

Group Ice Breakers

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These group icebreakers are simple to use and suitable for a wide age range. They require very few materials and can easily be used in a variety of settings. These games will encourage sharing, openness, cooperation and discussion, facilitating the 'getting to know you' process for a small group.

Name Game: One group member says his/her name aloud along with a gesture with their body. The rest of the group repeats the name and copies the body gesture.

Commonalities: Arrange the group into clusters i.e. groups of 3. The task is to have them generate a list of things that are in common to all the people in the cluster, but which cannot be identified by looking at them, for example, speak a foreign language, love chocolate, etc. Some examples that you can see and thus don't count are have brown hair, wear glasses. Etc. If this activity is being used in a treatment group, the facilitator should emphasize during the debrief that another thing they all have in common is the presenting problem that brought them to group i.e. parents are divorced, have a problem managing anger etc. Source: Quicksilver.

One, Two, Three: Without telling the participants why, instruct group members to hold up a number between 1 and three. After they've chosen a number, tell them that whichever number they chose is the number of things they must tell the group about themselves. No one can repeat what someone else has already said (for example, only one person can tell the group that s/he has a dog). Source: Simmonds.

Animal Match: (Leader beforehand writes names of animals on slips of a paper, ensuring there are two of the same for each animal). Each player selects a slip of paper with the name of an animal written on it. Players must then make the noise of that animal and must find their match by listening to the animal sounds the other group members are making.

Group Get Together: Leader calls out instructions for the players to follow; (e.g.) Get into groups of three, now form the letter H, now get into pairs with someone who is wearing the same color socks as you, now find two others who have a birthday in the same season as you, now form groups of four and join pinkies, now jump up and down 5 times, etc.

Human Treasure Hunt: Leader makes a list of items for each group member to find. Can be on a certain theme such as sexual abuse (e.g.) find someone in the group who disclosed within the last month, find someone who was abused by a relative, find someone who is angry at the abuser, etc.

Scavenger Hunt: Players are divided into teams. One person from each team joins the leader in the middle of the room. The leader calls out an item (e.g.) blue sock, and the representative from each team must run back to their team and get the item to bring back to the leader. The first team to present the item to the leader wins a point. Other

items for the treasure hunt may include: someone with a smile on their face, an earring, two people with the same size shoe, etc.

Playdo-ictionary: Played like Pictionary, except using playdo instead of drawing. Players take turns sculpting an item out of the playdo for others to guess, such as "table", "happy face", "bird", etc.

World Wind Blows: Everyone in the group sits on a chair in a circle. One person is chosen to be "it." That person removes his chair from the circle, so there is one less chair for all the members in the group. The person who is "it" stands in the center of the circle, and says "the world wind blows for anyone who..." The person who is "it" adds something, such as "anyone who is wearing running shoes." Anyone who is wearing running shoes must get up from their chair and quickly find another chair to sit in (not the same one they were just in.) The last person standing is then it and the game continues. Other examples of things to call out: "anyone who likes pizza", or "anyone who has a pet."

Clapping Clues: One person goes out of the room while the rest of the group chooses an item in the room that must be touched. Person returns, and begins touching things in the room. Rest of group claps louder as the person gets closer to the chosen item, and claps softer when the person gets further away from the chosen item. When the item gets touched, the group gives a loud cheer.

Secret Pass: group stands in a circle with their hands behind their backs. One person is selected to stand in the middle of the circle. Using a small object, those in the circle secretly pass the object around the outside of the circle and the person in the middle tries to guess who is holding the object. The people in the circle should pretend to have the object even if they don't.

Flinch: Players form a large circle with leader in middle. Players stand perfectly still with arms crossed in front of them facing the leader. Players can't make any sounds during the game. The leader tosses a ball randomly to players, making sure to turn around to interact with all the players. Players must catch the ball and throw it back to the leader, and then re-cross their arms. The leader can fake toss the ball to a player. If the player moves or makes a sound when there has been no throw, he or she must back out of the circle and kneel down on one knee. The game continues until there's 2 or 3 players left standing. Source: Cavert.

How Slow Can You Go: Players stand at one end of the room. Players must walk in slow motion to the other end of the room. Players must take the biggest steps they can, must stay in forward motion, and cannot have both feet touching the ground at the same time. Last person to cross the finish line is the winner. Source: Kottman.

Pass The Buck: One player begins by holding a ball and beginning a story. This player then throws the ball to another player who must continue the story. The game continues until all players have contributed to the story.

Balloon Gas: Divide group into two teams and give each person a balloon. Members stand behind the start line. The first person in line for each team blows up his balloon, and lets it go. The next person in line runs to where that balloon landed, and blows up his balloon and lets it go. Game continues until someone reaches the finish line. Source: Goodyear-Brown.

Scribble Tag: In pairs, each person uses marker on flip chart paper. Both people scribble on the paper with their markers. The person who is it must try and catch the other person by touching his marker with her marker. Once tagged with the marker, the other player is then it.

Lie Tag: Group stands in a circle. First person begins by doing an action (i.e.) brushing teeth. Second person (to the first person's left) asks the first person "what are you doing?" The first person responds by saying another action, but not the one he was originally doing, such as "I'm walking my dog". The second person must act out "walking my dog". Third person asks second person "what are you doing?" Second person responds by giving another action, such as "I'm skipping rope". Third person acts out skipping rope, and so on, until everyone in the circle has had a turn.

Blob Tag: Like regular tag, but once you're tagged, you join the blob (the blob consists of everyone who has been tagged, who must then join hands.) Played until one person left out of the blob.

Eye Contact: Players form a circle, and must shake hands and trade places with the first person they make eye contact with.

Pass the Cotton: group stands in a circle. One cotton ball is passed around the circle without anyone using their hands. Source: Goodyear-Brown.

Huggie Bear: Group members mingle about the room until the leader shouts "Huggie Bear" plus a direction, such as "Same color eyes". Members must then get together in a hug with everyone who has the same color eyes. Other examples: "Huggie Bear, same size shoe" or "Huggie Bear, birthday in the same season."

Simon in a Bind: Group stands in a line, facing the leader and linking arms. Played like normal Simon says, but the group must do the action with their arms linked together i.e. "Simon says touch your nose" or "Simon says hop up and down 3 times". The group is out if they follow a command that is not preceded with "Simon says."

Balloon Squish: Divide into pairs. Pairs must compete relays by moving from one end of the room to the other and back again, holding balloons between them without using hands, i.e. stomach to stomach, forehead to forehead, back to back, etc. If the balloon drops, the pair must start again.

Bloop: Divide group into subgroups of 3 or 4. Each subgroup blows up a balloon and sits in a circle. Object of the game is to keep the balloon in the air by hitting it only with head, hands, knees or feet. If the balloon touches the ground, members of the group must eliminate a body part to hit the balloon (hands first, head second, knees third, feet last.) Once there are no body parts left to hit the balloon, the subgroup is out. After they have practiced for 2 minutes, you can count a point for each time a group member hits the balloon to keep it in the air. See how many points they can accumulate before the balloon hits the ground. Source: Kottman.

Face Pass: Players form a close circle. The leader begins by making a funny or unusual face and passes it to the person next to her, who must copy it, and make a new face to pass on. The third person copies the face made by the second person, makes up a new face and passes it on, and so on until everyone has a turn. Source: Dale Le Fevre.

Feeling Sculpture: Group is divided into pairs. One person in the pair sculpts the other person by moving their face and body (sculpting) that person to show a particular feeling, such as mad. The other group members must then guess the feeling. No talking allowed.

Judge the Mood: Make a list of feelings (i.e. excited, scared, sad, proud, nervous etc.) Choose someone in the group to be the judge. Group forms a circle around the judge. Read a feeling from the list and instruct the group members to express that feeling as effectively as they can without words. The judge picks the winner--the person who has most effectively expressed the emotion. The winner shows his expression to the whole group, and the others politely clap in appreciation. Proceed with another judge and another feeling word. Source: Kottman.

Reach Out and Touch: Group forms a circle, positioning themselves close together (within reach of one another). Leader instructs the group as follows: "everyone reach out and touch someone's pinky. Don't let go. Now with your other pinky touch someone's nose. Don't let go of that either. Now with your left foot touch someone's toe. Don't stop touching it. Now with your other foot, touch something blue that someone is wearing. You may hop around twist or change positions as long as you keep touching all the colors instructed." Keep going until players fall down.

Don't Touch Me: Have the group stand in a large circle. Place a hula-hoop (or circle made of masking tape) in the center of the circle. Have the group pair up with someone on the opposite side of the circle. The task is for the pairs to switch sides (everyone in the group at the same time). Each person must make contact with the inside of the hula-hoop by touching it with their foot during the exchange. The group is timed but if someone is touched by someone else during the exchange, they must yell (don't touch me) and a second is added to each touch. So if the group makes the exchange in 10 seconds, but three people are touched during the exchange, the total is 13 seconds. The goal is to try to do the exchange in the least amount of time. The exchange can be repeated several times until the group has reduced their time. Source: Quicksilver.

Pass the Squeeze: Group stands in circle holding hands. One person starts by squeezing hand to that person's left. The person receiving the squeeze hops when the squeeze is received. That person passes the squeeze along, and so on.

SOURCES

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