being the chaser and the other person being the runner).

Explain that as long as you are linked arms in a group of 2 with another person you are safe from the chaser and cannot be tagged.

The game begins with the chaser trying to tag the runner.

In order to avoid being tagged and become safe the runner must link arms with one of the pairs forming a group of three. After they link arm, the third person at the end of the link must break off and become the runner.

If someone is tagged before they can successfully link arms with a group of two they then become the chaser, and must try to tag the person who just tagged them before they link arms with someone.

Note:

After people have gotten the hang of the game, you may add another element by allowing the linked pairs to move about in the playing field.

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### **Everybody's It Tag**

Material Needed: None

Time Required: 10-15 minutes

Group Size: 6-200

Purpose: Physical energizer

Make sure everyone is comfortable with either running or fast walking.

Tell participants the parameters of the playing field.

The game starts with everyone being "it" and trying to tag whoever they can.

If you are tagged you need to kneel down where you were tagged.

If tagged, you need to keep track of who tags you, because once they are tagged, you can get back up and get back in the game.

The game ends when there are only a few people left who haven't been tagged.

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**Look Up, Look Down**

Material Needed: None

Time Required: 10 minutes

Group Size: 10-200

Purpose: Physical energizer

Arrange participants into groups of 12-20 members.

Have participants stand in a tight circle, shoulder to shoulder.

Explain that when you (the facilitator) says, "look down" everyone must look at the ground. And when you say, "Look up" everyone must look up and stare directly at the face of another person. If two people look up and stare at each other, they must scream and then step out of the circle. The rest of the participants who didn't make eye contact with another person will continue staring until the facilitator says, "Look down" again. Play continues until there are only 2-3 people left in the circle.

Variations:

If you have more than one circle of Look Up Look Down going on, you will want a facilitator who knows the rules in each group.

With a very large group, you may have several circles of Look Up Look Down going on at the same time. If that is the case, once group members stare at another person, and scream, they must then run clockwise to the next circle and join their game. Your circles keep fluctuating in size. The game continues until you run out of time.

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**Samurai Sword**

Material Needed: 2 pool noodles about the length of swords

Time Required: 10-15 minutes

Group Size: 2-15

Purpose: Physical energizer

Organize participants into a circle with you (the facilitator) standing in the middle.

Put one of the pool noodles at your feet and hold the other like a sword.

The object of this activity is for the people in the circle to try and steal the sword at the feet of the person in the center.

The person in the middle needs to protect the sword by hitting anyone who tries to steal it with the pool noodle in their hand.

In addition to hitting people with the pool noodle, if the person in the middle spins around with the noodle above their head everyone on the circle needs to duck down, and if they spin around in a circle with the sword at their feet everyone on the circle needs to jump.

If someone successfully grabs the sword at the feet of the person in the middle, they have a duel and the first person to hit the other person with the sword gets to take over as the protector of the sword in the center of the circle.

**Note:**

This is a high-energy activity, so it is very important to keep safety in mind. Yes, pool noodles are soft and generally won't hurt someone, but a pool noodle in the eye or mouth sucks. So, setting parameters on where you can hit someone with the pool noodle before the game starts is a good idea. Also, anyone who doesn't physically feel comfortable jumping or ducking should opt out of that part of the activity.



**Teambuilders:**

***Whether you are newly elected officer trying to build a sense of team and buy in or you a seasoned leader that needs to refocus your group or reinforce positive practices. Implementing an effective team building sequence with your group may be just what you need to take your group to the next level. Click for a list of Teambuilders. All Teambuilders are printable!***

**All Tied Up**

Material Needed: Bandanas or cloth strips, other items as needed

Time Required: 15-30 minutes, depending on the goal and number of group members

Group Size: 2-15

Purpose: Work as team to complete a common goal

Arrange participants into a circle, facing each other. Ask them to hold out their arms. Tie the group together so that each person is tied to both neighbor's wrists.

Now that the group is "all tied up", give them a task to do together.

Some ideas are:

Make root beer floats for everyone. Wrap packages with gift wrap, bows, and a card. Eat lunch

Make a snack

Create an art project

Pour a cup of water for each person in the group

Anything else that is fun and crazy

Note:

To make the task more difficult give the group a time limit.

Debrief Questions or Topics:

Why were you successful (or unsuccessful) at completing the task?

How did the time restrictions aid or hinder your group from completing the task?

Did everyone in the group help to get the task done?

What happened when someone didn't help?

Do you ever feel like you are "tied up" with someone else when you are working with them and trying to get a job done? If so, why, and how do you deal with this feeling?

Source:

Jones, A. (1999). *Team -Building Activities for Every Group*. Richland, WA: Rec Room Publishing. P. 56-57.



### **Bid and Build**

Material Needed: A large sheet of paper (or a chalkboard, dry erase board, etc.), A writing utensil, Various items that can be used or not used to get a group from point A to point B (i.e. Frisbees, sheets of paper, rope, hula hoops, pieces of wood, or cardboard, and old garbage can, a tumbling mat, etc.), paper, pens and pencils, play money

Time Required: 30-45 minutes

Group Size: 4-20

Purpose: Team building, problem solving skills, adjusting to change, discussing consensus, group decision making skills, and working under pressure

List all of the items that you have gathered on the large sheet of paper, display it for the whole group to see to see, and show them the items listed.

Divide the group into at least two smaller teams of two or more and give each group a piece of paper and a pen or pencil.

Explain to the groups that their task is to attempt to get their entire team from one side of an open area to the other side (at least 10 yards apart). Before beginning, you should mark this area off with tape or rope to show them the distance.

Teams may use any of the items listed, and none of their team members may touch the ground.

In order to earn the right to use the items during the activity they must first use the play money (\$100.00 for each team) to bid on the items. They must divide up their money based on what they think will help them the most and write down their bids on the paper give to them. (One team may bid \$75.00 on the Frisbees, and \$25.00 on the rope, another team may bid \$50 on the rope and \$25 on the Frisbees and \$10 on the paper, and \$50 on the cardboard).

After all of the bids are completed, collect them and divide up the materials based upon the highest bid. In the example, the first team would end up with the Frisbees and nothing else, but the second team would get the rope, paper and cardboard. If there is a tie for any item you may have the teams bid again on certain items or divide the items up if possible.

Once the teams have their items, the second part of the teamwork activity occurs. They must now work together to get their entire team across the open area without any team members touching the ground in the process.

Debrief/ Discussion Questions:

Was it hard for your team to agree on what numbers to bid? Why or why not?

What did you do to come to an agreement?

When you disagree with others how do you handle it?

How do you feel about your ability to work with others after this activity?

What role do you usually take when in a group that is making decisions? Do you feel this is a good role for you? Why?

How did it feel to successfully/ unsuccessfully cross the area?

How did you go about developing a strategy?

Did you strategize before finding out what resources you would have or after you knew what you had to work with?



How did it feel to have to abandon/ change your plan?

If you could do this activity again, what would you do differently?

How did time play a factor in your decision making process?

Variation:

Give team members very little time to decide what to bid on. This will give them very little time to strategize how to get across the area with the given materials and make things more difficult. Also putting a time restraint on how long they have to get across the area will increase the difficulty. Also consider blindfolding, muting people throughout the activity.

Source:

Jones, A. (1999). *Team Building Activities for Every Group*. Richland, WA: Rec Room Publishing. Pg. 64.

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### **Blind Count Off**

Material Needed: None

Time Required: 10-20 minutes

Group Size: 5-100

Purpose: Team building, problem solving skills

Arrange group members in a circle.

Have group members turn around so that their back is facing the middle of the circle.

Tell group members to count as high as they possibly can out loud with only one person saying a number at a time.

There can be no planning and everyone must speak once before someone can say another number.

If two people say the same number at the same time or a number is said twice, the group must start over.

Variations:

Ask group members to count to a specific number.

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**Calm Down You But...**

Materials Needed: A flip chart or whiteboard, lots of 8 1/2 x 11 inch- paper

Time Required: 20-25 minutes, depending on the number of participants.

Group Size: 10-50

Purpose: Learning how to have difficult conversations, communication skills, management skills, speaking skills, emotional intelligence, reducing negative speech, customer service, conflict and negotiation

Possible Introduction:

*How many have ever told someone to [write on board] 'Calm down'? [show of hands]. How many found that the person didn't? [Show of hands, laughter]. What did the person say back to you? [Your learners will almost unanimously shout, "I am calm!"]*

*That's right: 'I am calm. And if you say that again, I will calmly break your face'.*

*Some words and phrases are like throwing gas on a fire. I call these 'fightin' words.'*

*They just make people come out swinging. Another fight' word is [write on board, to the right of "calm down"] 'You.' You made an error on this submission form; you aren't listening to what I am telling you; you need to meet your deadlines. What's the problem with this innocent word? [Answer: it feels like you're pointing fingers. Right.*

*Still another fightin' word is [write next to you] 'But.' I like your proposal, but we can't move on it right now; I understand your frustration, sir, but there's nothing we can do; you raise a good point, but we'll have to table it till the next meeting. What does but often mean to people? [Answer: ignore everything I said before but.]*

*We will now heighten our awareness of fightin' words, so that we can avoid throwing gas on the fire in our difficult encounters. We will do this through a game called...[point to white board and let learners read out loud], 'Calm Down, You But!' Let's get to work!'*

Divide learners into 2-4 teams (if you have more than 2 teams allow for more time. It is recommended to keep the game to 2 teams if possible, even if they are larger than the 5-7 ideal size).

Give teams one minute to come up with a common scenario for their organization. (Examples: exec officer evaluations, voting on something at a meeting, having a discussion about a huge project that needs completion.)

Hand each team a sheet of 8 1/2 x 11 paper, and give them 3 1/2 minutes to brainstorm a list of fightin' words for their scenario. (Examples: "No", "That just isn't our policy", "I don't know", "You'll have to", "Please hold", "That's not in my job description", etc.)

Tell them to keep these words a secret from the other teams.

After time is up, tell the teams that they will now have 10 minutes to complete in writing a one-minute script showing the best way to throw gas on the fire. Tell them that, as the judge you will award each team: 1 point for how many fightin' words they use, 1-3 points for how annoying their fightin' words are, and 5 bonus points for the actor who comes across as the most sincere, helpful, and cooperative when using the fightin' words. (Remind them that we often do mean to be helpful even when we're using the most annoying fightin' words).

After time is up, give them 30 seconds to pick 2 actors from their group. While they do so, distribute blank sheets of paper to each learner.



Have the first team perform their skit, while members of the other team write down the fightin' words they hear on their paper. At the end of the skit have the performing team identify the fightin' words they used and explain if necessary why they're problematic. Ask the entire group to suggest alternatives to the fightin' words. Have the team member with the neatest handwriting note down each alternative next to its fightin' counterpart on the flip chart paper.

Repeat this process with the second team.

Add up the scores. (Remember: 1 point for each fightin' word, 1-3 points for level of annoyance, 5 bonus points for the most sincere, helpful and cooperative actor.) Make a point in mentioning moments in each skit that got the biggest laughs from the audience.

Make copies of the lists of fightin' words and their alternatives and distribute to everyone

Debrief/ Discussion Questions:

Much debriefing has already taken place in the form of learners explaining their list and suggesting alternatives. While you don't want to flog this subject to death, here are some questions you can ask if they seem pertinent to the occasion

Many of us agreed on what constituted fightin' words- that is, we felt we'd be irritated if someone said them to us. Yet how many would admit to having used these words to others? Why do we sometimes use words or phrases to others that would get our own backs up?

Did anyone hear any words or phrases you didn't know were fightin' words? (In other words, that wouldn't bother you if someone said them to you?) How does that happen?

If you make an innocent comment that someone else hears as fightin' words, does that make you a jerk? Does it make them wrong? Which would you say is more important: your intentions or the other person's interpretations of your statement?

What's probably the best thing to do if we inadvertently say something that is perceived as fightin' words? [Answer: apologize sincerely and move].

Source:

Tamblyn, D., Weiss, S. (2000). *The Big Book of Humorous Training Games*. New York: McGraw-Hill. P. 217-221.

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### **Can Walk**

Material Needed: Large coffee cans, rope

Time Required: 15-20 minutes

Group Size: 3 or more

Purpose: Work as a team to reach a common goal, problem solving, communication methods

Gather together large coffee- type cans and punch two holes in the side walls, opposite each other near the closed end of the can.

Place a thin rope through the holes and tie the rope in a loop that is long enough to hold onto when standing on the can. Make several of these for your group.

Divide the group into teams of two or three. Give each team one more coffee can than there are people. The teams stand on top of the coffee cans, holding onto the handles and walking. Each person shares the can with his/her neighbor so that they are walking together (with the exception of those who are on the outside edge- the outside foot is by itself on the can).

Once the group is successful at walking on the cans in teams of two or three, challenge them to walk in as big a group as possible.

Debrief/ Discussion Questions:

How did it feel when your group was walking together?

Was it easy or difficult for the group?

What would have made it easier?

What would have made it more difficult?

What made doing this activity as a team better than doing it by yourself?

Source:

Jones, A. (1999). *Team Building Activities for Every Group*. Richland, WA: Rec Room Publishing. Pg. 86.

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**Circle Tag**

Material Needed: 1 blindfold

Time Required: 10 minutes

Group Size: 8-30

Purpose:

Start the game by asking for a volunteer. Blindfold this person and ask the rest of the group members to hold hands in a circle surrounding him or her.

The person in the middle tries to tag (or touch) those in the circle.

The people in the circle must work together to avoid being touched by the person who is in the middle.

If anyone in the group lets go at any time, the person in the middle wins that round.

Set a time limit (about 20 seconds) and challenge the group to go for this amount of time without being tagged.

The group can try to get away from the person in the middle by getting them to go under their arms and outside the circle without tagging them.

After the 20 seconds put another person in the middle and try again.

Variations:

Blindfold two people who must hold hands and work together to take the circle.

The person in the middle has no blindfold, but has their shoelaces tied together

Place a bell or other noisemaker on one person in the circle and challenge the person in the middle to tag this person while the rest of the group tries to keep her/him from being tagged. You may allow more time for this activity.

Discussion/ Debrief Questions:

What type of teamwork was needed for this activity (if any)?

Do you ever feel like a part of a team that is being pulled in many different directions? How do you deal with this type of situation?

What did each person need to do in this activity to make your team successful?

Do you ever feel like everyone else is on the same team and you are standing by yourself? How do you handle this situation?

Source:

Jones, A. (1999). *Team Building Activities for Every Group*. Richland, WA: Rec Room Publishing. Pg. 68-69.

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**Consensus**

Material Needed: None

Time Required: 10-15 minutes

Group Size:

Purpose: Team building, discussing consensus & teamwork, compromise

Divide the participants up into 3-4 groups depending on the number of people.

Ask each group to huddle together and create a noise and action to perform for other groups.

After each has demonstrated noise and action twice for other groups, the facilitator gives 10 seconds time for each group to huddle.

The goal is for all of the groups to be doing the same noise and action together, without consulting one another.

After the huddle, the facilitator counts to three and all of the groups at the same time must perform one of the action/noise combinations. (It doesn't have to be their original one).

Keep re-huddling until all three groups are doing the same noise/action.

Variations:

If for some reason the groups are successful on the first or second try, break participants up into smaller groups and have them repeat the activity.

Debrief/ Discussion Questions:

How did it feel to be successful (unsuccessful) with this activity?

What made it so hard to reach consensus?

What was most frustrating about this activity?

How did it feel to have your noise/ action not be chosen by the group?

Did any of you make any compromises during this activity, how did that feel?

How did it feel to not be able to communicate with the other groups?

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### Group Walk

Material Needed: Bandanas, strips of cloth, masking tape, or an entire group who is wearing shoes with shoe laces

Time Required: 15-20 minutes

Group Size: 2-40

Purpose: Building group trust, cooperation, problem solving skills

Ask group members to stand side by side. Give the group bandanas, strips of cloth or masking tape and ask them to tie (or tape) themselves together at the ankles. (One person is tied at the ankle of his/her neighbor on the left and right, and so on down the line.)

If you don't have any ties to use people may tie their shoelaces together with both their neighbors.

Once the group is attached, ask them to work together to walk forward without anyone falling.

If this is difficult for the group to do, break them into pairs and ask them to try walking with just one other person. Once successful with this, add another pair, so that there are four people in a group and try again till successful. Keep adding people until the group can all walk together without falling.

If the group is very large, it is best to break them into smaller teams of no more than ten people each.

Debrief/ Discussion Questions:

How did you feel about your teammates during this activity?

Did you help each other or hinder each other during this activity?

What did everyone have to do during this activity to help the team be successful?

What happened (or what would have happened) if one person did not cooperate?

When in your life are you on a team that is dependent on you for its success?

Source:

Jones, A. (1999). *Team Building Activities for Every Group*. Richland, WA: Rec Room Publishing. Pg. 74-75.

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**Human Knot**

Material Needed: None

Time Required: 15-30 minutes, depending on the size and speed of the group

Group Size: 8-200

Purpose: Team building, problem solving skills, communication

If the group is really big, split them up into smaller groups. If there are too many people in a human knot it becomes extremely difficult. Groups of 10-12 are ideal.

Arrange group members in a circle, standing shoulder to shoulder.

Tell everyone to put their right hand up in the air, and then grab the hand of someone across the circle from them.

Everyone then puts their left hand up in the air and grabs the hand of a different person.

Check to make sure that everyone is holding the hands of two different people and that they are not holding hands with someone directly next to them.

Tell group members to untangle themselves to make a circle without breaking the chain of hands.

If group members break the chain they need to start over.

Note:

You can give teams a time limit on this activity to make it more challenging.

You can also mute/ blindfold participants throughout the activity.

Instead of making groups start over when the chain is broken you can create penalties like blinding or muting a group member.

Debrief/ discussion questions:

How did it feel to be successful/ unsuccessful?

How did it feel to be mute? Blind?

What strategy did your team end up using to complete the task?

Who were the leaders in this activity?

Did the team reach consensus on a plan of action? What process did the team go through to reach consensus?

How do you feel your team communicated during this activity?

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### **Meeting Meddlers**

Material Needed: A copy of the Meeting Meddler Roles ([click here](#))

Time Required: The game takes place during an already scheduled meeting. No additional time is required aside from a 2-5 minute debrief at the end.

Group Size: 10-50

Purpose: To make meetings more positive, to show that small changes can make big impacts

Before the meeting, decide which group members would be best suited to play each of the Meeting Meddler roles.

Once you have decided ask each person individually if she or he would be willing to play the role.

Be sure to tell them that nobody else should know that any meddling is taking place.

Make plans to reimburse those meddlers who are bringing something material to the meeting.

During the meeting, give positive reinforcement to the meddlers, as appropriate, but do not let on that there is a conspiracy going on.

At the end of the meeting, ask the participants if they felt that anything seemed different than usual.

Solicit answers and then let everyone know that you had previously conspired with a few of the participants to make the meeting more positive and upbeat.

Point out that some of the communication was contrived, this did not make the meeting any less effective or undermine the business purpose of the meeting

Depending on the general personality of your group, you may or may not want the Meeting Meddlers to identify themselves and tell everyone which roles they played during the meeting.

Variations:

Expand the debrief session to ask participants what else they would like to see happen during the meeting.

Secretly give each role to one of the meeting participants.

Your role during the meeting: At least twice during the meeting, praise someone (for offering an idea, for being well spoken, etc.

Your role during the meeting: Use only positive verbs. Avoid such words as can't and won't.

Instead, phrase things positively (can, will, etc.)

Your role during the meeting: Be an enthusiastic cheerleader. Find opportunities to make emphatic statements such as "We can do that!" or "That would be great!"

Your role during the meeting: Every time someone looks at your smile.



Your role during the meeting: Bring an unexpected treat (cookies, chocolates, fresh fruit, specialty drinks, or the like.

Your role during the meeting: Before the meeting, without being seen, clean and tidy the room. Put some flowers in a central location in the meeting room.

Your role during the meeting: Make up your own role for another group member to play that will help you make your meeting a more positive experience.

Source:

Deming, V. (2004). *The Big Book of Leadership Games*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. P. 22-24.

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### **Personification**

Material Needed: Flip chart or butcher paper (one per group), markers

Time Required: 15-20 minutes

Group Size: 6-25

Purpose: Team building

Organize participants into groups of 3-6

Explain to participants that personification is taking an inanimate object or abstraction and giving it a persona. Simple examples include calling a boat a she or a hurricane a she or a he. Explain that the group will now be using personification to describe what you have chosen (e.g. your organization, qualities important for team members, exec board positions, etc.)

Explain that their group task is to sketch and then write descriptions of their personification.

Give each group a sheet of paper and markers and tell them they have 5 minutes to sketch and personify

When they are finished, have groups share their sketches and descriptions.

Note:

If you use this at the beginning or in the middle of a session, refer back to it when you can.

Source:

West, E. (1997). *201 Icebreakers*. New York: McGraw Hill. P 404-405.

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### **Phrase Ball**

Material Needed: A Nerf or other soft ball

Time Required: 15-20 minutes

Group Size: 5-40

Purpose: Public speaking, adjusting to change, problem solving

Arrange participants into a circle, and tell them they will now discover how talented they are at speaking extemporaneously.

The members of the circle will toss the ball to one another, at the same time speaking a simple, descriptive phrase; ("the placid lake, the little girl, the beautiful city skyline, the terrifying grizzly, the soft Nerf(tm) ball, etc.) Tell them that since there are no rules, there are also no wrong phrases! Have the group take turns tossing and speaking until everyone has gotten confident with their ability to come with a phrase (this usually takes less than 5 minutes). When you feel this has happened, wait for the next time the ball is thrown to you and hold on it.

Congratulate them all on their verbal virtuosity, and tell them they have moved ahead to the advanced level with astonishing speed. Tell them they will not play the game again, this time with only one rule: Their phrases must relate to the phrase that came before. That is, one person will say a phrase and toss the ball, and the person catching it will add onto that phrase.

Try a couple of passes. Toss the ball and say: "the idle cannibal..." The person catching must now say something like, "picking his teeth." (Applaud him to encourage the rest.) This person will then throw the ball to someone else, saying perhaps, "the soft, summer clouds..." And whoever catches it might say, "floating across the sky". That person turns and tosses it to someone else, saying, "the angry two-year old..." That person catches it and says, "yelling her head off". And so on. Do this until, once again, everyone seems comfortable with the ability to speak extemporaneously, at least most of the time. Express your admiration and ask your learners to sit down.

Debrief/ Discussion Questions:

What were your thoughts or feelings when the ball got tossed to you? Did these change as the game progressed? How comfortable were you in coming up with something to say in the moment? Did you censor or evaluate your contributions?

What round was easier for you, round one or two? As a speaker, how could your presentations improve if you focused on responding to your groups instead of impressing them? How does all this apply to making your presentations? Does being spontaneous mean you shouldn't carefully prepare yourself? [Answer: No!]

KEY POINT: Once you've prepared- written, rewritten, and rehearsed your presentation- what do you have to do next? [Answer: Get ready to play with the unexpected...because it will happen].

Note:

If your learners consistently have trouble with this game, it is because they are pressuring themselves to be clever- to come up with poetic, funny or unusual phrases. Keep reminding them that the point is to be spontaneous and impromptu. Tell them they don't have to worry about their originality. It will show up by itself; in fact they can't repress it. For the moment, their challenge is to dare to be banal- to just go with the first idea that occurs to them. Then swallow your pride and model this for them every time the ball comes your way!

Source:

Tamblyn, D., Weiss, S. (2000). *The Big Book of Humorous Training Games*. New York. McGraw-Hill. P 141-143.





### **Star Quality**

Material Needed: Five-pointed stars drawn on large pieces of paper or poster board (one per small group); tape or flip charts; markers

Time Required: 15-20 minutes

Group Size: 4-40

Purpose: Team building, discussing goals

Organize participants into small groups.

Provide a definition of qualities. (An inherent or distinguishing characteristic; a property, a personal trait).

Give small groups five minutes to brainstorm the qualities needed for achieving team goals.

After two minutes, instruct small groups to choose their top five qualities and write them inside the five points to their star.

When points are filled in, instruct groups to agree on other star qualities and list them in the center of the star.

Ask each group to share their qualities with the rest of the group.

Variations:

Instead of brainstorming qualities for achieving team goals, brainstorm qualities needed in an ideal leader.

If the group has fewer than twelve participants, do the activity together as one group.

Ask group to prioritize the star qualities they decided upon (picking a top 3 or top 5).

Use this as a goal setting activity.

Source:

West, E. (1997). *201 Icebreakers*. New York: McGraw Hill. P 407.

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### Stepping Stones

Material Needed: Two different colors of carpet squares (the stepping stones), tape

Time required: 20-25 minutes

Group Size: 10-20

Purpose: Team building, process vs. goal oriented

Before beginning the activity mark off with lines of tape or rope where the lava bed will be. The bed should be approximately 15-20 feet long depending on the number of participants you have.

Explain to participants that their goal is to get all of their team members across the lava bed safely.

The group gets half+1 as many stepping-stones as people in their group (i.e., group of 12 or 13 gets 7 stones, 14 gets 8, etc.).

The parameters are as follows:

Everyone must reach the other side safely, using only the stepping-stones.

The \_\_\_\_\_ colored stones can only move forward, the \_\_\_\_\_ colored stones can move both forward and backward.

There can be no piggybacking on top of group members.

Once the squares cross the line where the lava bed begins, they must be touched by a body part at all times or they will be lost FOREVER.

You have 20 minutes to complete this activity.

Note:

The facilitator can make penalties for anyone who dips in the lava bed (i.e. the whole group starts over, that person is muted/blindfolded or needs to choose another person to be mute/blindfold), but you can assign these as the activity goes on and don't need to explain them before the activity starts.

Watch the first stepping-stone VERY carefully. It is very likely that they will forget about the rule that a body part needs to be touching it at all times and will throw it on the lava bed and then put their foot down. If this happens, take away that carpet square away immediately.

If the group loses too many carpet squares to make it across the lava bed successfully, you can offer the chance to "buy" back a square by everyone or one person doing something ridiculous. Suggestions are to sing and dance to Brittany Spears, I'm a little teapot, or anything else you can think of.

Debrief/ Discussion Questions:

How did it feel to be successful/ unsuccessful in completing this activity?

How did it feel to have to start over?

How did it feel to have stepping stones taken away (to get them back)?

How did your team come to consensus during this activity? Did you come to consensus at all?



How did it feel to be muted/ blind? (to have to mute/ blind another person)?

Why did you choose to follow \_\_\_\_\_'s strategy to cross the lava bed?

How well do you feel your team communicated during this activity?

How concerned were you with completing the goal?

How much time did your team spend planning your strategy vs. actually attempting to complete the goal? Was there too much planning? Not enough?

How did your team react to the time restrictions? Were they helpful or a hindrance?

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### **Take Me....Please**

Material Needed: 3 blank index cards per person, Team Role Descriptions Sheet (pg. 188)

Time Required: 40-60 minutes, depending on the size of the group

Group Size: 5-40

Purpose: Increase emotional intelligence, conflict and negotiation, dealing with difficult people, leadership skills, reducing negativity, personality inventory, team building, values

Note: This activity works best with team members who know each other fairly well.

Suggested Introduction:

"Recall a meeting from hell where you might not have been well, your best. Perhaps you were a bit impatient with a slow talker. Perhaps you were the slow talker. Maybe you waited till the meeting was almost over to bring up a critical issue. Maybe you yelled at someone who really, really deserved it. But what your colleagues don't understand about you is that your intentions are pure. You wanted to help the meeting. If only your colleagues could appreciate your noble qualities."

Distribute the index cards and Team Role Description sheets to learners.

Ask the learners to read over the Team Role Descriptions sheet and circle the three roles that best describe them. Instruct them to place a star next to the role that is closest to how they see themselves acting in a group.

Ask the learners to write their selected qualities on the index cards. (One quality per card).

Collect all the cards, giving each learner three new cards.

Ask the learners to read their new cards. Their task is to get back to their original three roles (not necessarily their original cards), or end up with three cards they can live with. Learners do this by trading cards. In order to get ride of role, a learner will approach someone else and propose a trade. It is in the learners best interest to show the positive attributes of this role and how it fits the other person's typical behavior. Learners do not necessarily have to trade a card for a card. A learner could presumably have no cards at a given moment in the activity, or could be holding five or six. The key however is to "sell" the role you do not want and seek the roles you do want.

Give the group 10 minutes for trading. Call time and ask the learners to sit in a circle.

Ask the learners to retrieve their Team Role Descriptions sheets.



Ask who got all three roles back? Who got most of their roles? Who gave up on their roles and just kept whatever they ended up with?

Optional Activity:

[Note: if you are working with people who do not know each other well, you may want to skip this portion of the activity]. Tell the learners that they are now going to enter into the psychic portion of the activity. Go around the circle and ask the group to guess which role each person chose as the one that best resembles them. Allow 1-2 minutes of guessing time before asking the learner to reveal their chosen role.

Debrief/ Discussion Questions:

Did you generally see the roles you chose as strengths or weaknesses? Could these roles provided be both a personal strength and a limitation? Under what circumstances do these change?

There is a truism that suggests that we judge others by their actions, but ourselves by our intentions. How does this truism relate to this game and how we behave at meetings?

What do you wish people understood about your intentions at meetings?

What do you wish you understood about other's intentions at meetings?

How successful were you at finding people who would accept the cards you held? How accurate were you? What did you do or say to persuade someone who might have been hesitant?

What was it like to reframe a role you might actually find annoying in a positive way in order to sell it?

How might your attitudes toward your colleagues change if you could maintain this refrained perspective? How might your behavior change? How might your meetings and teamwork improve?

Was anyone surprised at how others perceived him or her? Why might others see you differently from the way you see yourself? Based on the feedback you received, is there anything you would like to change about your behavior?

What insights about team roles did this game suggest to you? How will these insights change your appreciation of others.

Source:

Tamblyn, D., Weiss, S. (2000). *The Big Book of Humorous Training Games*. New York: McGraw Hill. P 184-188.

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### **Thanks Giving**

Material Needed: Paper, envelopes, writing utensils

Time Required: 20-30 minutes, depending on the size of the group

Group Size: 2-40

Purpose: Team building, acknowledging others

Explain to the group that the phrase "thankless job" is one that can be applied to many positions or specific tasks. Explain that sometimes one simple phrase coming from the right source can change that descriptor; the phrase is "thank you".

Distribute blank paper and envelopes.

Ask group members to write their name on their envelope and place them in a location easily accessible to everyone during the meeting or retreat.

Invite group members to write a note at any time during the session when they remember a particular time, event, or behavior for which they would like to thank another team member.

Throughout the meeting or retreat tell members they may place the notes in the envelopes of their team members.

Encourage team members to write at least one thank you note for each individual.

Variations:

This activity can be adapted to include compliments or encouraging words. It can also be as simple as 3 kind words to describe the team member.

If done on a retreat, before hand you could create 8 x 11 posters with a picture of the person and their name and then have people write directly on the poster throughout the retreat. You can also include an envelope for people to put their note, incase someone doesn't want their note to be public.

Note:

Since these notes are personal between sender and recipient, do not explore them further as a group. The power of this activity is in the result, not the process.

Source:

West, E. (1997). *201 Icebreakers*. New York: McGraw Hill. P 409.

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**The Point of this Game**

Material Needed: None

Time Required: 10 minutes

Group Size: 2-50

Purpose: Creative problem solving, speaking skills, dealing with change, team building

**Suggested Introduction:**

(Hold up your hands as if carrying a cardboard box approximately 2' x 2' x 2' in size). "I am holding in my hands a box that doesn't exist. Can everyone see it? [look serious; your learners will undoubtedly nod. Ask one:] How big is it? [No matter what the answer, say:] That's right. Everyone agrees? [Comedy note: if your learner said the box was either very large or very small, adjust yourself physically to look like someone holding a box of that size.] This is a magic box. And in a moment, you will be surprised to find that half of you have just such a box under your chair. Let's see which of you do." [Mime tossing the box away, and begin the game].

Divide your learners into pairs, and have them decide who will be Person A and who will be Person B

Person A will hold out the "box" for Person B and they say, "Hello, Partner, tell me what funny things are in this box?"

Person B must immediately reach in and pull out an imaginary object, and name it. That's it. There are no wrong answers; there's just one hitch: It must be funny. Maybe it's a pink chicken: maybe a written plan for taking over the world with oven fork; maybe a hairy, nude CEO lolling in a hot tub (this is after all a magic box- dimensions are meaningless). Person B must keep drawing funny things out of the box one after the other, as quickly as possible until her or his brain fries. This will probably happen quickly. When it does Person B should stop at once.

Now Person B gets to take the box out of Person A's hands and sweetly say, "Your turn." And so it is. Person A now pulls witty, hilarious things out of the box, as quickly as possible, till his or her own brain fries.

Both partners take a nice refreshing drink of water.

Person A again holds out the box to the partner but this time says: "Hello partner. What banal, boring and unfunny things are in this box? Repeat the process with each partner naming items until their brains fry (usually 1 to 3 minutes).

**Debrief/ Discussion Questions:**

What differences did you notice between the first time, when you were trying to be funny, and the second round when you were trying to be unfunny? Which round was easier to do? When did you have most of your ideas?

During the second round, when you were trying to be funny, did one or two funny ideas still manage to slip through? (note: this will have happened with at least some of your learners. Invite them to share these ideas with the class. The remind learners that if unplanned funny stuff can pop out in a 1-2 minute exercise, it will certainly show up in a training schedule).

What were you thinking during the first round when the pressure was on to be funny?

What is likely to happen if you stand in front of a group with the same internal pressure to be funny?

Source:

Tamblyn, D., Weiss, S. (2000). *The Big Book of Humorous Training Games*. New York, NY: McGraw- Hill. Pg. 3-5.



### **Three Way Communication**

Material Needed: A flip chart, markers, a few bandanas, clipboards, pen and paper

Time Required: 15-20 minutes

Group Size: 6-40

Purpose: Discussing pros and cons of different communication methods and styles

Preface the game with a brief discussion about the various ways in which people communicate with their friends, professors, colleagues, etc. Tell them that in this activity, they will be determining key aspects and guidelines for three different communication methods: Face to face, telephone, and e-mail.

Divide the group members into three groups. The first group represents the face to face environment. These people do not have any controls on their communication. They should sit in one area of the room and use pen and paper to write their findings during the activity.

The second group represents the telephone environment. These group members should be blindfolded with the bandanas in order to replicate the telephone environment (in which they cannot see the person they're talking to). They should sit together in one area of the room. One person will act as the scribe for the group's findings and will not wear a blindfold.

The third group represents the e-mail environment. These employees should sit back to back and may not speak. They should have paper, pens, and clipboards. In order to communicate, they must write notes and pass them to one another.

Give them about 7 minutes and then ask each group member to make its report. (Participants can now be free of the blindfolds, clipboards, and other constraints).

Capture the findings and guidelines on a flip chart. After the session, transfer the information into a computer document and distribute a copy to all participants.

Source:

Deming, V.(2004). *The Big Book of Leadership Games*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill. P.115-116.

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**Water Carry**

Material Needed: 10 paper cups, filled 3/4 full of water, cafeteria- type tray

Time Required: 20 minutes

Group Size: 4-12 (or break a larger group into smaller teams)

Purpose: Work as a team to reach a common goal, problem solving, communication methods

Prior to the activity, fill ten paper cups with water about 3/4 full and place five at one end of the room (or outside area) on the ground and five at the other end. The cups should be at least 20 feet apart from each other if possible.

Gather the group together in the middle of the room with a cafeteria- type tray placed on the ground and give them the following challenge. " You must retrieve all ten cups of water and place them on the tray without spilling any water.

You may only get one cup from one end of the room a time. Before getting a second cup from that side of the room you must travel to the other side of the room with the tray and retrieve a cup from that side.

When all ten cups of water are on the tray you must place it on the floor in the center of the room.

By the way, each person can only use one foot and one hand for the entire duration of this activity, and if any water spills you must start over.

Most groups will try to hop with the tray at first but this spills water. The best way to accomplish the task is to pass the tray down a line and for the person at the end to hop to the front of the line so that the chain can continue all the way to the end of the line.

Debrief/ Discussion Questions:

How did it feel to successful/ unsuccessful in this activity?

Did anyone get frustrated at any time during this activity?

Did you try different things before you came up with a solution/

Are you ever a part of a team and you just want to quit? When and how?

How do you feel when you are a part of a team and you work together to accomplish a difficult task?

Source:

Jones, A. (1999). *Team Building Activities for Every Group*. Richland, WA: Rec Room Publishing. Pg. 146-147.

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**Who Started It?**

Material Needed: None

Time Required: 15 minutes

Group Size: 5-30

Purpose: Reducing group negativity, emotional intelligence, icebreaker, team building

Possible Introduction:

"How many have ever found yourselves behaving in ways you yourselves don't believe in? You know, gossiping or buttering up, doing that kind of thing, just because that's the way things were done in your group? [Show of hands. Note: Don't expect to see many. Few of your learners will consider themselves capable of such moral bankruptcy. Look surprised]. Really? I guess I'm the only one?"

Okay how many here are sick and tired of gossip and backbiting at work (in your organization) [show of hands]. Ohhh.....So when someone comes up to you with some really great dirt, you say, 'No, no. do not speak! My ears are sealed- get thee hence! [This definitely will get a laugh].

You know, group dynamics are such that we often feel pressured to say and do things that will help us fit in. And that creates pressures for others, who also try to say and do these things, which creates pressure for us again, and so on and so on....After awhile, it's irrelevant who started it; everybody's making everybody keep doing it! Let's see an example of this group dynamic. Everybody up!"

Process

Have participants stand in a circle. Start things off by pointing at anyone across from you in the circle. Keep pointing. That person must now point to someone else across the circle, who must then point at another person and so on. Tell them no one can point at anyone already pointing at someone else. No two people can point at the same person. You may all stop pointing (and apologize to each other for having been so rude to do it at all).

Now tell everyone to fix their eyes on the person they just pointed at. Tell them it is their job to keep watching that person. That person is the Role Model.

Learners have one job: They are to watch their Role Models closely and copy their actions and behavior. Ask your learners to stand perfectly still. The only time they move is if their Role Models move. In fact if the Role Model does anything- coughs, twitches a finger, anything at all- the learners must repeat the motion once, and then be still again (unless, of course the Role Model moves another time).

Start the game, and let it go for about 5 minutes. What will happen is that small movements will occur here and there. Anytime one does, it will be repeated around the circle endlessly (and usually exaggerated with each repetition). In the end, everyone in the circle should be wagging their heads, moving their arms and scrunching their faces, coughing, giggling and generally acting like a bunch of nuts.

Debrief/ Discussion Questions:

What just happened? We were supposed to stand still.



How many don't know who started some of the movements? [Let your learners argue about when this or that move originated]. In fact there should be lots of arguments about "who started what" during the debriefing.

How many knew it was your Role Model who started a given movement? [Note: Sometimes a learner can state confidently, "Charlie started the nose twitch," Ask Charley: "Are you surprised to learn that you're the one who started that? Were you aware of moving?"]

KEY POINT: Did it matter who started anything, once everybody else adopted it?

How did this game model what your group does in real life?

How do you play the "who started it" game at work/ in your organization?

What are the costs of playing this game?

How important is it to you personally to stop participating in this negative cycle? What would you be willing to do to change this norm?

Source:

Tamblyn, D, Weiss, S. (2000). *The Big Book of Humorous Training Games*. New York: McGraw-Hill. P. 195-197.