



# **ENERGIZERS, ICEBREAKERS AND TEAM BUILDING INITIATIVES**

Energizers, icebreakers, and team building initiatives are excellent tools for group development at all ages and levels. These types of activities establish an atmosphere that increases the comfort level of participants, facilitates communication between participants, and unites participants. When working with young people, these activities help maintain energy and create a fun and comfortable working environment. Essential to getting the most out of these activities is the energy and knowledge of the person leading the activities. Good facilitators help make these activities a positive learning experiences for the participants.

This Resource Packet contains a wide array of sample energizers, icebreakers, and team building initiatives that can be used when working with youth, as well as some tips for facilitating these kinds of activities. The lists given are not comprehensive, and a list of additional resources is provided at the end of the packet.

## **TIPS FOR FACILITATING ICEBREAKERS AND GAMES**

“**Why Do Them?**” compiled by The Points of Light Foundation, address some of the major goals of group activities including team building, personal growth, diversity, and recreation.

The Points of Light Foundation also put together a quick tip sheet for facilitators, “**Facilitating Energizers, Icebreakers, and Team Building Initiatives,**” which defines the role of the facilitator, suggests behavior for appropriate facilitators, and outlines tips for facilitators.

“**Key Elements for Quality Icebreakers and Team Building Exercises**” discusses the “three c’s” of effective facilitating -- comfort, communication, and commonalities. (Source: Debbie Stephens, California Campus Compact and Nicole Tembrock, Colorado YES Ambassador 1992-94)

## **ICEBREAKERS AND ENERGIZERS**

Various sources

## **TEAMBUILDING INITIATIVES**

Various sources

# **ENERGIZERS, ICEBREAKERS AND TEAM BUILDING INITIATIVES: WHY DO THEM?**

The group initiative program offers exciting and powerful tools for growth and change, providing an opportunity for groups and individuals to make a dramatic departure from their everyday routine. Through these activities participants can discover an unsuspected capacity for creative problem solving, support and leadership, while gaining new and healthy perspectives about their work, communities and lives. Major goal areas, which may be addressed, are: team building, personal awareness and growth, appreciation of diversity, or simply recreation.

## **TEAM BUILDING**

- ⇒ To build mutual support and team spirit within an established or newly formed group
- ⇒ To identify contributions to effective teamwork
- ⇒ To explore leadership issues: motivation, participation in decision-making, power, conflict, styles, etc.
- ⇒ To explore & improve: communication (listening, feedback, support, gender differences, asking for what you need, recognition), setting or achieving goals, trust, involvement, decision-making

## **PERSONAL GROWTH**

- ⇒ To increase the participant's sense of self-esteem and confidence
- ⇒ To explore one's strengths and weaknesses in group situations
- ⇒ To explore: risk-taking, personal responsibility, independence, leadership, setting goals, support, etc.
- ⇒ To gain new insights into/about self

## **DIVERSITY**

- ⇒ To appreciate and celebrate differences between people
- ⇒ To experience the positive effects of diversity
- ⇒ To increase respect within the group
- ⇒ To increase trust
- ⇒ To explore gender issues
- ⇒ To learn more about working with people from various backgrounds

## **RECREATION**

- ⇒ To laugh and have fun together
- ⇒ To wake up
- ⇒ To celebrate
- ⇒ To do something physically challenging



## TIPS FOR FACILITATING ICEBREAKERS, ENERGIZERS AND TEAMBUILDING ACTIVITIES

Some considerations to keep in mind when facilitating icebreakers, energizers and teambuilding games:

- Know what are you trying to achieve - why are you doing a particular activity? So people can get to know each other, to learn how to work together? (see “Why do them?”)
- Issues of risk and comfort

*Physical safety* - some activities may have some physical safety issues; make sure you have made people aware of the physical risks and have prepared for them (e.g. use spotters, allow people to opt out instead of risking injury). Is there adequate space for the activity? Are there obstacles (furniture)?

*Personal space* - some activities require people to touch each other and to be in each other’s personal space; make sure to let people know that they can opt out if they are not comfortable and be prepared to facilitate issues that may arise.

*People’s mental comfort zone* - some activities require people to talk about issues that may make them uncomfortable. Make sure people know they don’t have to participate and be prepared to facilitate issues that arise. Don’t underestimate the impact of a positive physical space on these kinds of discussions - distracting noises, physical barriers between people, etc. can ruin an activity.

- Know your audience – Think about what stage the group development is in, the purpose of the gathering, the size and diversity of the group. For example: don’t use high risk activities with people who don’t know each other.
- Processing - This is the key to making these games learning activities. No one wins or loses, everyone just learns something new about others or themselves. Don’t forget to factor in time for the debriefing, not just for the activity.

# KEY ELEMENTS FOR QUALITY ICE BREAKERS AND TEAM BUILDING EXERCISES

Icebreakers, team building exercises, and initiative games are excellent tools for group development at all ages and levels. These types of activities establish an atmosphere that increases the comfort level, facilitates communication, and unites participants in a common esprit de corps. Focusing on the “three C’s”: comfort, communication, and commonalities, there are important elements to consider when executing quality activities. The responsibility of quality exercises always rests with the facilitator, and the following tips are helpful reminders in achieving successful outcomes:

## COMFORT LEVEL

**Boundary Levels and Appropriateness:** In dealing with sensitive issues, such as topics of diversity, it is important to recognize the group’s boundary level for discussion when addressing these issues. If your program does not include sufficient educational or processing components for sensitive issues, then most likely it is not appropriate to address these topics in such a limited way. Know when to say when.

**Logistics:** Be aware that space and environment play a big part in executing successful exercises. Always consider the location (indoor vs. outdoor, classroom vs. recreation room, etc.), time period (exercise plus de-briefing), and “props” (tennis balls, bandanas, string, etc.) as critical components. Also, especially in cases of team building activities, which require climbing and balancing skills, issues of safety and liability must be recognized.

## COMMUNICATION

**Familiarity with Group:** It is always important to be aware of the familiarity both of the facilitator with the group and of the participants with the group. The facilitator should recognize the history of the lessons learned by the group and customize the training to their experiences. Also, the exercises that are conducted should be targeted to the needs of the group so that they are always growing together in their experience.

**Perception of Needs:** The facilitator should also be aware of the type of training that is needed by the participants. For example, a particular group might need to focus on gender awareness issues or appreciation of cultural differences as opposed to a lesson in resume

writing. Always stay in communication with program directors and supervisors in order to assess these needs.

## **COMMONALITIES**

**Expectations and Outcomes:** Before every activity, be sure to evaluate the learning outcomes and goals that you expect the group to achieve. The activities performed should be coordinated to match these desired outcomes. Be aware that outcomes vary for activities and that the de-briefing process can often be customized to target initial goals.

**Quality vs. Quantity:** The most common way to sabotage the quality of an activity is to underestimate the time needed to execute a successful exercise. It is always better to do fewer activities with good processing as opposed to more activities with less processing. Considering that “Less is more,” participants will be better able to learn from quality exercises.

*Developed by Debbie Stephens and Nicole Tembrock.*

# ICEBREAKERS AND ENERGIZERS

## Ah-So-Co

Ah= Either hand across stomach. So= Either hand over head. Co= Point to another person in circle. Whoever is pointed at each time must do next chronological action. If done wrong, fudge it, or take too long, then a Yahm Zing is performed by the group putting their thumbs in and saying "Yahm Zing". Person leaves circle and game continues. When people are "Yahm Zinged", their role then is to annoy participants in any way (without touching them) to get them to mess up and be "Yahm Zinged" out. Last two participants are the winners.

## Airplane Aerobics

This is a great way to re-energize a group. On poster-size paper, list directional arrows (up, down, left and right) in 4x4 rows and columns. The group stands in front of the sign and simultaneously call out the arrow directions and point their hands in the direction of the arrows. (Read the arrows from left to right like text.) Each time the group repeats the exercise, increase the pace.

## All My Neighbors

Arrange chairs in a circle - enough for each of the participants minus one. One person stands in the middle of the circle, everyone else sits in the chairs. The middle person calls out, "I want to meet all my neighbors who are wearing black shoes." Everyone, including the person in the middle who is wearing black shoes must find a new seat as quickly as possible - yet safely. The one person left without a chair then becomes the caller in the middle of the circle. Several ideas for calls are: those with blue eyes, those wearing glasses, those who use Crest toothpaste, those who have been to Europe, etc. Be creative!

## Aristo-cha

This exercise is another fun re-energizer. The group stands in a circle and the caller explains the Aristo-cha song. It is, "Aristo-cha, Aristo-cha, Aristo-cha-cha! Aristo-cha, Aristo-cha, Aristo-cha-cha!" the caller will call out the different commands that the group repeats in word and motion.

1. "Hands Up!" (as the group yells "hands up!", they put their hands above their heads)
2. "Wrists together!"
3. "Knees Bent!"
4. "Butt out!"
5. "Head Back!"
6. "Tongue Out!"

After each step, the Aristo-cha song is sung and leading with the wrists, the hands go back and forth over each shoulder when "cha" is sung. (of course, "cha-cha" stays on the same side.) Each step is added to the prior steps as a new verse is sung. Be silly!

## Bag skits

Great for road trips or lock-ins. Fill bags with miscellaneous items. Such as balloons, straws, toilet paper, cotton balls, pens or stickers. Each group has to come up with a skit using all the items and share it with the rest of the group. Very amusing and great entertainment. Process point: Do you enjoy being in the spotlight or do you prefer to do behind the scenes work? What created or didn't create a climate for open idea sharing?

## Concentric Circles

This activity brings the group together by giving individuals time to share something significant about themselves with other individuals in the group. Arrange the chairs facing each other in two circles, one inside the other. Everyone takes seats, and you give the group a question that each facing pair is to discuss. The pairs talk for a short time - perhaps a minute and a half. You then tell the inside circle to move one seat to the left, and give a new question for the new pairs to discuss. This continues until the inside circle has moved completely around. Depending on how the group is doing and how much time you have, you may increase the time for each pairing to three or four minutes. For smaller groups you can also do this as 2 facing lines of chairs.

### **Crossword Connections**

Each person is given a paper plate on which she/he is to write her/his name in bold letters across one side. The group is then given 5-7 minutes to mingle with other participants and find “connections” (similarities) they have with one another. When you discover a “connection,” write your new friend’s name in crossword style to connect with your own name. Then turn the plate over and write the hobby/characteristic/interest you have in common. The participant who discovers the most connections with different people wins the game. Process point: Individuals are so unique, but there is common ground between each person in this world.

### **Diversity Bingo**

Using a Bingo framework, label each square with a different category or characteristic of individuals in the group. The group will informally go around to different members in the group and have them “autograph” a square that represents them. If the interviewee does not qualify for the category in which you have identified them, then you cannot ask them any more questions. The opposite is true if they do qualify. The first person in the group to attain “Bingo!” stops the game and the group sits down to process the activity. Categories should include types of jobs, majors, talents, and organizational affiliation, or religion, cultural backgrounds, ethnicity’s, and sexual orientation.

### **Famous People**

As participants enter the room, they are secretly given a new identity by taping a card with a celebrity’s name on her/his back. When everyone has a new identity, group members mingle around the room asking other people yes/no questions about their secret identity. The goal is to discover which celebrity you have “become”. Variation: you can assign cartoon characters, animals, . . . as secret identities-just make sure to keep a common theme familiar to your audience. Process point: What did you learn about asking questions to reveal information about yourself? What makes this game difficult?

### **Family bonding**

For this large group game, the facilitator needs to make index cards with a single name form a famous family of 4-8 people. Cards are shuffled and each participant is given an index card with a different famous name on it. The goal is mingle and find the members of your new family. When all families are reunited, have the groups sing a song or do a short skit originating from the famous family’s life. Television sitcom families and cartoons work well as families for this game. Process point: How does this initiate the building of a community?

### **Funny Bones**

Find a partner and spread out across the room. The facilitator calls out 2 body parts that each team needs to connect. For example: connect your elbow with your partner’s foot and keep them attached. The facilitator then calls out a second challenge (“ear to ear”), and you and your partner must connect two new body parts. A pair is “out” if any body part (other than feet) touches the ground or they disconnect any of their funny bones. The facilitator continues to issue new challenges until one winning pair remains. Caution: members should be

comfortable with crossing common boundaries of personal space. Process point: How do you tackle challenges? How persistent are you?

### **Giants, Wizards, Elves**

Similar to paper, scissors, rock. Giants beat elves, elves beat wizards, wizards beat giants. Break into two groups. Each group huddles up and decides which of the three they want to be. Giants=both arms straight up in the air, wizards= both arms straight out in front, elves= bent position with two pointer fingers protruding from head. Teams line up 10 feet apart, with finish lines behind them equal distance for both sides. At count of 3, each team reveals their character, whichever one beats the other, they chase that team to their finish line. Those tagged before reaching their line joins the other team. If both teams choose same character, each team high fives each other and rehuddles.

### **Hog Call**

Participants form 2 lines facing one another - each person should have a partner they are across from. Each partnership needs to choose a compound word (peanut butter, tree trunk) and determine one person as the first part (peanut) and the other as the latter part (butter). Then everyone closes their eyes. Facilitators move all the participants from where they are standing to a random location away from their partner. Then, with eyes closed, partners attempt to locate their match by shouting out their half of the compound word and listening for their other half while moving toward one another. When partners find their match they may open their eyes and watch others complete the task.

### **Honey I love you**

One person in middle of a circle. Randomly addresses individuals, "Honey do you love me?" Individual responds, "Honey, I love you but I just can't smile", and must not smile while saying it or they are in the middle.

### **How's YOURS?**

One member of the group is sent from the room while the rest of the group decides on one part of the body. The person is called back into the room and tries to identify the body part chosen by asking members "How's yours?" The group members' description allows the person to guess the body part, that member becomes "it." Process point: How do you like to be in the "spotlight"? How do you respond to group attention?

### **It's Your Birthday**

This big group exercise really gets people moving and meeting. Everyone stands as the facilitator says, "It's your birthday today and this is your party! As hostess/host of this party you have to introduce as many of these people to each other as you possibly can." After people have had a chance to mingle, do a quick hand count of who introduced the most people. To make it more like a party, play some music as the people mingle. Process point: Isn't it much easier to work together after you know at least a few individuals' names?

### **Knock Your Sox Off**

Great stress reliever. Need a large grassy area and 10 or more players. Instruct participants to wear shorts and socks. They remove their shoes and get down "on all fours" (their hands and knees). Set area boundaries for the game. At the word "go," participants try to pull each others' socks off without having their own pulled off first. Participants must stay on all fours, so they can't hide their own socks, run, etc. Players are eliminated once they lose both socks. The only one left with a sock (or both) is the "winner". This can also be played in teams. Process point: how does it feel to be "on guard" all the time? How does cooperation help?

### **Mini-interviews**

Tape an index card on each person's back. Have people sit in 2 circles with one just inside of the other circle. Each person becomes a partner with the person facing her/him. Give each inner circle partner one minute to tell their partner as much about herself/himself as possible. Instruct the listening partner to secretly write one word describing her/his partner on the partner's card. Switch roles, write on the cards again, and have the inner circle shift to the right so everyone has a new partner. Shift to the right a few more times, then let people read their cards. Process point: How does it feel to "brag" about yourself? to listen? What did you learn about perceptions people have of you?

### **Mystery Partners**

Give each person an index card and instruct them to secretly write down their favorite three hobbies/special interests. Then ask them to draw a picture of themselves (stick figures are fine) doing one of three things they listed. Collect and shuffle the cards, then redistribute a "mystery card" to each participant. Each person now needs to find their mystery partner by looking at the pictures and interviewing group members. When everyone has found their mystery partners, have them introduce each other to the rest of the group. You can laugh with one another by sharing your pictures too! This works with 10-100 people, but adjust your mingling time accordingly. (High risk variation: ask personal questions instead of hobbies at the beginning) Process point: Were the perceptions you had about other people actually true? Talk about stereotypes.

### **Name and...**

Sitting in a circle, each person gives his/her name and responds to the question you have presented to the group. Begin with own name and answer the question, then proceed around the circle. Sample questions: What is your favorite food?, If you were an animal, what would it be and why?, Who is the best teacher you ever had and why? Ask higher-risk questions if the group is ready.

### **Name and Remember (Extension of Name and... )**

First, follow above directions, however the second person to speak must repeat the first person's answer and their own answer. The third person states the first and second person's answer and their own answer. The last person will have repeated each person's name and answer, as well as their own. Note: this format also works great for building a story.

### **PRUI (pronounced PROO-EE)**

Everyone stands in a group, closes their eyes and starts milling about. When you bump in to someone, shake their hand and ask, "Prui?" If the person asks "Prui?" back to you, then you have not found the Prui. Keeping eyes closed, continue milling until you bump into another person. Ask again, "Prui?" While the group continues this silly activity, the facilitator whispers to one of the participants that he/she is the Prui. This person opens their eyes. When someone bumps into him/her, shakes hands and asks, "Prui?", he/she does not respond. Thus, the person inquiring becomes part of the Prui by opening their eyes and clasping hands with the original Prui. So, this person now responds as the Prui. Eventually, the entire group will become part of the Prui (a line of people holding hands). Note: It is crucial that the directions of this activity are thoroughly explained prior to starting.

### **Rainstorm**

This is a great way to end a day! Make sure everyone is seated in a circle (on the floor, sitting cross-legged). Explain that participants replicate whatever action the person on their left is doing. The facilitator will start the action. The first action is snapping fingers. Watch one person after the other begin to snap their fingers until the person to your left is doing it, then you begin (like "the wave" in a stadium). Once the first action goes all the way

around the circle, the action will change. The entire sequence follows: snapping fingers; rubbing hands together; slapping knees; stomping feet while slapping knees; slapping knees; rubbing hands together; snapping fingers; resting hands on knees; holding hands of the person sitting next to you. The exercise is over when everyone is holding hands. Note: You may want to make the analogy between the calm after a rainstorm and the peace after a group shares.

### **Scategories**

Fun with a large group. Everyone stands. Facilitator calls out a general category, such as cereals, toothpaste, ice cream, etc. Then the participants group by their favorite type of the item. For example, if the category was cereal, there might be a group of frosted flakes, wheaties, corn pops, etc. It's a chaotic, crazy time as they search for everyone with the same favorites. When they have grouped, see which one can shout out their favorite the loudest, this way they find out if they found all their members. It's a great energizer and builds team spirit. Facilitator note: it can be hard to get their attention after they start to scatter, so stay in a visible place (possibly elevated) so they can see you clearly. Process point: What uncommon commonalties does your group share?

### **Silent Line-Ups**

Participants of the group are to line up according to a specific and obvious characteristic (such as birthday, age, height, alphabetical order by name . . .) Allow the group 30 seconds to strategize at the beginning, then for the exercise and they must be silent. An option for this activity is to blindfold the participants as well. Time limits add extra stress and fun to this activity . . . be creative! Process points: How did you attempt to line-up? How did you catch everyone's attention? Who were the organizers? Message senders?

### **Stand Up/Sit Down**

Ask a series of questions. Everyone who answers yes stands up, while everyone who answers no, or chooses not to answer remains seated. The leader may also participate. Questions may range from low-risk to high-risk depending on the readiness of the group. Sample questions: low-risk - Who has been to New Jersey?, Who has worked at McDonalds?, Who is left-handed?, and higher-risk - Who knows someone in a gang?, Who has committed a crime?, Who has betrayed a friend?, Who has a weapon? Note: It is very important to discuss confidentiality prior to the activity, and process the disclosure that occurs after the activity.

### **Theme Songs**

The group is divided into teams of 4-15 people. The Facilitator shares a broad theme with the entire group. The groups are then given 4 minutes to remember a movie/TV show theme song that relates to the topic. Each group must stand up and sing a phrase of their theme song together. If another team "steals" your team's idea before it's your turn to sing, your team must think of another song. Continue letting each group present in turn until none of the groups can think of anymore songs. Example: If the theme were families, a group could sing a song from The Brady Bunch, The Flintstones, or The Addams Family. Process point: Did your songs overlap? How do you react to stress and pressure?

### **Toilet Paper Talk**

At the beginning of a seminar/workshop, tell participants, "This is going to be a long day! How much toilet paper do you think you'll need?" Encourage participants to take as much as they want from the roll. Ask them to keep it in a pocket. Later, as a break, ask a participant who took plenty of toilet paper to tell the group something about himself/herself for each perforated square they took. Can also be done using candy (take as many as you want!)

### **Toss a Name Game**

Form circles of 8-10 people. Throw a ball around the circle in random order, ensuring that each person receives the ball once. Remember the sequence. The ball should be returned to the originator. Throwing the ball in the same sequence, say the name of the person as you throw them the ball. Then when they receive it, they will say, "Thank you, name" to the person who threw them the ball. Continue the established sequence with the calls previously mentioned. Continue adding balls (one at a time, up to 4) to add to the confusion. This is a great way to learn names!

### **Two Truths and a Lie**

Each person tells two truths and a lie about themselves. Others must figure out which one is the lie. Works better when the group knows each other well already.

### **Train Wreck**

Arrange chairs in a circle (or put tape in a circle on the floor), enough for each participant minus one. One person stands in the middle of the circle, everyone else sits in the chairs. The middle person calls out something unique that she/he has done, such as hiking to the top of a mountain. Everyone in the group who has accomplished the token feat, including the caller in the middle, must find a new chair. The one person left without a chair then becomes the new caller. When the caller says, "Train wreck" everyone has to find a new chair. It's a chaotic, but fun game! Process point: What unique talents did you discover in the group? This is a great way to learn about each other!

### **Zip Bong**

Participants sit in a circle. The object is to pass the word "Zip" around the circle as fast as possible. In order to change direction of the ZIP, participants may say "Bong". This changes direction. The only catch is that participants must keep their lips over their teeth at all times. Showing teeth disqualifies you. Those who laugh or show teeth are out-and the circle shrinks. Process point: Notice the concentration levels of group participants and how each person is able to adapt to silly behavior.

### **Zoom-a-Zoom**

In a circle, a person begins the game by turning their head to the right and saying Zoom. The next person to the right does the same . . . and the Zoom travels around the circle (quickly). Once the group is comfortable with "Zooming," introduce a new move, which reverses direction by saying "Wacka-Zoom." When you say Wacka-Zoom, the Zoom reverses quickly to the left until a new person says Wacka-Zoom, thus changing directions again. Once they've grasped the concept of Zoom and Wacka-Zoom, introduce the final move-"Super-Zoom," in which a person points and "shoots the zoom" across the room to someone who then chooses to pass the Zoom any direction she/he pleases. Once everyone understands the game, explain that when a person makes a mistake, she/he is "out"-the last two people remaining are the winners. This is a great energy booster and a way to encourage group interaction. Process point: Do you like depending on other people? Are you good wit quick responses to challenges?

# TEAMBUILDING EXERCISES

## All Aboard

Purposes: To transcend physical boundaries in a non-threatening way; To illustrate the importance of group cooperation and trust; To illustrate the flow of leadership in a group; To loosen people up, laugh, and have fun. You need a sturdy table or platform that is large enough to hold the whole group - but just barely. If you don't have this, you can put tape on the floor to enclose a space of this size. The instruction for the game is simply for everyone to get on the table (or fit into the space).

## Blind Design

Have each participant find a partner and sit back to back. Each person needs a piece of paper and a pencil. Have one partner secretly draw a simple picture. The artist's goal is to get her/his partner to draw the same picture without showing it to her/him. For example, if I drew a house, I couldn't tell my partner to draw a house. I would have to say "Draw a medium-sized box, then draw a triangle..." When they are done, share the pictures and swap tasks. You can also add limitations such as "artist cannot ask questions, artist can ask questions. Process point: What did you learn about communication skills and giving/receiving directions?

## Building Tents

You must work with your team members to form the strongest tent in the world. It can withstand harsh winds and rain, if you cooperate. Form a circle with an even number of participants. Count off. Lock hands (tightly) and knees (tightly). Slowly all even numbered participants lean in together. Simultaneously, all odd numbered participants lean out. This is a game of concentration and teamwork. Go slowly and together. Process point: How did it feel to trust your teammates?

## Human Machines

Divide your group into teams of three. Each group is told to devise a machine that can move a prescribed distance (15-20 ft). The catch: only 2 legs and 2 arms of the 3 person may touch the ground. Also, once a machine had covered the prescribed course, that team has a patent on their methods of movement and no other group can duplicate it. Only one group can go at a time. Give the groups time to strategize at the beginning. Consideration: requires space for moving and members need to be comfortable with personal touch. Process point: How did you develop ideas? What ideas did you not use? How did you make your final decision?

## Life Lines

Give each person a large sheet of paper and a marker. Everyone should draw a horizontal line across the paper to represent the median line. Have members spend 15-20 minutes drawing a timeline of high points and low points during their lives. Then take some time (approximately 10 minutes per person) to share highlights of your life stories in a circle with the whole group. Note: Because of vulnerability, this activity is for small groups who will be spending large amounts of time together. Don't require people to share things that are uncomfortable. Process point: How will knowing about your team members' backgrounds help you work together more efficiently?

## People Puzzles

For this game, the facilitator needs to find a large picture/poster with many people doing many different kinds of activities. (For example, a sporting event, a carnival, a school snapshot, . . .) The group ponders over the people in the picture for a short amount of time as they choose the person that best represents their function in your

team. Have them explain why they chose that person, and which person they would most like to be. This is a quiet game, but great for goal setting and role assignment for a long-term group.

### **Round-Up**

Instruct everyone to stand in a circle. The object of the game is simple; simultaneously all players must walk directly across the diameter of the circle and reform into a circle. The circle should be exactly the same as before, but with players facing the opposite direction. Add variations to the game for more challenge: players must keep their hands at their sides, keep all eyes closed, . . . Process point: How do you get everyone to work together the same way at the same time?

### **Community Game**

Ask participants to form groups of the specific number you call out. They should attempt to do so as quickly as possible. A group is formed by circling together - holding hands or arms. If individuals are unable to make a group of the appropriate number, they are out of the game. Continue calling numbers until only two people are remaining. The remaining two are the winners. Process point: Discuss fighting for limited resources, feeling left out, how to design a community...

### **Lap Sit**

This activity is great for large groups. Stand in a circle shoulder to shoulder. Now everyone turn to your right. Make the circle very tight (touching one another) by stepping into the center of the circle with your left foot. Be certain the circle is perfectly round (no bumps or gaps). Then, very gently, everybody sit down on the lap of the person behind, on the count of three. (It is essential that everyone sit at the same time.) Once you're comfortable seated, you might all wave your arms, or give the person in front of you a back rub. If the group is really feeling strong and stable, try to take a right step (all at once), and a left step... How far can you walk?

\*In 1974, 1,306 New Zealanders set the record for the most participants! Can you break the record?

### **The Shrinking Ship**

Use a 6-8 foot rope to make a circle big enough for your group to stand inside. Everyone's feet must be inside of the perimeter for fifteen seconds. Once they have succeeded with this task, ask the group if they would be willing to make the circle smaller, Have them decide on the actual size. If they succeed again, ask them to consider an even smaller circle. Continue this as long as the group is willing. Process point: How did the shrinking ship require cooperation? How is the ship like real life?

### **Stand Up**

Sit on the ground/floor back to back with your partner, knees bent and elbows linked. Now attempt to stand up, supporting one another. Once you've mastered this, join another pair and attempt it with four people. Continue to add pairs. Can you do it with, 8, or 10?

### **Magic Elevator**

Group members sit or stand all together. The object is for the group to count to ten together without jumping on each other's words. Members may not talk except to count. They may communicate non-verbally.

Facilitator's Note: Add a degree of difficulty to this game by having members stand facing front in lines (as in an elevator). Process point: How does practice enhance team achievement? Did you discover new methods of communication? How does this apply to real life?

### **Spinning Webs**

The group needs to be in a circle. The leader needs to have a large ball of string/yarn as she/he answers a process question such as “What talents can I contribute to the program?” or “What is one way to get my peers involved in community service?” \*any question works). After the first person answers, they hold onto the end of the string and toss the ball of string to someone across the circle. The process repeats until each person has answered the question and the ball of string returns to the first person. Everyone should be holding onto a corner of string and a web should be visible in the circle’s center. Process point: while looking at the web, discuss the value of unique perspectives in teamwork, brainstorming, group input, how we all may be different, but we are connected, etc.

### **Tangled Knot**

Form groups of 8-12 people and stand in a circle. Ask everyone to close their eyes (optional) and extend both hands to the middle of the circle. Each person needs to grasp the hand of another person across the circle, without both hands being connected to both hands of another person. Open eyes. Without letting go of hands, the group is to unwind, freeing themselves of the knot, forming a circle. Note: Grips may change and palms may pivot on one another, but contact must be maintained. To make it more challenging, don’t allow the participants to talk to one another.

### **Switch Swatch**

Purposes: To illustrate poor communication and conflict resolution; to loosen everyone up and have fun. Ask for two volunteers to come up and face each other. Tell them that their goal is to defeat each other in an argument by arguing as vehemently as they possible can for their position. They are not to listen to each other, but to talk over each other. You will give them the topic of the argument and the position they will take (for or against). But when you say “Switch!”, they have to switch their positions immediately. Explain that we are doing this game to illustrate the kind of communication that is not productive in solving problems. When people are having an angry discussion, they are playing switch swatch. Assign the topics and the positions, then let the pair argue for about 30 seconds before switching. Switch two or three times for each topic. Ask the crowd to declare the winner, then let the winner stay up for a round with another volunteer. Topics should not be serious or divisive, like drug abuse or abortion. Hurt feelings or serious disagreements are to be avoided. Instead, choose topics such as ice cream for lunch, daily exercise, or a 12-month school year. It is helpful if a couple of group members have been prepared before the meeting to start off as the first switch swatch pair. This game is high risk. It works best in large groups and in groups that are already bonded. It is most useful when the meeting is focusing on communications skills or conflict resolution.

### **Square Form**

Blindfold all participants, give them a ball of yarn, and ask each person to grab hold and try to form a perfect circle. When they think they have completed the circle they need to stand in position and remove their blindfolds. Note: you need a large flat clear area and 10-50 people for this game. Process point: Talk about cooperation and problem-solving when deprived of one of their senses.

### **Trust Walk**

Participants should be divided into pairs (preferably with someone they don’t know very well). One person is blindfolded, and the other person becomes the guide. Challenge the pairs to go exploring in the area, trusting the guide to lead them wisely and safely. After 10 minutes trade roles. Variations include muting the sighted partner or both. Process points: Did you trust your partner? What enables people to trust others? What tears down trust? How did you communicate with your partner?

### **Two Doors, Two Giants**

Group must work together, or in small groups. Scenario - Your friend is behind one of two doors, and desperately needs your help. There are 2 giants, one guarding each door. The giants will lead you to your friend, but you must figure out which door it is. You get to ask one giant one yes/no question, with the answer telling you which door your friend is behind. One giant always lies, and the other always tells the truth.

### **Values Continuum**

The facilitator introduces a controversial issue for group discussion. She/he should point to two corners of a room which are assigned polar viewpoints on the particular issue. Each participant must take a stand on the imaginary continuum line between the polar corners which best describes their feelings. There isn't room for two people in a space, so participants must thoroughly discuss the intensity of their values. Once people in line, give them an opportunity to defend their stance. Process point: What did you learn about your important values? What surprised you most in the line-up? (Using low risk questions, this can also be a good icebreaker)

# RESOURCES

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Structured Exercises in Wellness Promotion, Volume 1,2,3. Edited by Nancy Loving and Donald A. Tubesing. Available from Whole Person Press, PO Box 3151, Duluth, MN 55803.

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Learning to Teach: Training the Trainers for Community Development. . Jane Vella, editor, 1989.

Available from: Save the Children Federation, PO Box 950 Westport, CT 06881

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