
Julie A. Pack

A Collection of Icebreakers
and Connection Activities

Icebreakers and Connection Activities

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Using Icebreakers and Connection Activities

The “How-To’s” of leading connecting activities.

For a group to function well, its members must be comfortable as well as familiar with each other. The effectiveness of the group will be directly affected by the ability of the group to work together.

Using icebreakers promotes just what the name implies: they break the “ice” that forms when unfamiliar people meet together. When used in a supportive situation, icebreakers help to create an atmosphere that reduces the participants’ inhibitions and increases their awareness of each other. Group facilitators need to be aware that icebreakers must be highly structured and ensure that time is used productively. To reduce the risks and maximize the benefits for participants, group facilitators should be mindful of the following guidelines.

Voluntary Participation

Forcing group members to participate in an activity could severely reduce the effectiveness of the activity. The group facilitator should encourage all group members to participate, but make it clear to group members that any participant has the right to refrain from engaging in any activity that appears too uncomfortable or awkward.



It’s about having fun

The group facilitator’s job is to make participants feel comfortable or at ease. Enjoy the group facilitator role and allow the participants to see you engaging in and enjoying the process. Try not to discount anyone’s concerns or inhibitions about an activity. Whatever a participant decides, it is his or her choice. Make it clear to the participants that you respect their choice.

Confidentiality

Unless otherwise agreed, the information generated during an activity should be considered confidential, particularly activities that are labeled moderate and high risk exercises. As the group facilitator, you must go over the ground rules prior to engaging in any activity where information may be generated that is personal. Addressing the ground rules and having everyone agree will help to ease participants' discomfort and uneasiness about sharing with unfamiliar people.

Set Ground Rules

Ground rules build trust and allow participants to feel more comfortable with an activity.



- Have everyone in the group agree to the confidentiality rule prior to beginning the activity.
- When processing or debriefing activities, remind participants of their agreement to the confidentiality rule.

Group Facilitator as Model

Participants will be more inclined to participate in any activity where the facilitator is an active participant and appears to be enjoying the activity. You will find that even your reluctant participants will be more willing to take modest risks when you participate in the activity.

Never ask a group to do any activity that you are unwilling to demonstrate or participate in. It is often helpful if the group facilitator will demonstrate fully what is expected of the group for the group to see after giving instructions and prior to asking the group to begin the activity. Participants will have an opportunity to ask questions and match their understanding of the directions to the facilitator's expectations.

The end activity is just as important as the activity itself...always debrief with the group.

Process or Debrief Activities

After every activity, the group facilitator should take time to debrief or process the activity with the participants. The processing is more important as the risk level of the activity increases. Although icebreakers are a low-risk activity, the group facilitator should still monitor the issues and concerns raised during an activity as well as the group dynamics.

GETTING STARTED

Questions and debriefing information can be found in more depth in the activity debriefing chapter of this manual. Do not skip this important step in the activity. Often much of the connection between group members occurs when activities are debriefed with the group.

Consider Carefully

When you plan connection activities, consider carefully the appropriateness of the activity. Things to consider when selecting the correct activity include:

1. Determine the growth level of the group. Risk levels should match accordingly. For example, a new group or newly reacquainting group should start with low-risk activities. As group dynamics mature and grow, the risk level can increase accordingly.
2. The premature use of a higher risk activity or overuse of low-risk activities could leave participants feeling that the structure is too manipulative.

Keep in Mind

Keep in mind that an icebreaker or connection activity is simply a learning tool for a group. The process is much more important than the product.

Following these general guidelines will help you as the group facilitator to improve the group interaction and create an atmosphere of trust where connection can take place.

LOW RISK ACTIVITIES~ICEBREAKERS

Low Risk Activities ~ Icebreakers

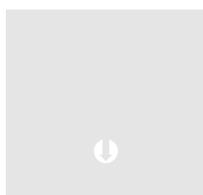
Perfect for introducing strangers and getting people involved and moving.

The variety and versatility of icebreakers makes it easy to customize activities to fit any situation. The group facilitator should choose appropriate activities that will bring groups together by reducing inhibitions through stimulating, challenging, and motivating the participants. These activities are perfect for warming up a group, beginning a program, starting a new session, ready the learners for new content material, or shifting the focus of study.

Have fun with these activities and add your own as you become more comfortable with the process. Remember to prepare several debriefing questions to ask following the activity.

Name Games

The purpose of these activities is for participants to learn each other's names. These activities are most effective in the early stages of group development and can be modified numerous ways to be fun and be creative.



Pass the Bear

The group size can be small or large, but works best with no more than 30 people. Arrange the room where everyone is either standing or sitting in a circle. The group facilitator will need a prop of some sort, usually a stuffed animal works best.

- Explain to the group members that they will receive a “stuffed bear” [or whatever object you use] from the person sitting next to them. The facilitator starts by saying, “My name is _____, and I have the bear. I’m going to give it to _____”

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(and say the person's name sitting next to the facilitator.)”

- The next group member says, “My name is _____, and I have the bear which came from _____ (facilitator's name). I'm going to give it to _____ [the person sitting next to group member]”
- The process continues as each group member in turn states his name and the names of ALL group members who had the bear before him/her.
- Once the object returns to the facilitator, s/he repeats the names of each group member in proper order. **DON'T PANIC...**by the time the entire group has repeated all the names of the group over and over, you will be able to have learned them all. In addition, if you stumble, it's okay. Remember, it's about the process not the product.

Zoo Names

The group size can be small or large, but works best with no more than 30 people. Arrange the room where everyone is either standing or sitting in a circle. No props are needed for this activity.

- Tell each group member to come up with an animal that starts with the same letter as their first name. The facilitator should demonstrate with his or her own name. For example: Jaguar Julie. If the facilitator will be known to the group as Mr. or Ms. Last Name, explain to the participants the reasoning and proceed with an example for facilitator's last name. For example, “This year you will be calling me Ms. Pack, so I will use that name. However, since the rest of you will be called by your first names, think of something that goes with that. So I'm Penguin Pack.”
- The next person introduces the previous person(s). “This is Penguin Pack and I'm Jaguar Julie.”
- Continue around the circle allowing every participant to start from the facilitator and then add themselves to the end of the list until finally reaching the facilitator again. The facilitator should then repeat all the animal/names of the participants in order.

Thank You

The group size can be small or large, but works best with no more than 30 people. Arrange the room where everyone is either standing or sitting in a circle. The facilitator will need a few stuffed animals to use during the activity.

- Explain to the group that they will be passing a stuffed animal to someone in the group (they can choose anyone who has not already been chosen.) The facilitator should demonstrate what should be said before the toss is made. “Here it comes, John.” John should catch the animal and say “Thank you, Julie.” John should then take the animal and say, “Here it comes, Ann.” Ann should catch the animal and say, “Thank you, John.”
- The facilitator should explain that the participants need to remember only two people’s names, the one who threw it to them and the one to whom they are throwing.
- The process continues until the animal has been tossed to everyone and returns to the facilitator.
- Options: Time the initial round and see if participants can reduce the amount of time it took to redo the exercise in exactly the same order. Once the animal has started around the circle, the facilitator can unexpectedly send a second or third animal to continue in the same order.

Let’s go on a picnic

The group size can be small or large, but works best with no more than 30 people. Arrange the room where everyone is either standing or sitting in a circle. No props are needed for this activity.

- Explain to group members that they will be going on an imaginary picnic (or other activity). They are to introduce themselves and associate their name with some item they plan to bring on the trip (that rhymes with their name.)
- The facilitator should demonstrate by saying, “My name is Ted, and I’ll bring the bread.” [of course, use your own name].
- The next group member should then introduce the previous person(s) and what they’ll be bringing along until it reaches back to the facilitator who then should introduce the whole group and tell what each member will bring in order.

Other Icebreakers

Place other Icebreakers that you find here:

The purpose of these activities is to mix people together and give them an opportunity to work with someone different or new or participate in unfamiliar activities together as a group. These activities are most effective at mixing groups and getting people moving and motivated prior to beginning a session.

Human Knot

The group size can be small or large, but the larger the group, the facilitator must break the participants into smaller groups of 10 to 12 in a group. *To quickly mix people up in a group, have them line up by birthdate, age, alphabetically, etc. Then divide the group accordingly.* The room/area should be free of obstructions and allow for movement. No props are needed.

- Explain to participants that they must stand shoulder to shoulder in a circle within their small group. They are to clasp hands with two other people, but they are not allowed to grasp the hand of either person to their immediate right or left.
- Without letting go of each other's hands, the members of each circle must untangle themselves so that they stand shoulder to shoulder with those people whose hands they hold.

Make an Appointment

The group size can vary for this activity. The room should allow for ease of movement for participants, and the facilitator should have prepared appointment pages or have participants prepare an appointment page for the activity. One variation that works well is using a standard paper plate and drawing a clock on the plate.

- The facilitator should prepare ahead of time a list of appointments that participants should make. A few examples: 8:00 birthdate; 9:00 favorite color; 10:00 favorite book/tv show/movie; 10:30 middle name; 11:00 # brothers and sisters, etc.
- Group members should make appointments on their calendars with others at the described times, and find out the person's name and the particular criteria for the specified time period. A participant should only use a person once unless the group size dictates that repeats must be made.
- The facilitator should participate and call time when everyone has an opportunity to make enough appointments (10 min or so.) The facilitator

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should then demonstrate an introduction by choosing one of the appointments and sharing with the whole group.

- Group members should also choose one appointment and share the information with the group until everyone has had something shared about them by another group member.
- The information shared can be fit to any academic subject/special topic by the facilitator through creating appointment times and criteria that fit the particular topic. Be creative!

Crack a Smile

This activity works best with groups of less than 25. The facilitator should pair participants, taking care to mix the group. The area should be clear enough for pairs to find a spot to stand facing each other and move easily. No props or materials are needed for this activity.

- The facilitator should explain that the participants will be trying to get their partner to “crack a smile.” The participants will take turn trying to make their partner smile without touching their partner in anyway. The facilitator should demonstrate with a partner standing facing the facilitator. The facilitator should instruct his or her partner not to smile. The facilitator should then attempt to make the partner smile by being silly. Once the demonstration is complete, the facilitator should tell participants to attempt the game.
- The participants should change roles once they make their partners smile. The facilitator should monitor the groups and help determine if a smile is made.
- Occasionally, a group will have someone who is good a making a person smile/laugh right away and a person that can hold a smile forever. The facilitator should ask those two to pair up and demonstrate for the whole group.

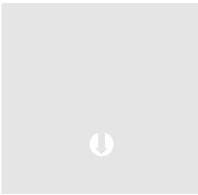
Word Associations

This activity allows group members to get to know and introduce another group member and works best with a smaller group size, less than 30. The area should be large enough to permit participants to move freely. The facilitator will need to prepare slips of paper with word associations (see below) and have tape for

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the activity.

- The facilitator should select word pairs such as “peanut butter and jelly”, “ham and eggs”, “paper and pencil”, “Batman and Robin”, etc. and write the words on separate pieces of paper.
- The facilitator should tape a piece of paper with one half of a word association on it to the back of each participant. Explain to the participants they will be pairing off by finding the other half of their word association. [Taping on the back prevents the participants from pairing up prior to mingling]. The participants are then told to find the other word that compliments their words. They may ask each other what their own word is.
- Once the pairs have been made, the pairs then are given a few minutes to learn about each other. When the allotted time has elapsed, the group facilitator should reassemble the whole group and partners should identify each other and briefly introduce each other to the whole group.
- The facilitator should participate in a pair if the group has an odd number. If the group is evenly paired, the facilitator should join a pair and participate in the discussion of that group.



Find Someone Who...

This activity requires advance preparation by the facilitator, but allows participants to find out fun, interesting things about each other. The area should be large enough to permit participants to move freely. Works best with medium to large groups. Facilitator will need prepared attribute lists and writing utensil for each

participant.

- Prior to meeting with the group, the facilitator should create a list of attributes which can apply to the group members. Each attribute should have a line beside for participants to sign. The facilitator should have a copy for each group member. Examples of attributes include, but are certainly not limited to: I read Harry Potter books, I love Blink 182, I have a little sister, I squeeze the toothpaste in the middle, I love country music, I have traveled outside of NC, etc.
- The group members then mingle, seeking others who may possess an attribute on their list. Participants should sign their names on other’s lists in the blanks beside the appropriate attributes, while they too seek out persons to sign their lists.

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- Set a ground rule for how many times a person can sign one person's sheet. Allow participants to mingle until time is called or you have a "winner"--the first to complete the sheet.

Number Groups

This activity asks the participants to form groups quickly, the number of participants in each group being based on a number that is called out. This activity is best suited for a group of 12 or more participants and should be conducted in an open area unobstructed by tables or chairs. No additional props or materials are needed.

- The facilitator should explain to the group that they will be participating in an activity that demands quick thinking. The facilitator explains that when a number is called out, the participants must form groups that contain that number of people.
- The numbers should be called out quickly, and the participants must move rapidly to form their groups. If a person cannot find a group, then s/he is responsible for calling out the next number.
- This exercise should only take about 5 to 10 minutes.

Two Truths and a Lie

This activity gets the participants in smaller groups and to find out interesting information about each other. The activity works with any size group, and the area should be spacious enough to allow small groups to form either seated or standing. The facilitator should provide small note cards to participants.

- The facilitator should tell participants they are going to be seeing if what they can tell about each other just by meeting. Give each group member a note card and instruct them to write three things about themselves on the card. Two things should be true and one should be false. Challenge them to be creative to see if they can trick the other participants. Have them number the statements.
- Once participants have written their statements. Instruct them to mingle about the room and talk to a certain number of people [facilitator should determine.] For each participant that a group member talks with, a group member should write the person's name on the back of their card and the number of the statement that s/he thinks is false. They should not reveal which of the statements is actually false during this part of the activity.

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- Once everyone has mingled and the allotted time has elapsed, the facilitator should re-form the large group and have each person give their name and read his or her three statements. Those who met the group member can tell what they determined to be the lie, and the person can reveal.
- Make sure everyone has an opportunity to share before moving on to debriefing or another activity.

Can I have your autograph?

This activity requires that the facilitator prepare an “autograph” sheet for participants ahead of time. Any size group will work fine and the area should be spacious enough to allow participants to mingle.

- The facilitator should prepare autograph sheets that have signature lines adjacent to a line entitled “interesting information.”
- The facilitator should explain to the participants that they are to seek out a certain number of autographs from the other participants. Participants must put beside their autograph an interesting fact about themselves like... “I’m a Libra.” “I’m an only child.” “I race motorcycles.” “I love to swim.”
- After allotted time elapses, call the group back together and go around the group having them tell something interesting they learned about another group member. Do this until all group members have been introduced.

Get the Scoop Bingo

The goal of this activity is to warm up the group and find out interesting information about one another. Any size group will work fine and the area should be spacious enough to allow participants to mingle. The facilitator will need to prepare ahead of time “Bingo” cards and copy enough for every participant.

- Create a bingo card of 16 blocks. In each block, print humorous or interesting personal information such as “own red shoes,” “have more than one pet,” “has freckles,” etc. Leave one square blank. Give a copy of the bingo card to every participant and ask them to PRINT a secret attribute or personal fact in the blank square (so that their handwriting cannot be identified.)
- Take back all the cards, shuffle them, and deal them out again. If anyone gets his or her own card, take back five cards, shuffle, and give them back until no one gets his or her own card.

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- Instruct the participants to walk around the room, talking to each other to find out who “fits” each square, and writing that person’s name into the square on his or her own bingo card.

Group Quilt



This activity gives participants an opportunity to share information with other participants that they deem important about themselves while creating a visual reminder that illustrates how all the group members bring individual talents and qualities yet all stand together as one group. The area should allow for individuals to work on creating quilt squares. This activity is applicable to any size group. The facilitator should have supplies for participants to use to create their square such as construction paper, scissors, markers, glue, etc. Also, cloth material can be used along with related craft supplies.

- Give participants access to supplies and explain that they are to create a quilt square that represents who they are. Only give dimensional directions (size of square, etc.) and allow participants to add as much or as little as they feel necessary.
- Have each participant present his or her square to the group and explain the significance of items on the quilt. [Group size permitting]
- Attach quilt squares together with tape (or sew if you choose to do actual fabric quilt) and display in prominent location.

Puzzle Pieces

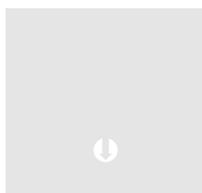


This activity gives participants an opportunity to share information with other participants that they deem important about themselves while creating a visual reminder that illustrates how all the group members bring individual talents and qualities yet all stand together as one group. The area should allow for individuals to work on creating puzzle pieces. This activity works best with groups of less than 30. The facilitator should create ahead of time out of poster board, cardboard, or other substantial material puzzle pieces cut in jig-saw puzzle fashion. Depending on the size of the group, pre-made blank puzzles can be purchased at craft stores. Also children’s puzzles with larger pieces and themes that match the topic or focus of the group can be purchased and the back side of the puzzle can be used for this activity, so that the puzzle serves a dual purpose.

- Give each participant a puzzle piece and explain that they are to design the puzzle piece to be a representation of them. They can draw or attach symbols, items, etc. that represent who they are. Be sure that everyone draws/marks on the same side of the puzzle pieces.

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- Have group members present their puzzle pieces to the whole group and explain the significance of the items used. After everyone has presented, or as people present, have the group assemble the puzzle. Display in prominent location for group.



Big Wind Blows

This activity allows participants to see how others are like them in unique ways in a fun environment. The area should be free of obstructions and allow for the group to form a circle. Group size can vary, but usually works best with 20-30 people. No additional supplies are needed.

- Everyone forms a large circle with the facilitator in the center of the circle.
- The facilitator explains that the person in the middle of the circle must call out an attribute, characteristic, quirk, etc. For example, “I have blue eyes.” The people in the circle must move from their spot if they share the same characteristic and trade places with another participant. The object is for the person in the center to find someone else’s spot so that a different person is in the center. A person may not trade places with someone directly to the right or left.

Moderate Risk Activities

Use these activities to get groups more acquainted with each other.

To help groups get more familiar with each other and learn about each other, utilize these next activities. Moderate risk activities ask participants to reveal more personal information about themselves than icebreakers that just deal with the “safe” information. Reluctance to participate will result with these activities, particularly if they are introduced too soon or clear ground rules have not been established for how information will be handled among the group.

In addition, the facilitator should be aware that as the level of risk increases, the smaller the groups for each activity need to be. Where icebreakers can be performed in large group settings, getting acquainted and connected exercises require that smaller groups be formed within the large group. Small groups should be mixed to allow opportunity for all group members to learn a little more about all the other members in the large group.

The facilitator should monitor group dynamics carefully during the moderate level exercises to ensure all participants feel comfortable and safe during the activities. Take time to debrief any exercise and get participants reactions to what they experienced. [see Chapter 6] Remember to acknowledge participants’ fear and reluctance as well as participating in the activity with the group.

Getting Acquainted

The purpose of these activities is for participants to learn more personal information about their group members. These activities are most effective once a group has begun to know each other better and has already participated in some of the low-risk activities. Most of these can be modified to fit any topic or special situation, but they can also be used effectively “as is.”



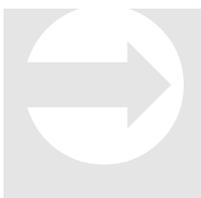
What's On Your Plate?

This exercise asks participants to share their responsibilities, interests, etc. with which they are currently involved. The area should be arranged so that small groups can meet together in seated circles. The facilitator should provide every participant with

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a paper plate.

- The facilitator explains to the group that they are to write on the plate all of the activities, responsibilities, interests, etc. with which they are currently involved. They may write them randomly or divide the plate into wedges to reflect the various items.
- After allowing enough time for participants to complete their plates, the facilitator should then ask the participants to designate certain things about the items written on the plate. Suggestions: Check the item that energizes you most. Put a happy face next to the item you enjoy most. Put a clock beside the item which takes up most of your time. Star the item that you wish you could spend more time doing. Put an X beside the item you could do without.
- The facilitator should divide the group into foursomes. Ask each person to share “what’s on your plate” with the small group. Allow time for groups to interact and discuss the symbols they put besides certain items.
- If time permits, allow group members to tell the large group interesting things they learned about each other as a small group. For example, a group may find that they all put a star beside of family and realized that they had in common a desire to spend more time with their families.



Four questions

This activity involves answering four predetermined questions that vary in the degree of personal information exposed and gives groups an opportunity to give positive feedback to each other. The area should be arranged so that small groups can meet in seated circles. The facilitator will need note cards and small (1”) sticky

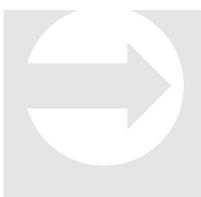
notes.

- The facilitator should prepare ahead of time four questions for participants to answer. Sample questions would include: What is your full name and where does it come from? What is your most embarrassing moment? What is one thing that you value personally? What would you consider a small success in your life? What is your greatest fear? Who do you admire the most and why?
- Divide the large group into small groups of 4-6 people. Have participants share with each other the answers to the questions.
- Give each group a note card and enough sticky notes for everyone in the group. Instruct the participants to put their names on the note card and the names of the people in their small group on the sticky notes, one name per

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sheet. They should leave space to write an attribute or phrase that they learned about that person from listening to them talk about the four questions.

- Each participant takes a turn passing his or her note card to the other members of the small group. As each participant puts the sticky note for that person on his/her card, the participant should tell the person what s/he wrote and why/how s/he learned it about the person.
- Debrief the activity with the large group.



Paper or Plastic?

This activity is like the association game played by famous talk show hosts by asking participants to respond to words. The area should be clear to provide movement to designated areas. No additional materials or supplies are needed.

- Prior to meeting with the group, the facilitator should determine the types of words to present to the participants. The word pairs, sometimes more, should give participants a choice between opposing or unlike things or ideas. For example: Front Porch or Back Porch; Beach or Mountains; Appetizer, Main Course, or Dessert; Morning or Night; Bath or Shower; athletic shoes or sandals; etc.
- The facilitator should explain to the group that s/he will be calling out a few words, and participants should pick which word they most closely identify and move to a predetermined area of the room for that word.
- Once participants choose their side, ask the groups to discuss with each other why they ended up together and what their reasons were for choosing that particular word. Then ask each group to tell the other group(s) what they determined.
- Do several different scenarios to mix the groups. During debriefing note how the groups changed during different pairing of words. Once this has been used with a group, it can become an easy way to mix up a group and get people out of their seat for a moment.



Comfort Food

In this activity, participants will share about themselves in relation to food. The area should allow for the group to stand or sit in a circle. The facilitator will need to supply construction or card stock paper and markers for this activity.

- Give each participant a folded piece of paper (like a place card or name tent) and ask them to use the markers to write their comfort food (under the flap.) Comfort food should be defined as what you like to eat when you've had a tough day, deserve a treat, or when no one's watching. The facilitator should tell the group what his or her own comfort food is.
- Assemble the group in a circle. Go around and have everyone reveal their favorite comfort food. Ask the participants to select a partner based on which comfort food would go well with theirs. Ask the partners to take 3-5 minutes to discuss with each other about their food and the significance it has. *This is also a good chance to have the pairs brainstorm for a particular topic.
- Invite them back to the group to have the pairs share about what they learned about each other.



Life Maps

This activity provides participants with the opportunity to share the major events that have shaped their life. The area should provide adequate workspace for display project to be created, and the facilitator should provide materials such as construction paper, poster paper, markers, etc. for participants to use to visually illustrate the path of their life.

- Give participants supplies to draw/create visual map/timeline of their major life events starting with birth. Explain to participants that they should illustrate the major events in their life which shaped who they are today. The events they choose to highlight are up to the participants.
- After participants have had a reasonable amount of time to prepare their life map, have each participant share their map.
- Debrief with the group following the activity.



Platinum Records

This activity has participants share their most influential people and events in shaping their lives through the creation of a CD album cover. Participants will need to be able to work on this project either outside of the classroom area or provide extended time. The facilitator should provide blank/empty CD cases for participants to utilize or have participants procure ahead of time as well as decorating materials such as paper, construction paper, markers, colored pens and pencils, etc.

Distribute empty “jewel cases” to participants and tell them they will be creating a hit record about themselves. Their task will be to create a CD cover that reflects who they are as a person.

The Construction Criteria is as follows:

1. Select a name for the artist or group that best represents the “Real You.”
 2. Select a title and design for the cover that represents how others see you.
 3. Select 8 song titles (can be actual or invented):
 - a. One that best represents who you are
 - b. One that represents your philosophy of life
 - c. One that tells where you feel most comfortable and makes you feel good
 - d. One that tells what you do well and would like to accomplish
 - e. One that represents your family
 - f. One that represents your goals/dreams in life
 - g. One that represents the type friend you are, etc.
 - h. Your choice--explain
 4. Choose a producer--your most influential family member.
 5. Choose an agent--your most influential non-family member.
 6. List the six credits (individuals) who have helped you become who and what you are.
 7. List your five best characteristics.
- Have participants present CD’s to the whole group explaining the choices they made in creating the CD. Allow students to use drawings, magazine or actual photographs or to computer generate their product.
 - Debrief what the group learned about each other following the presentations.

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High Risk Activities

These activities are best used once a group has begun to function well together.

Once the group has begun to work together better and become connected, high risk activities can be employed to deepen the connection between the group members and rejuvenate group members during tough times. Do not attempt to utilize any high risk activities without allowing the group dynamics to mature and relationships to begin to form.

Ground rules become extremely important at this stage because some of the activities ask participants to share very personal information. In addition, the facilitator must monitor the group closely during high risk activities to ensure that participants are comfortable with the situation and to accommodate those who need extra time or space.

Boundary Breaking

Boundary breaking refers to the general activity of sharing in a very structured format. In boundary breaking, the facilitator asks predetermined questions to begin discussion within the group. Each member of the group gets an opportunity to answer the question or pass until everyone has shared, including the facilitator. This activity works best with groups of 10 to 15 or smaller. Larger groups can be successful; just keep in mind that the higher the number of people, the fewer questions you will be able to discuss. During boundary breaking, it is important to sit in a circle where everyone can be seen clearly and to eliminate any physical barrier between participants. Choosing an area that is different from usual work locations is also important. Sitting outside under a shade tree or peaceful spot works well if weather permits. If your group must remain indoors, avoid sitting in student desks or tables. Try to find an area where the group can sit on the floor in a comfortable manner. Avoid having some participants “higher” than others...if a participant is unable to sit on the floor, then everyone should be seated in a chair or the same height.



The Questions

The following is a list of questions that can be used when conducting boundary breaking activity. As the facilitator, remember to set clear ground rules with the group and have all members agree. Remind participants that they may give as much information as they feel comfortable in their response. Encourage all group members to be attentive to the other members as they share, and remind them that there are no correct or incorrect answers to the questions...only honest or dishonest ones. Encourage members to explain their responses and pursue interesting tangents as they pop up.

The questions are divided into levels to help the facilitator to guide the depth of the conversation. It is suggested that the facilitator begin with one or two low level questions before increasing the intensity of the questions. If the group discussion or dynamics become too intense, the facilitator should drop down in intensity level adjust the climate of the group. Plan ahead which questions you plan to use, but let the group energy determine the order and direction you go with your questions. The facilitator should always plan too many questions to give him or herself options once the boundary breaking begins.

Low Intensity Questions

- Who are you named after or what significance does your name have?
- If you could choose any career, what would it be?
- What is your favorite book/movie/TV show and why?
- Who has influenced you most in your life?
- Do you think the world will be a better or worse place 100 years from now?
- Would you rather be them member of a world championship sports team or be the champion of an individual sport? Which sport would you choose?
- What relaxes you the most?
- Whom do you admire the most?
- What is your most treasured memory?
- What type of pet do you have or would like to have?

HIGH RISK ACTIVITIES

- What is your favorite food?
- What time of day are you at your best? Why?
- If you could pick winning the lottery or living with your health for 100 years, which would you choose and why?
- If you were only able to save one item from your burning house, what would it be?
- What do you like to do when no one is looking?
- What is your favorite song?
- What was your favorite childhood toy?
- If you could take a trip anywhere in the world and money was not an issue, where would you go and what would you do?
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Moderate Intensity Questions

- If you could change one thing about yourself what would it be?
- Would you be willing to move to a distant country knowing that there would be little chance of seeing your family/friends for a person you loved deeply?
- Describe a dream that you've experienced that made a lasting impact.
- Describe your worst nightmare. What did you do after waking?
- What is your greatest fear?
- If you could wake up tomorrow with a new attribute, what would it be?
- For what in your life do you feel most grateful?
- Describe your most embarrassing moment.

HIGH RISK ACTIVITIES

- If you had the opportunity to live one moment over in your life, what would it be, and what, if anything, would you do differently?
- What is more important to you: being healthy or being wealthy? Why?
- Would you ever go on a vacation by yourself? Why or Why not?
- What is one habit you would like to break?
- What do you like best about yourself?
- What personal characteristics of yours would you want your children to have?
- If you were having difficulty on a test and could safely cheat by looking at someone else's paper, would you do so? Why or Why not?
- What do you value most in a relationship?
- If a crystal ball would tell you the truth about any one thing you wished to know concerning yourself, life, the future, or anything else, what would you want to know?
- If you were guaranteed honest responses to any three questions, who would you question and what would you ask?
- Which is more important: actual experiences, or the memories that remain when the experiences are over?
- Have you ever been caught in a lie? What happened?
- What virtue do you value most in others? Yourself?
- If scientists were able to develop a time machine that allowed you to return to a place in time, but you were unable to return, would you go and what time would you choose? If you would not go, why not?
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High Intensity Questions

- Do you believe in ghosts or spirits? Why or Why not?
- If you were to die this evening with no opportunity to communicate with anyone, what would you regret not having told someone?
- If you had the chance to speak to someone that has passed away one last time, who would it be and what would you say?
- When was the last time you cried?
- Would you prefer to die a hero's death, die a martyr to some great cause, die in a natural catastrophe, or die peacefully?
- How forgiving are you when your friends let you down?
- If you could ask God, Mother Nature, or a supreme being a question, what would it be?
- Could you forgive someone who caused you a great loss, like the loss of a loved one, great wealth, your health, etc.?
- What is the worst thing anyone has ever done to/for you? How did it make you feel? What is the best thing anyone has ever done to/for you? How did it make you feel?
- If you could be given a heavenly power, what power would you desire and how would you use it?
- If you could choose exactly when your death would be, would you? If so, what time would you choose?
- Would you be willing to commit a crime if it meant saving the life of a loved one? (like steal medicine that you could not afford, etc.)
- What is the highest personal cost you would be willing to pay to save the life of someone that you care deeply about?
- Do you prefer to be buried underground, entombed in a vault or mausoleum, cremated, or some other form of burial?
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HIGH RISK ACTIVITIES

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What I like about you...

This activity works well at bonding groups together after they've begun to get to know each other better. It also works well when a group begins to break down and is forgetting the human piece of the equation by helping the group to reconnect and remember about the positives. Supplies will vary determined by how the facilitator chooses to have participants give information. If the facilitator wants the participants to write responses, then participants will need note cards or paper.

- The facilitator should tell participants the name of the activity... "What I like about you." Each group member should have a card, paper, etc. For every person in the group, a participant should write/say something that he or she likes.
- Participants can pass around their own note card/paper and have the other participants write something or participants can make a list of everyone in the group and tell the person what they have written. The facilitator can have the group do this in advance and then have the group members have their day where everyone else tells them the "good stuff."



Round Tables

Once the group has established a relationship, round tables can be used to discuss issues and process/debrief the activities or feelings of the group. Regular use of round tables enables a group to have time to communicate effectively and a method of airing concerns and praises. "Round Tables" implies that everyone is on an even playing field, much like the knights of the round table (no head), as well as that the group is meant to form close bonds between group members.

There are no set questions or pre-set instructions for roundtables. The only guidelines are that the round tables be done regularly and that any rotation of groups occurs sparingly.

3. Create small groups within a larger group of about 4-6 people.
4. Instruct the groups that the time will be called round tables and discuss your expectations for the groups' time together.

HIGH RISK ACTIVITIES

5. Determine the amount of time groups will be given to discuss.
6. Monitor the groups and provide direction when necessary. If the facilitator only participates in one round table discussion, have the other groups report important information back to the facilitator.
7. When it is time for round tables, simply tell groups to get into their round table groups and give any guiding directions/questions you may have. As groups become experienced with the round tables, they will look forward to the time and automatically begin the discussions.

Information that surfaces during roundtables can be likely be personal information about what a group member is experiencing in a personal situation. Take care to deal with issues appropriately and confidentially when possible. If legal ramifications require you to report certain criteria like abuse, make sure to talk personally with the group member involved and explain your position. If you suspect someone may reveal information that could evoke this situation, you may want to preface the activity with your legal obligations so group members are aware of actions you must take. Always communicate with your group members, just as you would expect them to communicate with you.

Debriefing and Closing Activities

Take time to process activities as you complete them for participants to understand the relevance and importance of the fun they just had.

To help groups fully understand and respect the process of interacting, the group facilitator should take time to process or debrief the activity. Simply put, the group facilitator should offer up the hidden motive behind the exercise such as “I simply wanted you to become more familiar with each other.” Or “we needed a pick-me up today.” In addition to revealing the hidden agenda to the fun, it is helpful for the group facilitator to ask structured questions to help the group find deeper meaning in the light hearted fun or deep conversations.

By asking questions of the participants, the group facilitator will discover the impact the exercise had on the participants, sometimes even surprising to themselves. The questions should be low stress and conversational. Participants should not feel like they are being quizzed or tested on the activity, rather lead into an organized reflection.

Below you will find some guiding questions to process activities. Please note that they are not one-size fits all. As the group facilitator gains experience with exercises, these questions will come naturally. Most of all, remember the rules for leading group activities...model, model, model! Don't be afraid to share your experiences with the activity as well, especially to get the conversation started. Most importantly, remember that the process is much more important than the product...so there's no right or wrong. Just do it (if I can borrow from an old sneaker slogan!) and see how it goes.

Debriefing Questions

The following questions will help you wrap up or finish activities. Plan to ask at least one question when planning your activity. Don't forget to model and answer the questions as the group facilitator.

- ➔ Why do you think we did this exercise/activity/icebreaker?
- ➔ What did you like most about what we just did?
- ➔ What is one thing that you learned today that you didn't know before doing this activity?

- ➔ How did you feel while you were.....?
- ➔ What would you have done differently?
- ➔ What did you learn about yourself from participating in this activity?
- ➔ What did you learn about someone else by participating in this activity?
- ➔ Why is it important for us to do this?
- ➔
- ➔
- ➔

Feel free to add to the list as experience with the exercises leads to other questions. The important thing is that the participants spend a few minutes after each activity reflecting on the connection that s/he has made with the group, another individual, or his or her own personal goals.

Get Connected!

Now it's time to get connected with the group! I hope this guide is helpful to you as a group facilitator. Any and all feedback is greatly appreciated!