

# TEAM BUILDING SKILLS

Presenter: Dr. Avis R. McGhee MS-DD  
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## INTRODUCTION

N

- In Field For Over 30 Years
- Director for Most of Those Years
- Women and Children Drug & Alcohol Residential
- Now With Resources For Human Development (RHD) / Family House Norristown for 2.5 Years
- Loves to Work With People of All Facets.



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# BUILDING BASICS

What Is Team Building?

**Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is  
progress; working together is success.**

**- Henry Ford**

# TEAM BUILDING

## THEORY IN

## PRACTICE

- **Whaddya Know?**
- Time: A few seconds
- Purpose: Reinforce knowledge, liven up a boring meeting
- Participants: Any number can play — one at a time

## TEAM

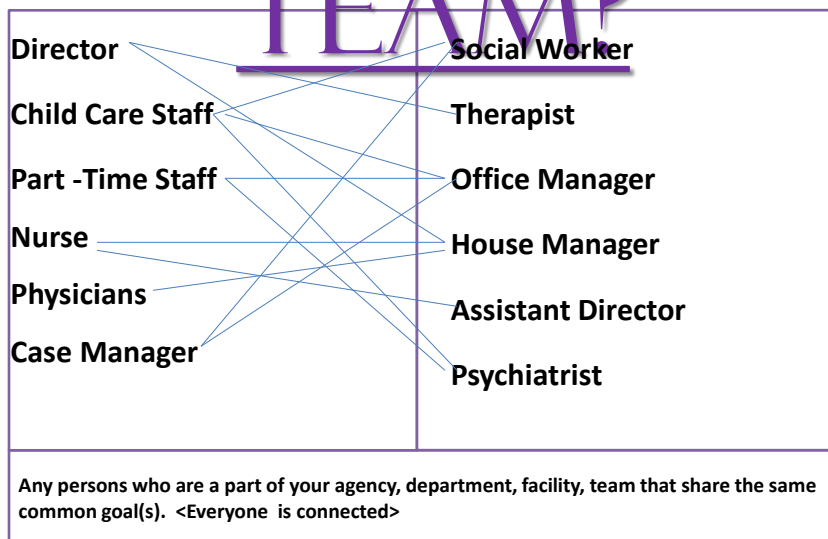
- A **team** is a [group of people](#) linked together for a common purpose. Human teams are especially appropriate for conducting tasks that are high in [complexity](#) and have many interdependent subtasks.

# THE TEAM DYNAMIC *Who Is Part*

*Of The Team?*



## WHO IS THE TEAM?



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# OF TEAM BUILDING

## *Why Is Team Building Important?*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?t=25&v=mKucprXVGMU>



1. ) Facilitates better communication – Activities that create discussion enable open communication among employees, and between employees and management. This can improve office relationships and in turn, the quality of work done.



**2.) Motivates employees – Team leadership and team building go hand in hand. The more comfortable your employees are to express their ideas and opinions, the more confident they will become. This will motivate them to take on new challenges.**



**3.) Promotes creativity – Taking a team outside of an office setting and exposing them to new experiences will force them to think outside of their normal routine. Working together with other team members can ignite creativity and fresh ideas, which are great qualities to bring back to the office.**



**4.) Develops problem-solving skills – In public relations a crisis can happen at any time. Team building activities that require coworkers to work together to solve problems can improve the ability to think rationally and strategically. Teams that are able to determine when a problem arises and know what they can do about it, can then effectively take charge when a real crisis occurs.**

## **BREAKING BARRIERS**

**5. Breaks the barrier – Team building increases the trust factor with your employees. Often in corporate settings there is a disconnect between the leadership team and employees because the employees sense too large of a gap between the two. Team building exercises give leadership the opportunity to be seen as a colleague rather than a boss, which can do wonders for employee morale.**

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# TEAMWORK

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# OUTCOMES

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\*Overall, team building in the workplace enables better communication, better relationships and ultimately increases productivity.\*



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## TEAM

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## BUILDING

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### Who's Responsibility Is It To Build The Team?





The responsibility relies on the person in charge of that unit, division, agency, hub, program, facility, so on and so forth. In other words the: HEAD HONCO

## BUILDING THE TEAM

***How Do You  
Build The Team?***

# EFFECTIVE

## TEAM

- Clarify the common goals and purposes.
- Clarify each person's role in achieving the common purpose.
- Put team members in touch with the people who use what they do.
- Pay attention to conflicts when they arise.
- Work out ways to resolve conflicts.
- Remember your leadership role.

## BUILDING AN EFFECTIVE TEAM- CONTINUED

- Make sure team members interact at meetings.
- Allow team members to have input into their jobs.
- Make sure there is room for minority or unpopular views.
- Appraise and reward the team as a whole.
- Appraise and reward each employee individually, including a review of his or her teamwork.
- Communicate team successes.

# INTERACTIVE LEARNING BUILDING SKILL EXERCISES

1. Name and Number
2. Two Truths and a Lie
3. Who's Done That?
4. Common Ground

AND  
FEEDBACK  
[Avis.Mcghee@rhd.Org](mailto:Avis.Mcghee@rhd.Org)

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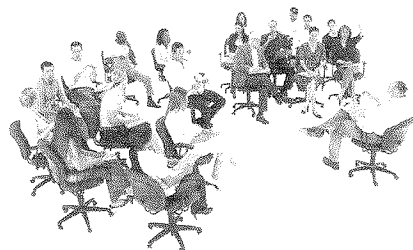
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Activities,.

- [Wikipedia](#)
- Diversity Activities for cultivating community 2010 National Youth Council
- [People.rice.edu/teams/twelve%20ways%20](http://People.rice.edu/teams/twelve%20ways%20)

# Team Building Exercises for a New Human Services Team

by Miki Markovich, Demand Media



*A key to team building is to have members interact with each other.*

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Team building is essential for new human services teams to work together to achieve their important mission. When introducing a group of new team members, strive to evoke laughter to facilitate bonding. However, ensure this is group laughter, not jokes at the expense of an individual that would cause unnecessary isolation. Avoid teambuilding exercises that might make staff uncomfortable, such as activities requiring an inordinate amount of touching.

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## Lunch

Plan lunch. Encourage staff members to bond and visit over a satisfying meal. Also consider inviting key members of the organization so that new team members can begin to recognize upper management other departmental employees they may need to contact. To make it memorable, consider hosting lunch at an exotic locale. Counterintuity, a marketing and design firm, once hosted team activities at an upscale bowling alley, where team members mingled with local celebrities.

## Hands On

Build strong teams while allowing human services workers a glimpse of their community impact. Create a team atmosphere by engaging in an activity that provides immediate, concrete results. Ensure your activity relates to your organization's mission. This may mean collecting donations for the homeless or assembling toys for children. Not only will this provide a shared bonding experience, it may also provide inspiration to get new employees through long stretches of deskwork or other tasks not directly conducted on the front lines. This may result in positive publicity as well, increasing awareness of your organization.

**Related Reading:** [5-Minute Team-Building Exercise](#)

## Two Truths, One Lie

A fun and informative icebreaker is "Two Truths, One Lie." Begin by distributing paper and writing utensils. Provide team members with time to write down two true statements and a one false statement about themselves. Allow each group member to present these "facts" and have others figure out what is true and what

is false. Another variation of this icebreaker is to have a facilitator take team members' truths, written on individual strips of paper, and place them in a bag or hat. He then pulls the strips from the hat one at a time and reads them to the team members. The team then must figure out which fact belongs to which person.

### **I'm Who?**

In the icebreaker "I'm Who?" the facilitator tapes the name of a celebrity or historical figure on the back of each team member. Strive to utilize people who complement your organization. For instance, those organizations focused on helping people overseas might choose Angelina Jolie as a celebrity name. Each team member's goal is to ask "yes" or "no" questions until she correctly guesses the identity of the mystery person marked on her back. When she receives a "no" answer, she must then move on to another team member. This allows new staff to mingle in a lighthearted atmosphere. Once a team member has correctly guessed who she is, she should remove the label from her back, write her name on it and wear it on the front of her shirt. She is then free to assist others in their "self discovery."

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# 15 Team Building Activities for the Workplace

Team Building Exercises That Foster Team Success Yet Are Easy and Cost-Effective



By Susan M. Heathfield  
Human Resources Expert

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Are you interested in holding [team building](#) events in your workplace? You don't have to spend a lot of money nor do they need to be ostentatious or complicated. You just need to create structured opportunities for employees to mingle. You can schedule team building activities in the workplace and in your local community for your employees. Here are 15 team

building activities that fit the bill.

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## Team Building Activities

1. **Lunch discussion and team building groups:** Provide lunch for the whole company, a department or a [work team](#). Assign employees to various work groups of up to ten people to thoughtfully discuss and respond to work related questions. One fun way to divide employees, when you don't care who is in which group, is to put numbers on the bottom of plates. All employees who have a number 1 on their plate take their lunch and meet in the library or conference room B, for example.

--Additional ways to [divide employees](#) into discussion groups.

--[Thoughtful questions for ice breakers](#) that you can use as samples, although you will want the discussion topics to reflect the interests and happenings in your workplace.

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2. **Take an employee to work day:** Schedule employees to visit another department for take an employee to work day. Employees are always curious about what other employees do. Satisfy their interest and introduce the employees to a whole new work group in the process. The opportunity to observe in another department allows employees to participate in [team building](#) that enhances cross department cooperation and understanding. It also offers employees the chance to explore another career path. Here's how one company put together their [take an employee to work day](#).

3. **Provide comfortable collaboration spaces with couches, snacks and beverages.** Ask employees to schedule the space as they might reserve a conference room. Require that all food and beverages must be consumed in the collaboration area in a group experience.

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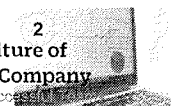
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4. **Hold work book clubs:** Employees across the company or in a single department volunteer to read and discuss a particular book in a work book club. The company purchases the books for the employees who meet weekly to discuss a chapter or two. In the best book clubs, employees take turns leading the discussion about the chapter. A second employee leads the discussion about the implications of what they are reading for the company. This is how to [set up a work book club](#).

5. **Use ice breakers at meetings:** Teams that meet frequently may not need an [ice breaker](#), but ice breakers come in handy for team building when you are forming a new team. They also work well when you are re-purposing a team with a new ice breaker help employees know each other and improve their ability to work well together. These [ice breakers](#) are especially good for meetings. Additionally, make sure that every team has [established team norms](#) and relationship guidelines if the team will work together for a period of time.
6. **Sponsor job shadowing opportunities for employees in a different department.** Just as [take an employee to work day](#) fosters team building between departments, so does [job shadowing](#). It provides the opportunity for an employee to explore alternate career paths, too. Job shadowing is easy to put together and costs only the employees' time. The benefits of job shadowing far outweigh its cost.

7. **Provide group mentoring.** One-on-one mentoring is important for employees and always recommended when you bring a new employee into your organization. But, [group mentoring](#) by a senior manager or manager is another opportunity for team building. Employees learn new skills and approaches while furthering their relationships with coworkers.

A second form of group mentoring involves an employee who has a particular skill set that other employees want to learn. The employee can mentor groups of employees to gain the skill or knowledge with the same impact on team building.

8. **Hold company sponsored off-site departmental lunches:** Departmental lunches, whether at a restaurant or grilling at a local park, are excellent team building activities. There is something about sharing a meal together, outside of the office, that encourages employees to talk and get to know each other. Schedule fun games as part of an outdoor activity. Sports participation works well for team building.
9. **Provide company sponsorship for sports teams and challenges for charity like half marathons.** A client company sponsors sports teams for employees that include baseball, golf, basketball, bowling, soccer, and more. The company also pays employee registrations for running and walking events, especially those for local charities. At one recent 5k run / walk, 36 employees ran together in company T-shirts. This is terrific for team building, for the company's positive notoriety and community exposure, and for supporting employee causes.
10. **Develop and schedule lunch and learns for employees.** In a [lunch and learn or brown bag lunch](#), an outside speaker or an employee with a hobby, interest, or particular knowledge meets with a group of employees to share information and experience. The employees bring their own lunches and the speakers are encouraged to make their sessions interactive to encourage team building. The shared interest in the topic encourages team building as does the interaction.
11. **With team building fun and fitness in mind, you can schedule fitness sessions in your workplace for employees.** Activities such as weekly Weight Watchers meetings, yoga classes at noon, or group exercises in your fitness center build also offer team building opportunities for employees. In one client company, an employee has organized a weekly 3-5k run / walk that is scheduled at the end of the work day. Employees run and walk together on a nature trail that runs through the office park. This weekly run / walk formed the basis for many of the external run / walks that employees do together. (See above.)
12. **Fun classes and events on-site after work or on the weekend promote employee engagement and team building with employees.** You can provide fun classes that employees (and their families) can attend after work or on weekends. Examples from team building activities that were successful for client companies include cheese making, beer making, cooking classes of all kinds, and product-centered tips and sessions for customers who attend on their own time but without paying any fees. The employees involved in the customer events did serious team building to plan, organize, and execute events that educated customers.

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## Team Build Good

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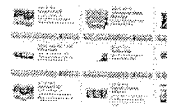
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**How to Create a Culture of  
Teamwork at Your Company**  
Team Building Creates Successful Teams



**Promote employee hobby clubs.** Employees may share interest in various outside-of-work activities. <sup>Search</sup> Provide the space, email lists, and occasional financial support to promote hobby groups meeting at work. I have experienced photography clubs, Internet game playing groups at lunch, knitting clubs, and shooting interest groups at work. Team building activities in this space are unlimited.

14. **Encourage your employees to volunteer as a group for team building.** Whether your employees are running for charity, golfing for the homeless, building homes for poor families, or collecting food for people without food, volunteering as a team is a team building activity that lasts. The camaraderie that employees build when they volunteer together is sustainable and powerful.
15. **Host activities for employees' families at work.** Any of the above can include the significant others of employees and their children, especially the fun classes and the charitable activities. Additionally, hosting children at work helps employee families develop friendships outside of work which cements the team building in the workplace. [Ideas for celebrations at work](#) for families include:

--hosting [trick or treating](#) from office to office and carving pumpkins for children at Halloween

--holding tailgate parties in the parking lot before football games

--putting up a big screen in the parking lot to show family movies in the summer

--inviting employees and their guests to enjoy annual sporting events such as the final game of the World Series and the final four games of the NCAA on big screen TVs

--holding a Christmas Eve holiday luncheon at work or in a local restaurant as employees scatter to celebrate the holidays.

Team building activities in the workplace stretch your imagination - and are only limited by your imagination and that of your employees. They are remarkable in their ability to foster a sense of community and friendships at work. Low cost, but highly effective team building activities, make your workplace desirable and you an [employer of choice](#).

You'll want to sign up for my free newsletter now because you want to read all of the new articles as soon as they are available. [Join Susan's newsletter community](#).

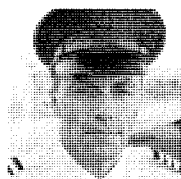
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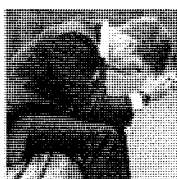
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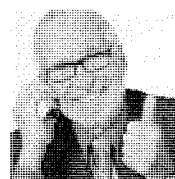
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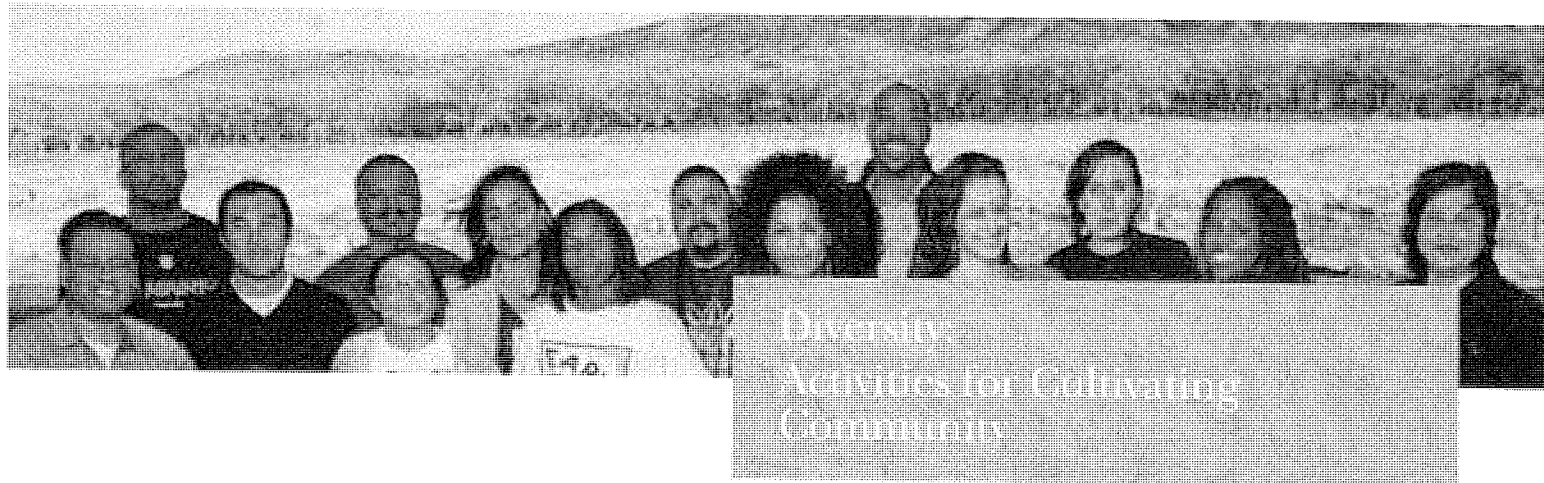
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## **Name Games, Icebreakers, Energizers, Team-Building, and Closing Activities**

These games offer skill-building opportunities that often result in more cohesive groups — critical to any successful service-learning experience. Not only do they help participants experience and process conflict, but they also foster communication, cooperation, and leadership in safe environments.

For each of these activities, this guide includes basic directions and list any materials needed, followed by ideas to make the experience more challenging and reflection questions to help tie the experience to the real world.

With any game, keep in mind issues of safety — both physical and emotional. People have different levels of comfort with physical touch and some are unable to participate in the more physical activities. NYLC's philosophy is "challenge by choice" and it is important to let participants know that they may elect out of any activity that pushes them too far out of their comfort zone. Rarely do participants abuse this choice. If someone is opting out of too many activities, discreetly pull the participant aside and discuss what he or she is feeling.

The reflection questions for each activity are intended as suggestions to be adapted. Finding the right balance — making sure not to either under-reflect or over-reflect — can be difficult. Young people, in particular, will tune out if they feel overprocessed. Always be mindful of the "temperature" of the group and adjust accordingly.

## Name Games

*These games are designed to help group participants learn each other's names, usually through the use of mnemonic devices. As such, they also serve as icebreakers.*

*Name games do not necessarily need to be processed. Sometimes they can be used simply as a way to get to know names or as an activity to add energy to the group. Consider what activities follow the game in deciding whether to ask the reflection questions.*

### Movement Name Game

*Hint:* You may want to start the game with an active and creative motion, as the first one will set the tone for the group. If the first movement is an easy thumbs up, the energy of the activity will be low.

*Procedure:* Ask the group to stand in a circle. The first person says his or her name and adds a movement to go with it. The entire group then says "Hi, \_\_\_\_\_!" and repeats the motion. Continue around the circle until all participants have had a chance to say their name and add a movement.

*Challenge:* Speed up the game.

*Reflection Questions:* Who found this exercise easy? Why? What does the game illustrate about learning that might apply to working with younger children, elders, or those with special needs?

### Adjective Name Game

*Procedure:* With the group sitting in a circle, ask participants to think of an adjective that describes an aspect of their personality. The adjective must begin with the same letter as their first name (e.g., elegant Elizabeth, vibrant Vickie, daredevil Dan). The facilitator begins by stating his or her name and an accompanying adjective. The person next to the facilitator then repeats the facilitator's adjective-name combination and adds his or her own. The names and adjectives accumulate as the group goes around the circle.

*Challenge:* Add a phrase to make the statement a complete sentence. For example, "Elegant Elizabeth wears her prom dress to school." The challenge can go further still, having everyone aim for alliteration such as, "Daredevil Dan danced with his dog until dawn."

*Reflection Questions:* Do you think it would have been easier or harder just to go around the circle and say people's names? Why? What does that tell us about learning that might apply to working with younger kids, elders, or those with special needs?

### Two Truths and a Lie

*Procedure:* Have the group sit in a circle. One at a time, participants introduce themselves with two truths about themselves and one lie. The group then guesses which statement is a lie. The crazier the truths are, of course, the harder it is to discern which are the truths and which is the lie.

*Reflection Question:* What does this exercise teach us about making assumptions or "judging a book by its cover"? What are the ways that this exercise relates to upcoming service-learning projects?

### **Group Name Juggle**

*Materials:* Tennis ball or other tossable items (Beanie Babies, rubber chicken, etc.)

*Procedure:* Have all participants stand in a circle, facing inward. The facilitator starts by saying his or her name, and then passes the ball, remembering who the recipient of the toss was. Each person gets the ball once only, and says his or her name loud enough for all to hear. The last person throws the ball back to the facilitator.

*Challenge:* Once everyone remembers the pattern of who tosses to whom, add more language like, “Here you go, \_\_\_\_\_!” or “Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_!” Add more tossable items, one at a time, until chaos ensues. See how many items the group can juggle.

*Extra Challenge:* Time the group and ask if they can improve their time. Have them discuss possible ways to cut down their time and continue trying. See whether they figure out how to maximize the efficiency by changing their positions in the circle so they are standing next to the person they are throwing to and receiving from.

*Reflection Question:* With whom might you use this game? For whom would it not work? Why? Do you see other applications for the game? How would you adapt it to a second language-learning group?

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

*Procedure:* With the group sitting in a circle, the facilitator starts this game by establishing a question all participants will answer when they give their names. The questions can be very basic: What is your favorite food? If you were a reptile, what kind would you be? Everyone in turn tries to repeat what all the others said before them.

*Challenge:* Questions relevant to the upcoming service-learning experience can be used if the group has a basis for familiarity with the issue — for example, “What do you think is the worst pollution site in the park?”

*Reflection Questions:* If using the higher-level service-learning-specific questions, ask whether this activity was helpful to the experience to come.

## Ice Breakers and Energizers

*A bit more involved than name games, ice breakers and energizers work best among group members relatively new to each other. They are designed to help group members learn about each other and exercise skills relevant to service-learning projects. Most can be done in 10-15 minutes.*

*These activities do not always need to be processed. Sometimes they can be used simply as a game to get to know each other or as an activity to add energy to the group. Be aware of what activities precede and follow these activities when deciding whether to include the reflection questions.*

### Arrow Game

**Materials:** Flip chart page containing four rows of arrows facing different directions, including curly arrows.

**Procedure:** The group stands in rows in front of the flip chart. The facilitator stands next to the flip chart calling out arrow directions, reading arrows from left to right, like reading a text. As the facilitator reads out the direction, the participants point their hands and bodies in the same direction as the arrow.

**Challenge:** Repeat the exercise, and increase the pace.

**Reflection:** What was challenging in this exercise? Have you had similar experiences in a classroom setting? What did you do about it? What makes it hard to speak up?

### Birthday Line-Up

**Hint:** This is a good activity before a team-building exercise in which the participants need to be split into groups. It results in a random line from which the participants can count off.

**Procedure:** The facilitator tells the group members to organize themselves into a line, from youngest to oldest, without talking. The challenge in this activity is for group members to communicate their birthdays without speaking.

**Reflection Questions:** What was the critical strategy used to make this work? How long did it take you to figure out this strategy? What does this teach us about the power of language? How much faster would the process have gone with language?

### Rumpelstiltskin

**Procedure:** The group brainstorms categories of their favorite pastimes, simple categories such as sports fans, reality T.V. shows, movies, foods. Within each category, there should room for several subcategories. For example, within sports fans, you might have the subcategories of basketball fans, baseball fans, and non-sports fans. In this game, when the facilitator yells "Rumpelstiltskin!" participants choose a subcategory and discuss why they are drawn to that subcategory. This can also be done with something physical dividing the categories, so that participants are moving from one side of a "line" to another.

**Challenge:** This exercise can be targeted to the social issues underlying a service-learning project and can be used as a pre-reflection activity before the project, helping participants share their concerns or previous experiences. For example, the facilitator might say, "People who have worked with elders before in nursing homes, move to this side of the line. Those for whom this is a new experience, move to the other side of the line." Then the facilitator might ask the groups to talk about their prior experiences or reasons they have had no prior experience.

**Reflection Questions:** What similarities did you find with your fellow group members? Did you find yourself repeatedly landing in the same category as someone else? How did this make you feel toward that person? How do we learn about people's backgrounds and preferences in real life? Does this exercise make you think differently about question-posing?

### **Impulse Circle**

*Procedure:* Stand in a circle, holding hands. The facilitator squeezes the hand of the person on his or her right, sending an impulse around the circle. See how quickly this can be accomplished.

*Challenge:* After a couple of times around with an impulse, add a second impulse. See if the group can keep the two going at once.

*Reflection Questions:* How difficult was this? Why is this exercise challenging? What were the challenges? What were the distractions? How could you minimize the challenge of this activity? Were you able to make the impulse move more quickly? If so, what strategies did you use and how were they decided on?

### **Balloon Bust**

*Materials:* Balloons for each participant; string to tie balloons to participants' ankles.

*Hint:* Before you hand out the balloons, make sure that no one in your group has issues with balloons or the noise they make when they pop.

*Procedure:* Each participant blows up a balloon and ties it to his or her ankle with the string. When the facilitator gives the signal, the participants try to break one another's balloons by stepping on them. Participants are eliminated from the game when their balloon is broken. The last person with an unbroken balloon is the winner.

*Reflection Questions:* What were your dominant feelings in this activity? What are the strategies you used? Did success feel like success? Why or why not?

### **Not-So-Knot**

*Procedure:* Have participants stand in a circle, shoulder-to-shoulder. Each person then crosses their arms, either right over left or left over right, and joins hands with the people on either side. Make one break in the circle so that there are two loose ends. With everyone's hands tightly held and arms crossed, the challenge is to untangle the group into one continuous line. If hand-holds are broken during the exercise, the group must start over. Participants are not allowed to go underneath their own arms, do forward flips, or twist off the wrists of their fellow participants!

*Reflection Questions:* How many of you had an intuitive sense of how to untangle this knot? Was it hard to get the group to go along with your idea? What worked in negotiating the proposed solutions? What skills were involved? Are these skills transferable to real-world situations?

### **1-2-3 Line-Up**

*Procedure:* Ask the group to form a letter or geometric shape or symbol around the facilitator. The group members then need to remember their place in relation to the facilitator. The facilitator moves, and the group recreates the same shape and orientation, saying "1-2-3, line-up!" This exercise can be used at a later date to test the group's memory. It can also be a fun way to make sure all members of a group are accounted for after a field experience.

*Reflection Questions:* What are the keys to success in this activity? How might this be useful with a group of younger people?

### Mirror

*Procedure:* Have the group divide into pairs and sit facing each other. As the partners face each other, they try to mirror body motions and facial gestures.

*Challenge:* See if the pairs can do it so carefully that an observer can't guess who's leading.

*Reflection Questions:* What can we learn from this activity about observation? When might it be important to have strong powers of observation in a service-learning activity?

### Hog Call

*Materials:* Large space that allows for noise; blindfolds for all members of the group.

*Procedure:* Have group members line up in two parallel lines, facing each other. Each couple facing each other is a pair. Have all the pairs select a compound word like "signpost" or "stoplight." Each half of the pair chooses half the word as identification. Then, pair by pair, they shout out the compound words. Now blindfold all players, and have the participants move around the room, with their arms out, bent at the elbow, palms out. The challenge now is to have all the compound nouns find their other halves.

*Reflection Questions:* Without sight, what other senses did you rely on to find your partner? How well did this work? What other senses did you rely on more heavily? What does this teach us about physical limitations, like blindness?

### All My Neighbors

*Materials:* Chairs, one fewer than the total number of participants, set in a circle facing inward.

*Procedure:* This is a "You're it!" game. One person stands in the middle of the circle, while everyone else sits in the chairs. The person who's "it" calls, "All my neighbors who..." then fills in the blank with such phrases as "are wearing black shoes"; "have been to Minnesota"; "know how to knit." Every participant who matches the description, including the person in the middle, must get up and then find a new chair quickly. The person left without a chair is the new "it." Participants cannot move to the chair on either side of the one they currently occupy.

*Reflection Questions:* What did it feel like to be the first out, or one of the two remaining? Did you feel this game had more to do with competition or cooperation? Why? How does this experience apply to real life?

### Group Count

*Hint:* Be aware of physical limitations and make sure this is a challenge-by-choice activity. Participants can opt out of if they feel physically uncomfortable with the exercise.

*Procedure:* Ask participants to form a circle. The goal is to count to 10 by random individuals saying each number in sequence. The trick is that they must watch each other and silently figure out a strategy to accomplish the task. No words can be spoken outside of the numbers themselves. The person on either side of the one who just called a number may not call out the next number. If two people speak at the same time, the group must start again at 1.

*Reflection Questions:* How did you figure out a strategy to accomplish this? What skills were needed? How might this apply to other situations?

### Lap Sit

*Hint:* Be aware of physical limitations and make sure this is a challenge-by-choice activity. Participants can opt out of it if they feel physically uncomfortable with the exercise.

*Procedure:* Have everyone stand in a circle, shoulder to shoulder. Then ask everyone to turn to their right. The facilitator can make the circle very tight by stepping into it. Once everyone is certain that the circle is perfectly round, on the count of three, everyone sits down on the lap of the person behind them. It is essential that everyone sits at the same time.

*Challenge:* If the group is feeling stable, try to make a right step all at once. At the end, each can give the person ahead a back rub.

*Reflection Questions:* Ask the group how many people they think made the largest group sit on record. (Answer: 1,306 New Zealanders in 1974.) What did it take for that to happen? How can this experience be applied to upcoming projects?

### Stand Up

*Procedure:* Divide the group into partners. Partners sit in the group, back to back, with their knees bent and elbows linked. Then, they attempt to stand up, supporting and leaning on one another.

*Challenge:* Once the partners are successful, have them join with another pair and attempt the same with four people.

*Reflection Questions:* What did you need to figure out in order to be successful? How did you do this — by talking it through or by experimentation? What does this tell us about differences in learning styles? Can you imagine times when analyzing ahead of time is most effective? When might jumping in and experimenting be the better approach?

### Community Game

*Hint:* Use this for people who have been sitting a long time and need to get energized.

*Procedure:* Ask participants to form groups of the number you call out, as quickly as possible. These groups should then hold hands, or link arms. Individuals who are unable to create a group of the selected number are out of the game. Continue calling out numbers until only two people remain. The remaining two are the winners.

### Stand Up/Sit Down

*Hint:* Make the group aware that it is their choice whether they sit or stand and that they may choose to stay seated even if the answer is “yes” for them.

*Procedure:* Participants stand up or sit down in response to a series of questions, with standing up representing “yes” and sitting down meaning “no.” Start with simple questions and then lead to more challenging ones that relate to the service-learning project. For example, you might want to start with, “Who is left-handed?” or “Who has brown eyes?”

*Challenge:* This exercise can become one of self-disclosure, related to the project. For example, among people who feel safe with each other, you may ask more challenging questions like: “Who has felt discriminated against based on race?” or “Who has been discriminated against based on gender?”

*Reflection Questions:* Processing this exercise can be as simple as, “What did you learn from this exercise about the group? What did you learn about yourself?” Add depth by talking about minority/majority status in any answer to any question, and what it feels like to be the only one standing up to a question.



### **Tangled Knot (a more difficult version of “Not-So-Knot”)**

*Procedure:* Form groups of 8-12 people, and have participants stand in circles. All the participants then extend their hands into the middle of the circle. Each person grasps the hand of two people across the circle. Make sure that no two people have simply grabbed each other's hands. Without letting go of the hands, the group should unwind, freeing themselves of the knot and forming a circle. Grips may change and palms may pivot, but contact must be maintained.

*Challenge:* The initial grabbing of hands can be done with eyes closed.

*Reflection Questions:* What worked well in solving this problem? What didn't work as well? What might this exercise be a metaphor for? Were there a few people who did most of the talking — if so, why?

### **Pair Drawing**

*Materials:* Marker and paper for each participant, plus two flip chart pages that have been decorated with a design or picture. These decorated pages should be hidden or covered before the exercise begins.

*Procedure:* Have the participants form pairs and spread out across the room. Partners sit back-to-back, with one person facing the flip chart at the front of the room, and the other facing the opposite direction. Each pair needs a marker and two sheets of paper. The partner facing the front of the room will try to explain the drawing to the partner facing the back of the room WITHOUT naming the object specifically. The drawing partner will then try to replicate it based on the partner's description. (For example, a sun might be described as a big orange ball with rays emanating from it.) The person drawing may not ask any questions of the partner giving direction. After completing the first drawing, the partners compare their drawing to the original. Then the partners switch as the facilitator changes the drawing on the flip chart, and they go through the exercise again.

*Challenge:* Do this with geometric shapes like a rectangle overlapping a circle which has a square in it. The sighted partner can not use the terms circle, square, etc.

*Reflection Questions:* How hard was this? Was one of you better at describing the drawing? Was one better at interpreting the words of the describer? What was critical in direction-giving? What does this teach us about language use?

### **Pruui (pronounced proo-ee)**

*Hint:* You may want to use blindfolds as young people can have a hard time with the eyes-closed rule.

*Procedure:* Have everyone stand together with their eyes closed (or blindfolded). Quietly designate one person as the Pruui, who will remain silent during the activity. Tell everyone that they will start walking about, and when they bump into someone, they are to shake the other person's hand and ask, “Pruui?” The Pruui will not answer, but everyone else should respond, “Pruui.” Participants keep walking blindly and asking, “Pruui?” to those they meet. When a “Pruui?” question is not answered, they know they've found the Pruui, and they become a Pruui as well, and may open their eyes, remaining silent when asked, “Pruui?” Eventually everyone in the group will be a silent Pruui.

*Reflection Questions:* How frustrating was this? Did you find tactics that worked? If so, what were they? How might this be like a social issue? What then makes solving a social issue difficult? (You might provide the example of the “I'm one too” button campaign of the 1970s, when lesbians and gays were first coming out, and their buttons were meant to help quietly spread the word and provide comfort to other gays and lesbians coming out.)

## Incorporations

*Procedure:* The goal of this activity is to become as large a “corporation” as possible. As the facilitator calls out categories, the participants group and regroup. The facilitator should assure participants not to worry if they’re not in the first group by the time the second group is called. They should just head for the second group. The directions begin simply. For example, the facilitator might say: “Get into groups of three!” or “Get into groups of five with everyone having at least one piece of clothing that is the same color!” Then the directions progress: “Find four other people who share the same last digit of your phone number!” or “Find four people who live in a state you’ve never visited.”

*Reflection Questions:* What did you learn about the group in this exercise? Did the activity get easier or harder as it progressed? Why? How might this be like a service-learning project environment?

## Zoom

*Procedure:* The group stands in a circle. The facilitator starts by turning to the person on his or her right and saying, “Zoom!” That person repeats the word “Zoom!” and turns to the person on his or her right. Each person passes the word “Zoom!” around the circle as quickly as possible.

*Challenge:* Try speeding up. Then add variation of putting on the brakes by saying “Mooz!” and changing directions.

*Reflection Questions:* What does this remind you of? Do you consider yourself adaptable? Why or why not? How many of you have been in second language settings where you’ve completely misinterpreted or misunderstood someone? What was the result?

## Who Started It?

*Procedure:* Have the group sit in a circle, and send one person away. The group then chooses a leader who will create hand movements (claps, snaps, jives, etc.) that the group will follow. When the person comes back from exile, he or she has three tries to guess who the lead is.

*Reflection Questions:* What strategy worked to discern who was starting the movements? How frustrating was it? What misled you? How is this like fitting into a new place, culture, language? What does it mean to read someone’s “tea leaves”? Why is this sort of behavior detrimental to a group?

## Elbow Tag

*Procedure:* All participants pair up and link their inside elbows loosely. Select one pair to separate. One person is “it” and chases the other. The person who is not it, runs away. When he or she doesn’t feel like being chased anymore, the chasee can link elbows with a pair, forcing the partner on the other side to the pair off the link to become the new “it.” If the person who’s “it” catches the chasee, they switch roles.

*Challenge:* The game rules can change the limitation on the number of people linking elbows from two, up to eight.

*Reflection Questions:* What was most confusing about this game? Are there safety concerns if you were doing this with younger children? How might you help avoid catastrophe?

## Team-Building Activities

*More involved than initiative games, these exercises usually involve problem-solving and thus allow the talents of individual group members to shine while reinforcing the importance of cooperation, listening, and leadership skills.*

### Ideal Community Member/Community

*Materials:* Glue, roll of paper, magazines, magic markers for several groups.

*Procedure:* Divide the larger group into groups of four. Each group will draw a large outline of one of the members on roll paper so that they have the outline of a body to decorate. Have groups find images that represent their sense of an ideal community member. After the activity, each group reports out on the dominant characteristics they've identified as ideal attributes of a community member.

*Reflection Questions:* How did this work at the smaller group level? Were there any arguments about the attributes themselves? How different were your ideals? Why do you think this might be? How many of you feel these values are reinforced in your family? In your school? In your larger community? Which attributes are most valued?

### Blind Square

*Materials:* Blindfolds for all and rope (50-75 feet).

*Procedure:* Start by having all participants blindfold themselves, then stand in a line, holding on to the rope. The participants are not to let go of the rope during the entire activity. Ask them to form a square.

*Challenge:* They can also make triangles, circle, etc.

*Reflection Questions:* What needed to happen for the goal to be accomplished? What were the most critical skills for the success of this experience? How might these skills relate to a service-learning experience? Was everyone involved in solving this initiative? What types of leadership were exhibited? Were people who were not talking exhibiting leadership?

### Human Machine

*Hint:* Watch the groups closely to make sure that safe choices are being made.

*Procedure:* Break larger group into groups of three. Have each group devise a human machine to move 15-20 feet. Only two legs and two arms of the three people, however, may touch the ground at any time. Also, once a machine has covered the course, that team has a patent on their method of movement and no other group can duplicate it. Groups go one at a time.

*Reflection Questions:* What became the biggest pressures for the group? Did you anticipate this ahead of time? What might have helped? What worked? What would you do differently next time? Did anything make you uncomfortable?

### Talk Back

*Procedure:* Have the group split into pairs. One of the people from each pair talks about himself or herself for three minutes while the other listens carefully. Then the roles within the pairs switch. After everyone has talked, each partner introduces his or her partner to the larger group, recounting as many details as possible.

*Reflection Questions:* What was hard about this exercise? Why was this hard? How might these listening skills help in a situation where you are interacting with people you don't know?

## Plane Wreck

*Materials:* Several rolls of masking tape, many pieces of cardboard, blindfolds for the entire group.

*Procedure:* Divide the participants into groups of four. Give each group a roll of masking tape and pieces of cardboard. Explain to the groups that they have crashed on a tropical island. In the wreck, one person in each group has lost use of his or her hands. (Then tie that person's hands behind his or her back using a blindfold). The rest of them have lost their sight and ability to talk. Hand out blindfolds to all the others and have the groups remain silent, all but the one whose hands are tied. Using the cardboard and tape they are given, they are to create a vessel that will hold water. All must contribute to this endeavor, but only the sighted one may speak. Tell them they will have 10 minutes to solve this problem. After 10 minutes, test the vessels' efficacy with a cup of water.

*Reflection Questions:* How well did it work to have only one person able to speak in the group? How did you manage to involve all people in the solution? What kinds of accommodations did you have to make for those without sight? What did this experience remind you of? Did everyone follow the rules? Why or why not? How does this compare to when people don't follow rules in real life?

## Group Obstacle Course

*Materials:* Rope and chairs set up in an obstacle course, with a goal at one end.

*Procedure:* Explain that the objective is to reach the goal as a group, moving together through the obstacle course. Have the group do a group hug, then tie a rope around them. Let the fun begin!

*Reflection Questions:* What was most challenging about this sort of teamwork? How clear were the roles at the start? What did it take to make the whole group successful?

## Be the Machine

*Materials:* Machine names written on separate sheets of paper. (Machine types might include a copy machine, blender, pencil sharpener, hair dryer, washing machine, fax machine, etc.).

*Procedure:* Split the group into subgroups of three or four. Explain that the teams will need to become the machines that they have been given, and that others will guess what they are acting out.

*Reflection Questions:* What did you learn about the skills of your fellow group members in this exercise? How might knowing these things help a service-learning project?

## Building Bridges

*Materials:* Lots of newspaper, several rolls of masking tape, and shoeboxes full of junk.

*Procedure:* Divide participants in teams of five. Tell them that their challenge is to build a bridge that will hold a shoebox full of junk, allowing the shoebox also to slide under it. Give the teams about 10 minutes.

*Challenge:* Tell them they will get extra credit if someone can sit on it without the bridge collapsing.

*Reflection Questions:* Did everyone in your group participate in a meaningful way? Was there any dissension in your group? Did the first plan work, or did you have to resort to other plans? Were these decisions to try other plans unified decisions? What grade would you give yourselves for teamwork? Why?

### The Great Nail Challenge

*Materials:* Boards with a single nail hammered into each one, and twelve tall nails for each group. All nails must be the same size and have big heads.

*Procedure:* The goal is for each group to balance all twelve nails on the head of one nail. (This actually can be done! One nail lies on the head of the first; 10 are hanging off of this one, five to one side and five on the other, alternating. One nail goes on top of the contraption to hold the dangling nails in place.) After about 15 minutes, show the groups if they haven't met the challenge.

*Reflection Questions:* Did you figure out the challenge? What worked well? What didn't? How much time do you feel was wasted in your group? What strategy might have worked better? For those who didn't solve the problem, did you gain some group cohesion through the process anyway? Did the challenge seem impossible? If so, how did you feel when you saw the nails balanced?

### Pass the Story

*Procedure:* Have the group sit in a circle. One member then offers the beginning to a story. It can be as basic as the infamous, "It was a dark and stormy night," or might be more useful if it's relevant to the moment. The next person adds on, with consideration for building plotline and characters. Continue around the circle at least once, until the story either gets too farfetched to have a logical ending or comes to a natural conclusion.

*Reflection Questions:* For how many of you was this relatively easy? For those of you for whom it was difficult, why was that the case? What attributes help this activity along? What doesn't work? Are these traits transferable to a service-learning project? If yes, how?

### Balancing Act

*Hint:* Watch participants carefully for safety, and make sure they know they can opt out.

*Procedure:* Have groups break into pairs, facing one another. The partners then take one small step away from each other and lean forward with their arms outstretched until their palms meet. As each distance becomes comfortable, the pair take another small step backward.

*Challenge:* This can also be done with one partner leaning backward, while the other holds his or her hands out, palms up to catch the back of the person. Then he/she pushes the other back into balance. With this version of the activity, it's important that the catcher has one foot further back than the other, arms out, ready to catch the leaner.

*Reflection Questions:* What did it take for each partner to be effective at this? What other settings might these traits be appropriate for?

### Team Balance

*Materials:* A gymnastics balance beam, fallen tree, or horizontal telephone pole long enough for the group to stand on.

*Procedure:* Divide the group in halves, with one on one end of the beam/ tree/pole and the other half facing them. The challenge is to have the two groups exchange places without touching the ground. The group has to begin again if someone touches the ground.

*Reflection Questions:* How many of you think you learn best from direct experience? How many of you would prefer to analyze the situation before plunging into it? Which approach worked best in this activity? Why? What were some key epiphanies?

## Electric Fence

*Materials:* Rope or string tied between two trees or poles.

*Hint:* Watch the groups closely to make sure that safe choices are being made. Be aware of physical limitations of participants and make sure this is a challenge-by-choice activity that participants can opt out of if they feel physically uncomfortable. This can be a very uncomfortable activity for people with different body sizes.

*Procedure:* Tell everyone that they have to clear the “electric” fence without touching it, as a group, with their hands held. If either someone touches the fence or lets go of another’s hand, they have to begin over.

*Reflection Questions:* What made this activity challenging? What aspect of it required the most strategizing? How might this experience provide an analogy for what you experience during a service-learning project?

## Ultimate

*Materials:* Frisbee, nerfball, football, or water balloon; a playing field, and two goals.

*Hint:* Watch the groups closely to make sure that safe choices are being made. Be aware of physical limitations of participants and make sure this is a challenge-by-choice activity that participants can opt out of if they feel physically uncomfortable. This can be a very uncomfortable activity for people with different body sizes.

*Procedure:* Many people have played Ultimate Frisbee, but the game takes on added dimensions when the Frisbee is instead a water balloon, for example. Tell new players that Ultimate is reminiscent of soccer: The objective is to get the “ball” past the goal. Divide the group into two teams. One team “kicks off” to the other team from the center of the field. Participants can run anywhere on the field but cannot run with the ball. When a player catches the ball, he or she must stop running. Then, they can only advance the ball by throwing it to a teammate. If a passed ball is dropped, thrown out of bounds, or intercepted, the other team immediately takes possession of the ball, and the direction of the play shifts to the opposite goal. Players must stand at least an arm’s length apart so that the defensive players do not prevent the offensive players from throwing. Intentional physical contact is not allowed.

*Reflection Questions:* How many people have prior field-sport experience? How many don’t? What was the most challenging aspect of this game? What skills did success rely upon? How might these skills be helpful to a service-learning project?

## Minefield

*Materials:* Large area cluttered with tennis balls, boxes, or chairs; blindfolds.

*Procedure:* Divide group into pairs. Blindfold one partner from each pair, and have the sighted partners walk their blindfolded partners to one end of the minefield. The sighted partners go to the opposite side. The objective is for the blindfolded partner to make it across the minefield, relying on verbal guidance from the partner.

*Reflection Questions:* Did you try different verbal strategies in talking your blindfolded partner across the minefield? What was most challenging about the activity? What worked? How is this situation a metaphor for what might happen in a service-learning project? What skills are most important to success in this situation?



## Closing Activities

*These activities are the wrap-up version of icebreakers, designed to bring groups back together after a project and help them reflect on their experiences.*

### Rainstorm

*Procedure:* Have everyone sit in a circle on the floor. Explain that participants are to replicate any action the person on their left does. The facilitator starts the action, which is usually finger-snapping. One person after another snaps his or her fingers as the person to the left picks up the action, until it travels around the circle like a wave. Once the action has traveled all the way around the circle, add a motion to the wave, so that the sequence of actions is increasing in number for everyone. The action sequence might be: snapping fingers, rubbing hands together, slapping knees, stomping feet while slapping knees, slapping knees, rubbing hands together snapping fingers, resting hands on knees. The exercise ends when the facilitator grabs the hand of the person to his or her left, to signify that he or she has completed the sequence.

*Reflection Questions:* What skills does this exercise illustrate? Could you use this in working with younger children or with elders? Why is it a good activity for the end of the day?

### Weaving the Web

*Materials:* A ball of yarn or string.

*Procedure:* Have participants stand or sit in a circle. The person holding the ball is the facilitator and makes a statement on a topic he or she has selected as a way to reflect on the day. These statements might pertain to qualities each person would like to offer the program, or one thing each learned through the experience.

*Reflection Questions:* Explain the symbolism of a spider web, a group's interconnections and interdependence. Ask what the strengths of a spider web might be. Are there weaknesses? How might these relate to group work?

### Marker Race

*Materials:* Wide felt-tip markers and flip chart paper; tape indicating starting line.

*Procedure:* Divide the group into relay teams of at least four members each. Pose questions about the day. These might include: "What one word describes your favorite part of the day?" "What surprised you most about the experience?" Team members race one at a time up to the flip chart to record their answers.

*Reflection Questions:* Look for themes across the relay teams. Are there any patterns? What can be applied from today's experience to the next community issue?

### Finale Clap

*Procedure:* On the count of three, have the group offer a single clap together, signifying the end of the experience and the beginning of an altered world due to the effects of their experience together.

*Reflection Questions:* How did the group interact and influence one another? What will be different now for group members as individuals? What will be different in the community? (Often it's nice to end the reflection questions with another group clap.)

### Group Gift Box

*Procedure:* Participants stand in a circle to pass around an imaginary box. When the box comes to them, offer a gift to the box for the good of the group and take something out that they've gained from the group. (For example, a participant might take out the support he or she received from the others and offer good wishes for their future projects.)

### **Symbol Circle**

*Procedure:* Participants pass around a symbolic item (drum, egg, branch, etc.) from their time together. When the participant has the symbol he or she shares feelings about the group's time together. The symbol does not need to go in a linear fashion around the group.

### **Question Line**

*Materials:* Two rows of chairs facing each other. It helps to have a bell or gong to interrupt the chatter and to signify the time to switch seats.

*Procedure:* This activity can be used at the planning stage of a project or as a debriefing tool. Have people take seats so that everyone has a partner they're facing. Pose a group question that helps participants process the day, such as, "Describe one thing that surprised you about the project," or "Describe one thing you'd do differently on-site." Give the group three to five minutes for conversing, so that each member of each pair has the chance to explain his or her perspective. Then have one row stand up and move down a chair. Pose a new question.

### **One Word**

*Procedure:* Have the group sit in circle. Ask everyone to offer a one-word reflection on their experience. (This can also be a pre-reflection technique before a service-learning project if framed as one word about their feelings pre-project.)

*Reflection Questions:* Does anyone feel they'd like to more completely explain their one word? Observe any similarities in words expressed.

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## Team-Building Reflection

Write a reflection on what you learned during the team-building exercises. Keep in mind that your learning process involved not only what you learned about communication and building a stronger class community, but it is also about what you began to understand about yourself and others in the group.

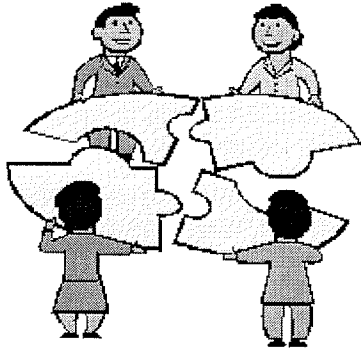
Consider, before you begin writing, what you've learned about:

- Your ability to lead or follow to solve a problem as a group?
- Your own communication style?
- Your ability to interact with others you do not know very well?
- Your comfort level in taking physical and verbal risks with a group?
- Your physical space needs?
- Your psychological pressure point, limits, and boundaries?
- Your learning style?
- Your understanding of balancing your own personal needs with those of the group?

How did you recognize the group needs during the activity, challenge yourself, and alter your own behavior based on those needs?

How did you think you will be able to use this information in the class and upcoming projects?

*All Lift materials are based in the K-12 Service-Learning Standards for Quality Practice, available at [www.nylc.org/standards](http://www.nylc.org/standards).*



# Icebreakers, Team Building Activities, and Energizers

## About this Resource

Whether it is a small gathering at your home or a large training seminar, we all want to feel that we have established some commonality with our fellow Lions. By creating a warm, friendly, and personal learning environment, Lions will participate more and learn more. One way to do this is to incorporate group activities, such as icebreakers, team building activities, and energizers.

What is an icebreaker? The term "icebreaker" comes from "break the ice", which in turn comes from special ships called "icebreakers" that are designed to break up ice in arctic regions. And just as these ships make it easier for other ships to travel, an icebreaker helps to clear the way for learning to occur by making the learners more comfortable and encouraging conversation. Specifically, an icebreaker is an activity designed to help people to get to know each other and usually involves sharing names and other background information.

A team building activity is designed to help groups form bonds and become a team. Team building activities differ from icebreakers in that the group members already have learned each other's names, and perhaps some personal information, and the focus is on making the group become more cohesive.

Energizers are quick, fun activities to liven up a group. They are particularly useful after a meal, when groups may be getting sluggish, or late in the day when energy is waning and motivation is decreasing.

Often an icebreaker, a team building activity and an energizer overlap. For example, during an activity in which participants are asked to line up in alphabetical order by first name, participants will learn each other's names (typical of an icebreaker), they'll work together as a team to form the line (teambuilding), and become invigorated by being able to get up and move around the room (an energizer). As a result, the activities in this resource are grouped together according to how they might be used instead of how they are defined.

Listed on the pages that follow are activities to facilitate introductions, to introduce a topic, to review concepts recently learned, to encourage team building, and to energize. There are also some miscellaneous activities at the end that you might find interesting or useful.

## **Activities to Facilitate Introductions**

These icebreakers can be used to help participants relax and ease into a meeting or training; and to help participants learn each other's names and personal/professional information.

When participants are meeting for the first time, start with an icebreaker that helps everyone to learn names and personal/professional information. If you are facilitating more than one session, choose a few icebreakers -- you can use one to get people chatting and exchanging personal information, another to help memorize or review names, and another at a stretch break.

### ***Seating Plan***

Ask participants to arrange their seats:

- \* *alphabetically, according to first name, or*
- \* *sequentially, in order of birthday month and date*

### ***Marooned***

You are marooned on a island. What five (you can use a different number, such as seven, depending upon the size of each team) items would you have brought with you if you knew there was a chance that you might be stranded. Note that they are only allowed five items per team, not per person. You can have them write their items on a flip chart and discuss and defend their choices with the whole group. This activity helps them to learn about other's values and problem solving styles and promotes teamwork.

### ***Who's Done That?***

Prior to the meeting, make a list of about 25 experiences or skills that might be useful to individual Lions. For example, a list for a group of Lions might have some of the following:

- |                                   |                                     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| ○ Developed a Lions club website  | ○ Has taken an online course on the |
| ○ Has applied for an LCIF grant   | Lions Learning Center               |
| ○ Has attended a Lions Leadership | ○ Has been a club officer           |
| Institute                         | ○ Is good at using PowerPoint       |
| ○ Has visited the LCI website     | ○ Led a community service project   |

Ensure there is plenty of space below each item (3 or 4 lines) and then make enough copies for each person.

Give each person a copy of the list and have him or her find someone who can sign one of the lines. Also, have them put their job title and phone number next to their names. Allow about 20-30 minutes for the activity.

Give prizes for the first one completed, most names (you can have more than one name next to an item), last one completed, etc. As a result of this activity, participants will have a list of Lions who can serve as resources, and will have learned about each other.

### ***Alliteration Introductions***

An excellent game for players to get to know each other's names. Ask group members to stand in a circle, if room space permits. A player starts the game by introducing himself or herself by making a gesture, and alliterating his/her name, e.g. "I'm Wonderful Wendy" or "I'm Smart Steve". The next player **points to the first player**, repeats the **previous** player's name, attribute and gesture, and does something similar about himself or herself.

And so on. The game ends with the first player having to do every other player's gesture, repeating their names and attributes.

### ***Chaos***

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

Time Required: 10 minutes

Group Size: 8-20

Purpose: Physical energizer, name game

1. Organize participants into a circle. Go around the circle once and have each participant introduce him or herself by name.
2. One person begins by tossing one of the objects to someone else, saying, "Hi, Name of Person!"
3. The person who catches the object then says, "Thanks, Name of tosser!" and repeats by tossing to someone else in the circle.
4. Names must be said each time the item is tossed or caught.
5. 3-4 items may be in place at once, but make sure to space them 30-60 seconds apart from each other.

### ***Geographic Location***

Each group member is from a different geographic location, but together they will form a map. (Note: if group members are not from different geographic locations, assign them one). Ask each group member to stand where he/she thinks they belong to make a map as close to scale as possible.

### ***Name and Number***

As people walk into the gathering, put their name on one side of an index card, and a number on the other side. As everyone walks around with their name showing (on the index card that is taped to their shirt), they have to try to introduce themselves to as many people as they can. After a bit of mingling, tell everyone to turn over his or her name tags, so that the number on each card is showing rather than the name. Now give everyone a numbered piece of paper, and see who can fill in the most names next to the corresponding number.

### ***Pat on the Back***

Have everyone draw an outline of their hand on a sheet of paper, then tape it to their back. Have group members mingle and write things on everyone's back that tells them something positive.

### ***Meeting Warm-Ups***

Quick ideas to get people focused on each other and ready to participate!

This activity can be done with a group of any size.

Time Required: The activity can be as long or as short as you would like.

Materials: None

Physical Setting/Location: Needs to be in a location where group members form a circle.

Instructions:

Go around the circle and complete one of these sentences:

I became a Lion because...

The best project I ever worked on was...

Being a Lion has taught me that...

When people ask me about Lions Clubs International, I tell them...

This year I plan to...

Each person in the circle should answer the question before a new question is issued to the group.

### ***"I Have Never" (10 Fingers)***

Each person starts off with some candy. Going around the circle, each person finishes the sentence "I have never..." Everyone who HAS done what they have never done gives that person one of their candies. A fun way to learn things you might otherwise not find out about people.

### ***Two Truths & A Lie***

To allow participants to get to know and appreciate one another better, through discovering both common and unique interests and experiences. To help level the playing field within a group through making human connections that aren't related to either organizational or power structures. To help people begin to be more comfortable talking and listening with one another.

Group Size: This activity can be done with a group of any size

Time Required: Each person will take about 3-5 minutes

Materials: None

Physical Setting/Location: This activity can be done either inside or outside – standing up or sitting down.

Instructions:

1. Tell participants that they must introduce themselves to the group, coming up with two true statements/facts about themselves and one lie.
2. Ask for a volunteer to start with their two truths and a lie – have them share all three with the group.
3. Whoever guesses the correct lie, will go next.
4. Some participants may want to expand on their truth statements, depending upon how elaborate they are!

### ***Me Too***

This activity works best for small groups or with a large group divided into smaller groups of 4-6 participants.

1. Everyone in the group gets 10 pennies/toothpicks/scrap of papers, etc.
2. The first person states something he/she has done (e.g. water skiing).
3. Everyone else who has done the same thing admits it and puts one penny in the middle of the table.
4. Then the second person states something (e.g. I have eaten frogs' legs).
5. Everyone who has done it puts another penny in the center.
6. Continue until someone has run out of pennies

### ***Common Ground***

This also works best for small groups or for each small group sitting together as a team (4-6 learners). Give the group a specific time (perhaps 5 minutes) to write a list of everything they all have in common. Tell them to avoid the obvious ("we're all taking this course"). When time is up, ask each group how many items they have listed. For fun, ask them to announce some of the most interesting items.

## **Activities to Introduce a Topic**

Sometimes when a group is meeting for a workshop on a specific topic, participants already know each other well. In these situations, use an icebreaker that leads into the content of the gathering. A topic lead-in can play a number of functions. It can:

- generate interest in the topic of the meeting or training
- activate participants' prior knowledge of the subject
- help the facilitator and participants to identify individual learning needs and goals
- encourage the sharing of information and resources
- surface resistance to discussion or learning

Topic lead-in questions can be answered collectively or individually. Use topic lead-ins liberally: it is appropriate to use them in every session.

### ***Individual lead-in questions***

Individual lead-in questions are designed to identify individual learning needs and goals, encourage the sharing of information and resources, and/or surface resistance to learning. Participants can respond to questions in a predetermined order (e.g., left to right around the room), or by volunteering responses in random order. If you let participants speak in randomly, remember that one of the purposes of this activity is to get people talking, so try to ensure that everyone in the group makes a contribution.

Here are some topic lead-in suggestions:

- State one or two "burning questions" you hope will be answered in this session.
- Describe one strategy/resource you have successfully employed recently (relevant to the topic of the meeting/training).
- State your personal definition of the topic (eg., in a session on public relations, "Public Relations means...").

The following lead-ins are particularly useful when the subject matter challenges established beliefs or practices:

- State your opinion on the topic. ("I think...")
- Complete a phrase or phrases (eg., in a session on public speaking, "encourage a person who is fearful of public speaking by...").

To encourage free-flow participation, ask participants to listen to all contributions, but reserve their comments for discussion later in the session.

### ***Word Tree***

Generate a list of words related to the topic. For example, if discussing goal setting, ask participants to give you words related to the topic. Participants may suggest: 'objectives,' 'action plan,' 'targets,' 'planning,' 'achievement,' etc. Write all suggestions on the board, clustering by theme where possible. You can use this opportunity to introduce essential terms, too.

### ***Multiple Choice or True/False Quiz***

Rather than giving participants a multiple choice or true/false quiz at the end of a session, try giving it at the beginning. As facilitator, you can walk around and discretely scan participants' responses -- this can help you to identify where to focus your attention during the training. Check the answers with the group at the end of the session.

## **Activities for Reviewing and Applying Learning Concepts**

These activities are meant to reinforce, review or apply material that was recently learned. They are a fun way to highlight key concepts while getting the participants up and moving around.

### ***Ball Toss***

This is a semi-review and wake-up exercise when covering material that requires heavy concentration. Have everyone stand up and form a circle. It does not have to be perfect, but they should all be facing in, looking at each other. Toss a foam ball or bean bag to a person and have them tell what they thought was the most important learning concept. They then toss the ball to someone and that person explains what they thought was the most important concept. Continue the exercise until everyone has caught the ball at least once and explained an important concept of the material just covered.

### ***Process Ball***

This is similar to the above exercise, but each person tells one step of a process or concept when the ball is tossed to them. The instructor or learner, in turn, writes it on a chalkboard or flip chart. For example, after covering "Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs," you would start the ball toss by having everyone give one step in the pyramid of needs, e.g. Safety, Physiological, Esteem, etc.

### ***Traffic Lights***

The purpose of this activity, suitable for any group, is to introduce the idea of developing an action plan at the end of a training session/seminar.

Materials: flipchart paper; pens and/or markers

Time: 20 minutes

1. Divide the group into teams.
2. Draw a traffic light on a flip chart at the front of the room. Explain that the traffic light represents an action plan: what participants should stop doing (red light), what they should do less of (yellow light), and what they should go forward with (green light).
3. Ask each participant to write down his or her own "traffic lights". Allow 5 minutes.
4. Go around the group and ask each person to tell the rest of the group one of the things they will stop doing as a result of the training session/seminar, one of the things they will do less of, and one of the things they are going to go ahead and do.

#### **Source:**

Barca, Michele and Cobb, Kate. (1993). *Beginnings and Endings: Creative Warmups and Closure Activities*. Amherst, MA: HRD Press P.139

## **Activities to Build Teams**

### ***Pipe Cleaners***

This activity allows participants to be creative. At the beginning of the session (or during a break) place three pipe cleaners at each person's place. Don't tell what they are for unless asked. When you are ready tell the group they are to create a pipe cleaner sculpture. In other words, they can do anything they want with them.

At the end of the morning (or day), ask each group of five people to select a winner. Then have everyone select an overall winner.

If your culture encourages people to work in teams make sure to give special recognition to any group that combines their pipe cleaners and uses all of them together to make something "better."

### **Blind Numerical Order** (20 minutes)

Illustrates: Communication and listening.

- a) There is no talking
- b) You must keep your blindfolds on at all times
- c) Each of you will have a number whispered into your ear
- d) The goal is for the group to arrange itself in numerical order without speaking and without the use of sight.

Blindfold all the participants. Whisper a number to each of them (do not allow other participants to hear). The number should be RANDOM (not just 1-12, etc). After whispering the number, move the participant to a random location. Once every participant has a number, they should begin. Make sure all participants are safe throughout the exercise.

Processing Questions:

What was the most difficult aspect of this exercise?

Did you have a sense of working together? Why/why not?

How frustrating was it when you could not talk?

What was necessary in order for you to be successful?

Did you assume that the assigned numbers would be in order (like 1-12)?

How important is good communication in groups?

How does this activity relate to our group?

### **All Tied Up**

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

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

Group Size: 2-15

1. Purpose: Work as team to complete a common goal
2. Arrange participants into a circle, facing each other. Ask them to hold out their arms.
3. Tie the group together so that each person is tied to both neighbor's wrists.
4. Now that the group is "all tied up", give them a task to do together.

**Some ideas are:**

- Make root beer floats for everyone
- Wrap packages with gift wrap, bows, and a card
- Eat lunch
- Make a snack
- Create an art project
- Pour a cup of water for each person in the group
- Anything else that is fun and crazy

**Note:**

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

### **Debrief Questions or Topics:**

1. Why were you successful (or unsuccessful) at completing the task?
2. How did the time restrictions aid or hinder your group from completing the task?
3. Did everyone in the group help to get the task done?
4. What happened when someone didn't help?
5. Do you ever feel like you are "tied up" with someone else when you are working with them and trying to get a job done? If so, why, and how do you deal with this feeling?

**Source:**

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



### ***Build a Car***

Material Needed: flip chart paper

Time Required: 25 minutes

Group Size: 5-30

Using flip chart paper, draw the outline of a car. Instruct the group to add components to the car and explain what it stands for and how they can relate that to the team. Give one example and then let them go.

Break team into groups of four or five. Allow 20 minutes for the team to draw the car and 5 minutes for each team to present their vehicle. The total time depends on the number of groups you have.

Some examples: Draw the antennae to make sure we have good communication or the wheels keep us in motion. Others include a rear view mirror to keep an eye on where we have been, head lights to help us find our way, a trunk to store all our knowledge and tools, the gas tank to provide fuel when we need it, etc.

### ***Human Machines***

Have groups of 6 to 8 people each create a machine out of humans by imitating the appearance and action of the machine. Examples include becoming a blender, toaster, lawn mower, copy machine, lamp, or washing machine.

### ***Rain***

Everyone sits in a circle, shoulder to shoulder. No talking is allowed. The leader starts the exercise and each person joins in when they hear the sound the person to their left is making. The leader starts the exercise by rubbing their palms together. This continues in the circle until it comes back to the leader who then changes the sound (snap fingers, clap hands, slap thighs, stomp feet, and then in reverse order). The sensations created are akin to the sounds of a rainstorm.

### ***Consensus***

Material Needed: None

Time Required: 10-15 minutes

Group Size: 10-12

Purpose: Team building, discussing consensus & teamwork, compromise

1. Divide the participants up into 3-4 groups depending on the number of people.
2. Ask each group to huddle together and create a noise and action to perform for other groups.
3. After each has demonstrated noise and action twice for other groups, the facilitator gives 10 seconds time for each group to huddle.
4. The goal is for all of the groups to be doing the same noise and action together, without consulting one another.
5. After the huddle, the facilitator counts to three and all of the groups at the same time must perform one of the action/noise combinations. (It doesn't have to be their original one).
6. Keep re-huddling until all groups are doing the same noise/action.

Variations:

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

Debrief/ Discussion Questions:

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

2. What made it so hard to reach consensus?
3. What was most frustrating about this activity?
4. How did it feel to have your noise/ action not be chosen by the group?
5. Did any of you make any compromises during this activity, how did that feel?
6. How did it feel to not be able to communicate with the other groups?

### **Phrase Ball**

Material Needed: A Nerf or other soft ball

Time Required: 15-20 minutes

Group Size: 5-40

Purpose: Public speaking, adjusting to change, problem solving

1. Arrange participants into a circle, and tell them they will now discover how talented they are at speaking extemporaneously.
2. The members of the circle will toss the ball to one another, at the same time speaking a simple, descriptive phrase; ("the placid lake, the little girl, the beautiful city skyline, the terrifying grizzly, the soft Nerf(tm) ball, etc.) Tell them that since there are no rules, there are also no wrong phrases! Have the group take turns tossing and speaking until everyone has gotten confident with their ability to come with a phrase (this usually takes less than 5 minutes). When you feel this has happened, wait for the next time the ball is thrown to you and hold onto it.
3. Congratulate them all on their verbal virtuosity, and tell them they have moved ahead to the advanced level with astonishing speed. Tell them they will now play the game again, this time with only one rule: Their phrases must relate to the phrase that came before. That is, one person will say a phrase and toss the ball, and the person catching it will add onto that phrase.
4. Try a couple of passes. Toss the ball and say: "the new member..." The person catching must now say something like, "organizing the carnival." (Applaud him to encourage the rest.) This person will then throw the ball to someone else, saying perhaps, "wants to sell popcorn,..." And whoever catches it might say, "and cotton candy". That person turns and tosses it to someone else, saying, "the little girl..." That person catches it and says, "who needs glasses". And so on.
5. Do this until, once again, everyone seems comfortable with the ability to speak extemporaneously, at least most of the time. Express your admiration and ask your learners to sit down.

### Debrief/ Discussion Questions:

- What were your thoughts or feelings when the ball got tossed to you? Did these change as the game progressed?
- How comfortable were you in coming up with something to say in the moment? Did you censor or evaluate your contributions?
- What round was easier for you, round one or two? As a speaker, how could your presentations improve if you focused on responding to your groups instead of impressing them?
- How does all this apply to making your presentations? Does being spontaneous mean you shouldn't carefully prepare yourself? [Answer: No!]
- **KEY POINT:** Once you've prepared- written, rewritten, and rehearsed your presentation- what do you have to do next? [Answer: Get ready for the unexpected...because it will happen].

Note: If your learners consistently have trouble with this game, it is because they are pressuring themselves to be clever- to come up with poetic, funny or unusual phrases. Keep reminding them that the point is to be spontaneous and impromptu. Tell them they don't have to worry about their

originality. It will show up by itself; in fact they can't repress it. For the moment, their challenge is to just go with the first idea that occurs to them. Then swallow your pride and model this for them every time the ball comes your way!

**Source:**

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

### **Thanks Giving**

Material Needed: Paper, envelopes, writing utensils

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

Group Size: 2-40

Purpose: Team building, recognition

1. Explain to the group that the phrase "thankless job" is one that can be applied to many positions or specific tasks. Explain that sometimes one simple phrase coming from the right source can change that descriptor; the phrase is "thank you".
2. Distribute blank paper and envelopes.
3. Ask group members to write their name on their envelope and place them in a location easily accessible to everyone during the meeting or retreat.
4. Invite group members to write a note at any time during the session when they remember a particular time, event, or behavior for which they would like to thank another team member.
5. Throughout the meeting or retreat tell members they may place the notes in the envelopes of their team members.
6. Encourage team members to write at least one thank you note for each individual.

**Variations:**

- This activity can be adapted to include compliments or encouraging words. It can also be as simple as 3 kind words to describe the team member.
- If done on a retreat, before hand you could create 8 x 11 posters with a picture of the person and their name and then have people write directly on the poster throughout the retreat. You can also include an envelope for people to put their note, in case someone doesn't want their note to be public.

**Note:**

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

**Source:**

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

### **Three Way Communication**

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

Time Required: 15-20 minutes

Group Size: 6-40

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

Groups physically mimic a specific communication type/environment to make them aware of the

1. Preface the game with a brief discussion about the various ways in which people communicate with their friends, professors, colleagues, etc. Tell them that in this activity, they will **discuss and determine key aspects, pros/cons and guidelines** for a specific type of communication. Three different communication methods will be explored: Face to face, telephone, and e-mail.
2. Divide the group members into three groups. The first group represents the **face to face** communication environment. These people do not have any controls on their communication. They should sit in one area of the room and use pen and paper to write their findings during the activity.

3. The second group represents the **telephone** environment. These group members should be blindfolded in order to replicate the telephone environment (in which they cannot see the person they're talking to). They should sit together in one area of the room. *One person will act as the scribe for the group's findings and will not wear a blindfold.*
4. The third group represents the **e-mail** environment. These participants should sit back to back and may not speak. They should each have paper, pens, and clipboards. In order to communicate, they must write notes and pass them to one another.
5. Give them about 7 minutes and then ask each group member to make its report. (Participants can now be free of the blindfolds, clipboards, and other constraints).
6. Capture the findings and guidelines on a flip chart.

**Source:**

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

## **Activities to Energize Your Group**

Ever feel like your group is just running out of gas? Perhaps it's late, or after a meal, and your group doesn't seem to have a lot of energy. We have provided a list of short energizers to get you and your group going. These can be used at any time, so enjoy!

### ***Animal Roundup***

Material Needed: None

Time Required: 10 minutes

Group Size: 5-50

Purpose: Physical energizer

1. Tell group members to silently think of their favorite animal.
2. Then tell group members that without talking, they need to arrange themselves from largest to smallest animals.
3. Group members can only make gestures and the noise of their animal.
4. After they have finished, have group members go around and say the animal they were supposed to be to see if it was accurate.

### ***Lions Clubs International Needs Me Because...***

Material Needed: None

Time Required: 7 minutes

Group Size: 5-50

Purpose: Physical energizer

This exercise brings out humor, team spirit and reinforces commitment.

1. Ask participants to think of three reasons why Lions Clubs International needs them, or how they contribute to our association or their club.
2. Then, have participants, all at the same time, either stand up or walk around the room shouting out these reasons with commitment and belief.

### ***Animal Noises***

Materials Needed: Notecards with names of animals on them

Time Required: 5 minutes

Group Size: 10-50

Purpose: Energizer, icebreaker, good activity for breaking up people into subgroups.

1. Write the names of animals on note cards. Do at least 2 of each animal, but you may want more depending on the size of the subgroup you want to create. For example, if you want subgroups of 5 people each, you'll need 5 note cards with the same animal on them.
2. Distribute one card to each participant. Explain there are some duplicates.
3. Tell participants they must identify their partners (or group members) within the room purely by making the noise that they would associate with "their" animal. There should be no talking at this stage, only animal noises.

## **Miscellaneous Activities**

### ***Rearrange the Classroom (Change)***

Prior to class, set the desks up in the old "traditional" classroom row style. Except, that you should set your stage (podium, flip chart, etc.) in the back of the class. Start your presentation (you will be behind them, facing their backs). Explain to them that this is how a lot of change is implemented in organizations. The leaders get behind their employees and attempt to "push" them into change. And the attempt to change is about as successful as trying to conduct a class this way.

Also, point out that this is how a lot of traditional organizations are set up, in nice even rows (departments), where it is hard to communicate and learn from each other. But, real teams develop when we break out of our boxes and design organizations that have cross functional teams working with each other. Ask them to rearrange the room so that real learning, communication, and teamwork can take place. Depending upon your learners, you might have to give them a few pointers to get started, but then get out of the way.

During the next break or after lunch, have them rearrange the room again, using some of the techniques that they learned. This can be repeated several more times, depending upon the length of the presentation. But, each time they change the setting, it needs to reinforce a concept that they previously learned.

### ***You're OK***

Good for ending a seminar or an end of the year meeting. Distribute a 3x5 index card to people and ask them to write their name on it. Cards are passed around the group; at which time everyone write a positive comment about the respective individuals. The cards are then returned to each person.

# *Twelve Ways to Build an Effective Team*

## **Overview**

Twelve ways to build a team that works together productively and with synergy.

Teams that are cohesive, productive, and efficient -- and whose members enjoy doing their work and working together -- don't happen by accident. Successful teams are cohesive because team members work cooperatively, sharing common goals as well as the resources to achieve them. They are productive, not because team members never disagree, but because they have worked out ways to resolve conflicts when they occur. They are efficient because tasks are assigned in a way that takes into account each member's skills and interests, rather than letting the team be dominated by the most verbal, most aggressive, or most popular personalities. Managers play an essential role in developing and leading teams that work in these ways.

Here are 12 ways to build an effective and cohesive team:

1. *Clarify the common goals and purposes.* Make the team's purposes clear. Take the time to articulate the team's performance goals and how the team contributes to the company's success. Even a work group that has existed for some time may never have done this. In any case, the purposes and conditions change over time. If you are a new boss, you will be putting your own stamp on the group's common goal.
2. *Clarify each person's role in achieving the common purpose.* Define each person's job in terms of its contribution to the group's and the company's overall goals. This must be done in specific terms, not in vague generalities. For example, "We're working under very tight timelines. Joe, you'll be in charge of overall project coordination, so you will set the timetable for each project phase. Betty, can I ask you to take responsibility for writing the brochures and getting them printed? Maribeth and Scott, I'd like you to work together on the transportation requirements, OK? Let's meet again tomorrow afternoon at 3:00 for an update and a progress check. Does that work for everybody?"
3. *Put team members in touch with the people who use what they do.* Confirm the needs of the team's external or internal customers or clients on an ongoing basis. For example, "Tom, be sure to talk with both Materials Management and the folks in Production to make sure they're aware of the changes we've planned. Our changes could affect their work if we're all not in sync."

## 2 • Twelve Ways to Build an Effective Team

4. *Pay attention to conflicts when they arise.* It's natural for conflict to arise when people work in groups. Conflict, handled well, can actually produce constructive ideas. Sometimes team members will annoy each other, step on each other's toes, or hurt each other's feelings. Honest disagreements can become personal and heated. Work processes that seemed efficient can break down. It's important to recognize that some degree of conflict among co-workers is normal. Let problems come to the surface. Avoid the impulse to demand that your employees "drop it," "forget about it," or "just cut it out." Also, anticipate that more conflicts may occur whenever there are changes that affect the team's membership or goals.
5. *Work out ways to resolve conflicts.* What works as an effective style of conflict resolution varies from team to team, and may vary over time on the same team. Teams whose members all have similar experience and seniority may be able to settle problems more informally, for example, than a team with more diversity. Here are some ways to successfully resolve conflicts:
  - Make sure each team member involved has a chance to explain the problem as he or she sees it.
  - Establish clear ground rules so that people can have their say without being interrupted, rushed, mocked, or intimidated.
  - Encourage employees to solve problems themselves when they can so that you aren't always in the middle of every conflict between team members. However, if they cannot solve them, it's important that they can count on you to coach them through a problem-solving framework that allows them to build conflict resolution skills for the future.
6. *Remember your leadership role.* While you need to encourage your employees to feel a healthy "ownership" of the team's work, you need to avoid trying to be "just one of the team." You -- not your team -- are the one accountable to your own boss for the team's results. You're expected to get results through your people. Hold each employee responsible for meeting goals and for solving or helping to solve problems.
7. *Make sure team members interact at meetings.* Do team members mainly address their questions and suggestions to you, or do they interact directly with each other at meetings? Encourage team members to ask each other for help and to offer it to each other, without channeling it all through you. Synergy on teams is achieved when team members feel comfortable speaking up with suggestions that build on the creativity of other team members. This requires collaboration not competition. Dominance of a group by a manager or supervisor can limit the chances a group has to achieve real synergy. Also, competition within the team may increase as members vie for the manager's attention.

8. *Allow team members to have input into their jobs.* When you can, give your employees flexibility on how they meet their work goals. Encourage employees to make suggestions about changes in what they do and how they do it, based on their direct and daily experience of what works, what doesn't work, and what could work better. Of course, the only way to encourage employees to make suggestions over the long run is to show them that you will act on some of their suggestions.
9. *Make sure there is room for minority or unpopular views.* Teams can easily slip into "group think," especially when they are successful. Those who see flaws in the way the group does things, or who see improvements that could be made, may be politely ignored or even treated with hostility. Teams where this happens can fail when their environment or requirements change and they can't adapt. Effective managers build team trust by encouraging a diversity of opinion. Ask, specifically, for other viewpoints. Inquiring into views that may not have been spoken can allow better team performance. By asking the team, "What else do we need to consider here?" you allow perspectives not yet considered to be put on the table and evaluated. Those in the majority must be able to trust that those who disagree do so honestly and with good intentions. Those in the minority must be able to trust that they can speak up without being punished or left out.
10. *Appraise and reward the team as a whole.* As with an individual performance review, compare the team's performance to what was expected of it. Plan small celebrations of the team achieving important milestones. Acknowledgments of incremental successes can be more motivating than big end-of-project rewards. Celebrations could range from pizza at lunch, to dinner at a nice restaurant, to a bonus, or to a congratulatory letter from a senior executive that goes in each employee's personnel file. Keep in mind that the team review can never take the place of individual performance reviews.
11. *Appraise and reward each employee individually, including a review of his or her teamwork.* As members of a team, the expectations and criteria for their performance include showing a spirit of cooperation, developing conflict-resolution skills, engaging in good communication with others, and being willing to help others solve problems or get through crunch efforts. If feasible, encourage all team members to provide meaningful feedback to one another. Be sure to give each team member specific feedback about his or her strengths and any unique role that the person served on the team rather than just focusing on problems or performance gaps.
12. *Communicate team successes.* If possible, let the whole company know what your team has accomplished. Include a specific description of what you did, why it's important to the company, and what challenges had to be overcome. Name people who made key contributions, including those outside your



group. Be sure to include those who are usually left out of such acknowledgments, such as the receptionist who handled the flood of calls after a successful public relations effort or the information technology people who installed the complex software you used.

Remember, a work group begins to become a team when employees see their jobs not merely as what they are supposed to do individually but as contributions to the group's overall success. By following the tips in this article, managers can ensure that their work team develops the synergy needed to move a work group to a new level of cooperation and productivity.

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# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas

## 1. The Game of Possibilities

Time: 5–6 minutes

Purpose: To stimulate conversation, ideas, and laughter

Participants:

- Small groups
- This can be done with one group or multiple groups at the same time.

Materials needed: Cloth napkins

Instructions:

- Give a napkin to each group of five to ten participants.
- One person at a time stands and demonstrates a use of that napkin.

Rules:

1. Person demonstrating cannot speak
2. Must stand while demonstrating
3. Demonstration must be original

Desired outcome: Participants experience the infinite ways to use a napkin and translate this to the infinite ways to solve problems, use resources, motivate a team, etc.

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 2. Drop the Ball

Time: 10–12 minutes

Purpose: Cooperation and healthy competition

Participants: Small groups

Materials needed: Golf balls, straws, tape

Instructions:

- Each small group receives 12 straws and 18 inches of masking tape. They get ten minutes to build a container that will catch a golf ball dropped from about ten feet.
- Each group selects a 'ball dropper' — that person stands on a chair, holds a golf ball at eye level. That group places its container on the floor under where it thinks the ball will land. Each group gets three attempts.
- The group that gets a ball to go in and stay in its container wins.

Desired outcome: Teams can use their experiences in the game to overcome work problems and relational issues.

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 3. Winner/Loser

Time: 5–6 minutes

Purpose: Negative to positive perspective

Participants: Partners

Materials needed: None

Instructions:

- One partner tells the other partner about something bad that happened to them. This can be personal or work-related and can have occurred recently or years ago., but it must be something that is over. They can take about two minutes to do this.
- The same partner then tells the same story but this time relates the good things that came from this experience. The listening partner can help them explore the good that came from the bad.

Desired outcome: Participants experience a way to let go of negative attitudes and emotional baggage.

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 4. Ten Ways to Kill a New Idea

Time: 2–3 minutes

Purpose: Keep meetings positive

Participants: All

Materials needed: Poster paper, markers

Instructions: A list of negative phrases and words is posted in the meeting room. During meetings, anyone who uses any of the 'idea killer' phrases must put a quarter in the 'nega-jar.' When enough money is collected, it can be used to buy the team lunch.

Desired outcome: Team members learn to offer suggestions in positive ways.

## 5. Mission Statement

Time: 15 minutes to several hours

Purpose: Creating focus, passion, and group buy-in

Participants: All

Materials needed: Pens, paper, and any team requests

Instructions: Each person finishes the sentence, "My vision of a team that works is ..."  
The entire team now creates one statement or visual that represents the total of these vision statements.

Desired outcome: The team finds commonality of purpose and is more willing to cooperate.

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 6. Lifeboat Game

Time: An hour

Purpose: Discover how emotions effect the success of our negotiations

Participants: One or several small groups

Materials needed: List of 15 people in a yacht

Instructions:

Give the team or teams a list of 15 people who are on a yacht. Tell them that the yacht developed a leak and is sinking fast. There is only one lifeboat and it will accommodate only nine people — not one more can fit and there are no more life boats or life jackets.

The group must then come to an agreement as to which of 15 people gets to go in the lifeboat and be saved. However, they must also list those they save in order of importance — because if they run out of food and water the “less important people” will have to be dumped overboard. Of course this is often the more difficult job.

The key for this game is to make the 15 people on the list as controversial as possible. For example include a priest, minister, rabbi or all three! A pregnant woman, powerful leaders from both major political parties, an ex-convict, a male physician and a female one, a political lobbyist, people of different ethnicities, etc — the more emotionally charged the list the better.

Give them a period of time to work out the problem. Make it long enough to get into heated discussion but short enough to be pressed for time. I usually allow six to ten minutes.

The discussion afterward should be in depth and include everyone on the team. You can facilitate with questions. Such as ...

- What problems did you experience?
- How did you resolve these issues?
- Was it the best way?
- How else could you have resolved your differences?
- Why did these problems occur in the first place?

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

Then...

- How does this exercise reflect your day-to-day relationships?
- What are the similarities between what you just experienced and negotiations at work and at home?

After fully exploring these questions ask your team — or teams — to reconvene. This time they will list three things they would do differently now that they have had this discussion. Be sure to tell them that this follow-up exercise is not about the lifeboat or anyone on it — it is about the process of negotiation.

Desired outcome:

The critical take away here is that negotiation often fails because each participant wants to get his or her way. A better method may be to first learn the needs and intents of others. Understanding fosters a spirit of cooperation and therefore agreement.

Use the three things each team determines they learned as a guide to create better understanding in future meetings and discussions.

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 7. This Is My Life

Time: Few minutes to 1 hour

Purpose: Learn personal backgrounds in a fun setting

Participants: All

Materials needed: Decks of cards — picture cards only

Instructions: Cards represent different stages of life; i.e. Jack is childhood, Queen is teen years, King is young adult, Ace is now. As each person draws a card, they must tell one story about the period of their life that corresponds to the card.

Desired outcome: Team uncovers common interests and opens dialogue.

## 8. Recall Game

Time: 20 minutes

Purpose: Test after a training event

Participants: Small groups

Materials needed: Paper and pens

Instructions: Break into teams of five to ten people. Each team has ten minutes to list as many facts or skills as they can remember from their training. A representative from each team then reads the list and gets points for each correct fact remembered. All other teams can challenge any point.

Desired outcome: Instructor learns what was important to the group and how much was retained. The group takes a test that is fun, engaging, and creates team cooperation.



# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 9. **Cartoon Character**

Time: 2–3 minutes

Purpose: Creative introductions

Participants: Partners

Materials needed: None

Instructions: Everyone introduces themselves to one other person as the cartoon character they would be if they were not who they are.

Desired outcome: Creates a relaxed atmosphere

## 10. **Theatre of Excellence**

Time: Half to full day

Purpose: Enhance learning, develop solutions, learn to work together in a nonthreatening environment

Participants: Small groups

Materials needed: Varies

Instructions: Each team is given a 'title' for their play that represents the challenges and issues dealt with at work. The team then has X period of time to gather props and music and to write and rehearse their play.

Desired outcome: Employees act out challenges and find solutions in a nonthreatening and fun environment.

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 11. Relate to People

Time: 2–3 minutes

Purpose: Learn new things about co-workers

Participants: All

Materials needed: Pens and paper

Instructions: Group is given a list of characteristics and instructed to find people in the room that have those characteristics that differ from them. For example: different gender, weight by 20 lbs, height by seven inches, marital status, etc.

Desired outcome: Learn new things about co-workers; encourages conversation, breaks down perceived barriers

## 12. Airplane Caper

Time: 1–2 minutes

Purpose: Lighten up a tough day; re-energize

Participants: All

Materials needed: Paper

Instructions: Two teams are formed on opposite sides of the room; each person makes a paper airplane. Everyone begins to throw her or his airplane to the other side at once. The goal is not to let any planes land on the floor.

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 13. Animal Game

Time: 1–2 minutes

Purpose: Break from the ordinary, communicate in new ways

Participants: Partners

Materials needed: None

Instructions: Each person tells a partner what animal they would be if they could be an animal; they can't talk or write, but must only act and sound as that animal.

## 14. Hit the Mark

Time: 10 minutes

Purpose: Relieves stress and demonstrates the power of team encouragement

Participants: All

Materials needed: Piece of paper, marker, tape (prizes optional)

Instructions: Place a poster high up on a wall. One person runs across the room and jumps up, placing a mark as high as they can. Then they are told to try again but place it higher. This continues until the person is absolutely convinced they can't reach any higher. Then the team is told they will be rewarded (ice cream, longer lunch hour, etc.) if they can get this person to make the mark higher. However, they cannot do it for the jumper and can't touch them or provide a chair or other booster — they can only do this through encouragement.

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 15. Push-Push

Time: 1–2 minutes

Purpose: Releases anxiety and reinforces idea of cooperation

Participants: Partners

Materials needed: None

Instructions: Partners face each other and place hands palm to palm. Partner A is told to push as hard as possible. Next, Partner B is told not to push but to move their hands in a gentle swaying motion.

Desired outcome: When you push, others push back; when you dance, others follow your lead.

## 16. Ten Things I Do Well

Time: 1 or 2 minutes

Purpose: Reminds players of their personal and professional strengths

Participants: Any number of players in partner pairs

Materials needed: Paper and pen for follow-up assignment

Instructions: Each player has 15 seconds to tell their partner ten things they do well. Follow-up assignment is for each participant to make two lists: one, a list of ten things they do well professionally and the other a list of ten things they do well personally. They must take each list and post in a conspicuous place — one at home and one at work. The action plan is to read one or both lists every day — forever!

Desired outcome: Those who complete this assignment will feel a greater sense of confidence and pride within 21 days.

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 17. I Admire Others

Time: A few minutes

Purpose: To develop models of behavior

Participants: Any number of players

Materials needed: Paper and pen

Instructions:

Everyone writes on a piece of paper the words, "I admire others who ..." The game now has four steps:

1. Instruct players to think of people they admire and why.
2. Give the players one minute to finish that sentence. Ask them to use positive language; for example instead of writing, "I admire others who are not negative," write "I admire others who are positive."  
  
They are to continue to write free form for one minute without regard to punctuation, grammar, or spelling — just a constant flow of thoughts as they think of others they admire.
3. Have a few volunteers read what they wrote starting with the introductory words, "I admire others who ..."
4. Now ask that they draw a line through the words, "I admire others who ..." and insert these words: "I am powerful when I ..." Ask volunteers to read again, this time using the new introductory words.

Desired outcome: Participants understand that what they most admire in others they can do themselves. It encourages others with simplicity and ease to be the best they can be.

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 18. Flower Garden Gift

Time: Half-day or longer

Purpose: Do something meaningful for others

Participants: The whole team can play

Materials needed: Varies

Instructions:

- Select a site where a garden can be planted. This could be outside the building where the team works or at a school, hospital, nursing home, playground, community center.
- Gather the necessary materials — digging tools, seeds, water, fertilizer, plant food, etc. and create a flower garden.
- Variations of this game can be painting a room, decorating a wall, serving food at a shelter, or any other deed the whole team can do together to bring joy to others.

Desired outcome: The amazing uplift one experiences when we give without thought of getting

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 19. Dress-up Monday

Time: All day!

Purpose: Change the “dreaded Monday” mentality

Participants: Everyone who chooses

Materials needed: Your best clothes

Instructions:

- Request that everyone who wishes to play should dress up in their very best outfits on Monday. Have a small celebration like coffee at the morning break; take pictures of the group; have a parade through the rest of the office; give prizes for brightest colors, longest skirt, sleekest tie, etc.
- Do this only occasionally — a couple of times a year. Every Monday is too much and detracts from the uniqueness of the event.

Desired outcome: Your team feels better about Mondays — energy and renewed interest will follow.

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 20. What's in Your Treasure Box?

Time: Half to one hour

Purpose: Players realize all the things of value they have in their lives

Participants: Any number can play

Materials needed: For each player: a small box, several pieces of paper and a pen

Instructions:

- Each person writes everything they want in their life — things they have as well as things they don't yet have — but only one thing per piece of paper.
- Ask them to take ten minutes to complete but they must pretend that when they are done only things they wrote will be theirs for life. Anything they forget, they will never have. For example, if they forget to write 'good health' they will not have it in their lives. So suggest they write fast and include essentials first.
- When complete, ask them to put all pieces of paper with things they have inside their 'treasure boxes.' Their assignment is to put one action step on the back of each paper for something they don't have, which will help get it in the box.

Desired outcome: The marvelous discovery we already have much of what we truly value and clarity on how to start acquiring the rest.



# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 21. Ready, Set, Relax!

Purpose: Loosen up tight muscles right at your desk

Participants: Alone or all together — any number

Materials needed: None

Instructions:

Do five repetitions each of the following — all done in seated position:

Hunch up shoulders to your ears, roll them back, down, and forward making large circles.

- a. Bend your neck so that your right ear moves toward your right shoulder, straighten, move your left ear toward your left shoulder, straighten; tilt head forward until chin touches chest, straighten; head back to look at ceiling.
- b. Raise right arm over your head, bend your elbow so right hand is behind your head, and bend to the left as far as you can; repeat with left arm, hand, and side.
- c. Lift your right arm over your head and straight up; move it forward, down, and back drawing a large circle; repeat with the left arm.
- d. Squeeze your face, eyes, mouth, cheeks, making them all tight and small; now quickly open your eyes and mouth as wide as possible.

Desired outcome: Relieves tension, feels good — gets a laugh if anyone is watching!

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 22. Nerf Ball Break

Time: Seconds to minutes

Purpose: Stress reliever, team energizer

Participants: Any number of players

Materials needed: One or more nerf balls

### Instructions

- Throw a nerf ball at someone. They can respond or not. You can have just one ball per team, or everyone gets one.
- A variation of this game is to throw the ball only to signal a particular event. For example if your team hates to get a certain question on a call like, "why can't I get this in green?" or every time they make a sale they get to throw a nerf ball.

Desired outcome: Adds fun, lightens up the atmosphere, and connects team members

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 23. Walk This Way

Time: 10–15 minutes

Purpose: Encourages risk

Participants: All can play — one at a time

Materials needed: Music

Instructions: Everyone stands in a room leaving a path through the middle of the group. One person at a time walks or dances through the path from one end to the other. Each person in turn must follow, but each walk or dance step must be different than any that have been done before.

Desired outcome: As one person said, “After you’ve behaved like an idiot, for the rest of the day you’ll take any risk to get the job done!”

## 24. Tailgate Party

Time: 1 hour plus

Purpose: Reward for job well done

Participants: Everyone

Materials needed: Food, truck, music, sports equipment

Instructions: For lunch, have a party in the parking lot using the tailgate of someone’s truck. Provide food; let the radio blast music, have Frisbees or other sports paraphernalia, and play ball!

Desired outcome: A time to relax and regenerate both mentally and physically

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 25. Contract Run

Time: 30 minutes

Purpose: Release energy

Participants: All can play — teams of five to ten

Materials needed: One to three flip charts on easels, markers

Instructions:

- Small groups take one person at a time. That person yells out a string of adjectives that describes them — must be neutral to positive. For example, “I am a smart, persuasive, effective engineer.” Or, “I am a warm, loving, happy woman.” The group must demand the highest level of energy possible.
- When the group believes the speaker is sincere, they all [the speaker surrounded by their small group] run as one unit to the other side of the room and write quickly on a flip chart what they said and sign their names.
- The group then takes the next person in the group, repeats the action, and continues until everyone has completed the process. The two critical factors of this game are speed and energy — not accuracy.
- These ‘contracts’ are then presented to each person at a follow-up meeting and can be hung in their cubicles/offices to remind the world of who they are.

Desired outcome: Fun, revealing, and good physical exercise.

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 26. Time Out

Time: Takes 3 seconds

Purpose: Reverse a bad attitude

Participants: Anyone at any time

Materials needed: None

Instructions: If anyone within hearing says something negative, you make a time-out signal with your hands. But you must be sensitive to the other person's problems by smiling broadly while doing it.

Desired outcome: A simple but effective way to keep conversations positive.

## 27. Hula Hoop Fortune

Time: Less than a minute

Purpose: Stimulate creativity

Participants: All can play

Materials needed: Paper and pens

Instructions: Pretend you have just inherited a warehouse full of hula hoops. In 30 seconds, write what you would do with them. Share ideas when done. Now turn to the 'real' problem you're trying to solve.

Desired outcome: Breaks up tension and blocked thinking

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 28. Whaddya Know?

Time: A few seconds

Purpose: Reinforce knowledge, liven up a boring meeting

Participants: Any number can play — one at a time

Materials needed: List of questions

Instructions:

Bring a list of ten questions to a meeting. They can be questions about your business, the people you serve, your products — things your team should know but nothing too easy.

Without warning, pop a question to the group or direct it to one individual. Every correct answer gets a candy bar or some other small reward.

Desired outcome: Employees learn more about the business they are in — and meetings take on a little mystery.

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 29. Wear Your Attitude

Time: A few seconds

Purpose: Encourages all to be conscious of attitudes they are displaying

Participants: Everyone can play

Materials needed: Attitude buttons

Instructions:

Have buttons or laminated cards with a variety of attitudes on them; such as happy, angry, friendly, generous, sad, worried, excellent, etc. As each person enters work, allow them to pick the attitude they would like to display. People who pick unattractive ones can be avoided and the pleasant ones will get all the smiles, encouragement, and positive attention.

Anyone can change their 'button attitude' at any time.

Desired outcome: Bring awareness about how transparent our moods are and what we get as a result.

# 30 Team-Building Games, Activities, and Ideas, continued

## 30. Purpose Mingle

Time: One minute

Purpose: Focus participants before the meeting begins

Participants: Everyone attending the meeting

Materials needed: None

Instructions:

Before the meeting begins, everyone must stand up and tell as many others as they can in one minute what they hope to contribute to the meeting.

For best results, offer a simple prize for the most people contacted and a bigger prize for the most generous contribution expressed.

Desired outcome: Allows players to think about what they will give to a meeting rather than what they will get. Encourages participation from the start.