



Ice Breakers

MY PROBLEM

Supplies: pens/pencils, paper

Divide into two teams. Each team sits in a row facing each other. Give each person a piece of paper and a pencil. Ask those on one side to write down some great predicament they imagine themselves in.

Those on the other side, without communicating with the first team, should write down a solution to some predicament.

After everyone has written down a predicament or a solution, the first person in one line states his or her predicament. Then the person opposite him or her says the solution he or she had written down. This continues until everyone has had a turn. The results are pretty amusing.

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SMILE RESISTANCE

Supplies: none

See how long the members in your group can hold back their laughter.

Have everyone sit in a circle. One person is chosen to be "IT." The chosen member then selects someone in the circle, sits on his or her lap, and says, "If ya love me, honey, smile."

Then the person who is being sat on must say, "I love ya, honey, but I just can't smile." And if he or she laughs or even smiles, he or she must become "IT."

The game goes on like this as long as you want. And it usually gets funnier and funnier as it goes along.

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RHINOCEROS AND HIPPOPOTAMUS

Supplies: two objects (like a spatula and a spoon)

Here's a game that takes your group from simplicity to confusion to hilarity.

Everyone sits in a circle. One person passes an object, like a spoon, to the person on his or her left. The passer says, "This is a rhinoceros." The passee says, "A what?" The passer repeats, "A rhinoceros." The spoon is then passed to the next person, with the new passer saying, "This is a rhinoceros." The new passee asks, "A what?" And the passer then asks the original passer, "A what?" The original answer, and the response is passed around to the new passee. This progresses, with the question, "A what?" always returning all the way back to the original passer.

At the same time the spoon is passed to the left, the original passer also passes a spatula to the person on his or her right. He or she says to the passee, "This is a hippopotamus." The passee asks, "A what?" And so on, just like the spoon.

After both objects (they need not be a spoon and a spatula) get started around the circle, soon the two "a whats" will collide, confusion will set in, and laughter usually destroys the rest of the game.

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COMICS

Supplies: Comics

Select two or three comic strips from your local paper and remove the words from the speech bubbles. (See next page for example)

Divide the group into pairs and give each one a comic strip or a page of comic strips. As a pair, they should come up with the missing words from the speech bubbles.

After everyone has had a chance to write down their ideas, go around the room and share your amusing examples.

COMIC STRIP CHAOS

Each participant takes a turn at picking a comic frame out of the large container. After the entire group has each chosen one, the participants begin to search for others with the same comic strip sequence. After the participants have found everyone in their group, they must arrange themselves so that the sequence of frames are in chronological order to form the comic strip correctly. Upon completion of sequence, the newly formed group sits down together. Great game to break large group into smaller groups.

CONFUSION

Great high-energy game to help participants begin to feel more comfortable in new group. Give each participant a sheet with various tasks and ask them to complete it when you say, "GO!" Here is a sample:

- Get a male to do five push-ups and sign here
- Stand on one foot with your arms outstretched for 20 seconds
Have someone time you and sign here
- Leap frog over someone 5 times
- Get someone to whisper the pledge of allegiance and sign here
- Play "Ring around the Rosy" with two other people and have them sign here
- Get a female to recite a nursery rhyme
- Shake hands with someone you do not know and continue holding hands while debating the merits of your favorite ice cream flavor
- Have someone teach you a dance step (even if they make it up)

First person to complete the entire sheet, wins.

MAD LIBS

Supplies: A book of Mad Libs

Select a favorite Mad Lib and complete it as a group, giving everyone a chance to shout out the nouns, verbs, etc.

Read the results to the group.

MUMBLE JUMBLE

Before the activity begins, the leader will cut up a few pictures into puzzle pieces. Each group member will grab a piece of a puzzle from a bag. The group members will keep their puzzle piece to themselves until the leader says, "GO!" At this point, the group members will try to locate the other members of the group with the pieces to form the appropriate pictures. Whichever group does it first, wins. Good activity for breaking into retreat/activity groups.

SOLEMN AND SILENT

The instructor explains that this exercise will take self control. Members pair back to back. On the count of three, everyone must face their partner, look each other in the eyes, and then try to remain solemn and serious. No speaking! The first to smile or laugh must sit down. All who remain standing then take a new partner and the activity continues until only one person has not smiled or laughed. (Second round of playing can involve two teams competing to outlast each other.) If you get a pair at the end who are both keeping a straight face, the rest of the group can act ask hecklers to disrupt them.

UNCLE FRED'S SUITCASE

The group forms a circle. The first person states their name and the reason they picked this college, group, etc. You continue going around the group, repeating the names of the people preceding their name and why they chose to come to (Institution). You also can substitute the "why you came here" with other things. Another version of the game is to begin with, "I packed Uncle Fred's suitcase with....." and continue around like that. The real trick is the last person in the group who has to name all the people and why they came, what they like, etc.

PRUI

The purpose of this game is to integrate group members and build trust and communication. Have each player take a blindfold and spread out on the floor. Ask those who feel comfortable to put their blindfolds on. Explain that you will tap someone on the shoulder; that person will be the "Pru" and will take off his/her blindfold. (None of the other players will know who the Pru is.)

Everyone will mingle around slowly (with bumpers up). Each time a player bumps into someone, they should shake his/her hand and ask, "Pru?" If the person says "Pru," they are NOT the Pru. If the person does not answer you back, they ARE the Pru. Once a player finds the Pru, he/she should join hands with him/her and take off his/her blindfold. That person is now part of the Pru, so if someone bumps into him/her, they should NOT respond, so that person knows to join the Pru as well. Everyone will continue mingling around until they find the Pru chain. When everyone is part of the chain, the game is over.

NOTE: This is a high trust activity, and should be done at an appropriate time.

PROGRESSIVE STORY

The facilitator begins the story by setting the initial scene and mood. (The mood will alter as a result of the addition of more content to the story.) The story can start with the following examples (or others): "On my way to class the other day..." or "A good friend called last night and..." or "I had the most amazing weekend! I..."

In no special order, members of the group then take over the story. They add another element to the plot. The main point is to make sure everyone adds something. The progression of the story indicates where the group members are emotionally and is representative of what is high on their lists of priorities, concerns, and thoughts. This exercise spurs on creativity and can reveal a lot about a group's collective state of mind. The facilitator plays a big role in interpreting what is said by each person. Or you can take a more light-hearted stance and just see how silly of a story the group can create.

PEOPLE BINGO/ SIGN-UP MIXER

Give everyone a piece of paper with a selection of the following characteristics. They can be written in squares for a bingo format (see next page for example) or simply made into a list:

Wears size 6 shoes
Likes pizza
Has a 5 in his telephone number
Is left-handed
Birthday is in December
Favourite color is yellow
Drives a blue car
Plays tennis
Went to the movies last week
Has a pet dog
Name begins with "J"
Born in April
Sings in the shower
Talks in your sleep
Did not make his bed today
Takes naps
Loves ice-cream
Watches cartoons
Snores when you sleep
Has never changed a diaper
I use mouthwash regularly
I have a hole in my sock right now
I have no cavities in my teeth
I was born 1,000 miles from here
I love to play chess
I cry at movies
I refuse to walk under a ladder
Likes broccoli
Balances his/her checkbook
Has been to a fortune teller
Speaks another language

SENTENCE STEMS

Form dyads (2) or triads (3) and have participants complete the rest of the sentence. The leader can read the sentence to all of the participants or all participants can have sheets of paper with these listed and take their own time in covering them.

Here are some examples:

- Before I came to (Institution), my main interests were...
- The way I would describe my family is...
- The thing I remember most about highschool...
- My fondest memories of another person are...
- My most unusual friend is...
- The things I value most are...
- My favorite pastimes are...
- Some of the things that make me happy are...
- Where I hope to be five years from now...
- The thing I would most like to accomplish this year...
- The thing that concerns me most about college is...



CLIPBOARDS

This activity can be done in two ways. The first is to do the activity at the beginning of a group's "existence." Participants are given a clipboard and asked to decorate it (using magazine cutouts, stickers, markers, whatever!) in a way that best represents who they are. Facilitator can give each person lamination paper to cover their clipboard and help it to last for a long time. Participants will have their clipboard to use forever and they will always remember the experience whenever they do! Participants are then asked to share their clipboards with the group.

The other way to do this activity is to do it after the group knows each other well. Have participants pick a name out of a hat (but, shh....it is a secret!). The participant then decorates a clipboard for the participant they chose, to represent him/her (based on what they know). Group is given some time to do this. Group then comes back together and clipboards are "unveiled."

M&M

Pass a bag of M&Ms around, and tell the group to take as many as they want. For each M&M they take, they have to tell a fact about themselves (or what they did this summer or anything). There are many variations, such as ripping off sheets of toilet paper.

4 CORNERS

Everyone has a piece of paper, and they are told to write their name in middle, in one corner draw favorite hobbies, in other corner what you want to do when you grow up, in another corner favorite travel destination---these can be anything really. When everyone is done, they share their answers.

WHAT'S IN YOUR BAG?

Each person must find something that they currently have with them in their backpack, purse or pocket that represents them. Everyone shares their object with the group, and then explains why it says something about them.

COMMONALITIES

Split the members into pairs. Each pair will have 30 seconds to find 5 things they have in common. At the end of the 30 seconds, put two pairs together and give the foursome a minute to find something all 4 students have in common. Finally, each group can present the list of things they have in common. (You can use this activity to form groups.)

WEB

Start with a ball of yarn. Say your name and an interesting fact about yourself. Then, holding the end, toss the ball to someone. That person will say his/her name and an interesting fact, then, holding on to part of the yarn, toss the ball to someone else. By the time everyone has spoken, there will be a large web of yarn.

JELLY BEAN JAM

Supplies: envelopes, jelly beans

To get an unfamiliar group to interact, here's an idea. In each envelope, insert nine jelly beans of different colors.

Give an envelope of jelly beans to each person. Tell your group that the object of this game is to get nine jelly beans of the same color. Ask others for the color of the jelly bean you want and then trade one of yours. You may trade only one jelly bean at a time.

This activity takes time because several people may be pursuing jelly beans of the same color. The first person to get nine same-color jelly beans is the winner. Keep playing until everyone has jelly beans of all the same color.

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LABEL ON YOUR FOREHEAD

Supplies: scissors, paper, tape, string/yarn

Cut strips of paper about an inch wide and 6 inches long. Place a 3-foot-long piece of string or yarn on each strip, taping the string to the paper. On the paper, write the names of various types of personalities such as shy, obnoxious, lonely, sad, and funny.

Then, tie the strings around each person's head with the label showing on his or her forehead. Make sure no one sees his or her own label. Have your group members mill around talking with each other. Tell them they may not tell each other what their label is but that they must treat others according to the labels. As your group members talk, have them try to guess the label on their own foreheads by watching the way people treat them.

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PEOPLE TO PEOPLE

Each player finds a partner and joins the group in a circle except the leader who stands in the center. The leader snaps his fingers, chanting "people to people", and the others join him.

Whenever he desires, the leader changes his chant to "hand to hand" or "toes to toes" etc. The players must then touch their partner's hands with their hands, or toes with toes etc. The leader goes through the various body parts, and then shouts, "people to people". This is the signal for everyone to find a new partner, including the leader. One player is left without a partner and becomes the new leader. Players try to have a different partner and a different leader each time.

The activity is more challenging if the leader names two different body parts, for example "hand to foot".

DOTTY DRAWING

On the back of the papers, ask each guest to draw six large dots in any position. Collect the papers, shuffle them and hand them out. Be sure no one gets her own. Then ask guests to make a drawing, using the dots as the main framework. The prize goes to the guest with the most original drawing.

Note: They may not add any extra dots.

ALL THUMBS RELAY

Supplies: Wrapped sweets, 2 paper bags and two pairs of thick gloves.

Divide the guests into two teams. The first in line of each team is given a paper bag filled with wrapped sweets and a pair of thick gloves. Each guest in turn has to take the gloves out of the bag, put them on, choose a sweet, unwrap it, and put it in their mouth. They then have to take off the gloves, return them to the bag, and pass it to next guest in the team. First team to finish wins.