

# Team/Group Activities

## What am I doing and why?

**Icebreakers** are exercises designed to get a group to warm up, to get to know one another, to learn about each other, and to make people comfortable with the group, whether they are newcomers or established members. Some take a little prep time – props, proper space, dividing into groups beforehand. (Keep in mind that some energizers can be used as icebreakers.)

**Energizers** are used to get a group moving, give a break from long periods of sitting down, and excite a group about the next portion of a program. Use them in small doses to rejuvenate a group after lunch or first thing in the morning.

**Teambuilders** are exercises designed for groups to work through together, for the purpose of building cohesiveness, raising issues in the group, and posing challenges to the team. They generally take longer than icebreakers and energizers, because of the planning, thought, and execution of the task. Facilitators should choose teambuilders that are challenging, but not necessarily impossible, for a group to perform, although there is value in processing a "failed" teambuilder.

-- Be mindful of the group dynamics and never force a person to participate. Make sure to allow time for proper warm-ups and cool-downs so that nobody gets injured. Group stretching can be a great ice breaker – go around the circle and have each member lead a different stretch.

## Ice Breakers:

**Name Juggle:** Standing in a circle, one person begins by tossing a beanbag or stuffed animal to someone else, saying, "Hi, (name of person)". Catcher says, "thanks, (name of tosser)" and repeats by tossing to someone else. Names must be said each time item is tossed or caught. Can get 3-4 items in play at once.

**Blanket Down:** group divides into two teams, each crouching on one side of raised blanket (like wall between). One person from each team moves close to blanket, and when blanket is lowered, first person to say name of person opposite "wins" that person onto winner's team. Object is to get everyone on one side.

**Human Bingo:** make up bingo sheet of 25 boxes. You can only get someone to sign in one box. Boxes say things like "find someone who played professional tennis", "locate someone who has three or more siblings", "find someone who has started a CTA", etc. Bingo can be five boxes across or whole sheet.

**Geography Line-Up:** group must line up in order by how far each person traveled to come to workshop, then go around and introduce name and where from.

**Comic Strip Chaos:** cut four-panel comic strips into individual panels and drop into paper bag. All participants get one panel and must locate other three with adjoining panels. Those four introduce in small group. (Can be used for dividing large group into fours).

**Beach Ball Toss:** beach ball is pre-divided into questions. Group tosses around circle, introducing name and answering question where pinky hits on circle (can choose which one to answer).

**BLOB TAG:** This is a great game to play with groups. First establish the boundaries and pick one person who wants to be "it." This person is the beginning of the "blob." That person now chases people and everyone that he/she tags grabs onto the person that is "it" (grab their hand or shirt). As more and more people are tagged, the blob will get bigger and bigger (you can split it into smaller "blobs" if you wish). Obviously, the last person to be tagged is the winner.

**CLOTHES PIN TAG:** Give each player four clothespins. Each player tries to get rid of their pins by attaching them to the other players' clothing. A player's four pins must end up on four separate players.

**JOLLY GREEN GIANT:** This game is very similar to Sharks and Minnows. Two lines need to be established about forty yards apart. Everyone starts from behind one of the lines. Two group members are chosen to be giants. The giants stand between the lines. When the giants say, "Jolly Green Giant," the rest of the group runs to the other line trying to avoid being tagged. If a group member gets tagged, they become sprouts. Sprouts go down on their knees, and they can tag others with their **hands**, but they cannot move from their permanent position. The giants continue repeating "Jolly Green Giant," when the remaining are at the appropriate end. The last two to avoid being tagged become the giants in the next game.

## Energizers:

**What are you doing?:** Group in a circle. First person starts by miming action (ex: brushing teeth). Person to left asks, "what are you doing?" and first person answers with another action/activity (ex: climbing a ladder). Person to left must then act out climbing ladder, while person to their left asks, "What are you doing?" No one stops miming activity until everyone in circle is doing some activity/action.

**Jimmy Paul** - Excellent warm-up. Get everyone in a circle. We are going to establish a rhythm, by saying all together, "Jimmy Jimmy Paul Jimmy Paul J'Paul." Keep repeating this.

One person starts making a gesture to this rhythm, say, tapping your head with you left hand. When the sentence is repeated, the player next to her takes over this gesture, while the first one starts a completely different new gesture. Third time the sentence is done, player three does the first gesture, player two does the second gesture and player one invents a new one again. And so on.

This is also a concentration game, though it's not really difficult. All one has to do is watch the previous player, and next time, take over her gesture. When you're watching what everyone else is doing you're going to get lost though. (You can also play this as an elimination game, though it might take a while.)

**Clothespin Samurai:** Get the group in a circle with one person in the middle who is blindfolded and holding a "sword" (inflatable or foam). Middle person has several clothespins attached to clothing (back, arms, legs, shoes, etc.). Group members must remove pins without getting whacked by sword. If whacked three times, you're out.

**Heads-up:** Group in circle, one person in middle who calls "heads down". Everyone bows heads. When middle person says, "heads up", everyone looks up and at anyone else in circle. If any pair makes direct eye contact, they must swap places, with middle person trying to get into one of the places. Leftover person becomes new middle person.

Variation of heads-up is Screamer. Stand in circle and have facilitator say, "Sneak a peak" and if two people make eye contact, they must scream and drop to the floor dead – the more dramatic the elimination, the better.

**Partner Tag:** in twos, partners link arms. One pair starts as "it" and separates, with one of the two chasing the other. Everyone else in pairs just walks around. Person being chased is "safe" when he/she link arms with anyone, but whoever is on other side of newly linked person is now solo and can be tagged by chaser.

New person being chased becomes safe by linking with anyone he/she chooses, forcing someone else to unlink and become chased.

**Earthquake and Eviction:** one person alone to start, rest of group in threesomes, with two people making house of hands and one person standing underneath. Lone person calls either "eviction", in which everyone in a house must leave and find new one, or "earthquake", in which all houses collapse and everyone must form new threesomes of house and resident. Either way, lone person tries to get into one of the threesomes, so person left over becomes new "caller".

**Pulse Race:** in two lines, holding hands. Everyone has eyes closed except leader of each line. A beach ball or other object is placed at opposite end of lines from leaders. Facilitator stands by leaders and flips a coin. If tails, do nothing. If heads, leaders start pulse race by squeezing hand of person next to them, which sets off chain reaction. When last person in line feels hand squeezed, he/she may open eyes and grab for beach ball. Whichever team gets ball first each round gets a point. After each round, leader goes to end of line.

**TOE FENCING:** Have participants find a partner and face each other, holding hands. They then try to tap the tops of each other's toes with their own. When an individual scores three "hits," it is time to switch to a new partner. Beware! This is NOT toe STOMPING, so make sure players understand not to be too rough in their tapping. Hint: It is helpful to have players be "equally armed" (i.e. shoes and shoes, sandals and sandals, or socks and socks).

**WIZARDS AND GELFLINGS:** The leader will begin by choosing two "Wizards." The wizards will be doing the chasing. The gelflings will be running from the wizards. Once a gelfling has been tagged by a wizard, the gelfling must freeze, and begin sending out a distress signal. The distress signal is performed by making a fist with the thumb sticking up and pounding on the palm of the other hand. At the same, the frozen gelflings will yell in a high pitch voice, "HELP ME! HELP ME!...." At this time, two unfrozen gelflings will run to their frozen buddy's side and make a bridge with their hands. Once their hands are locked, they will keep their hands locked and bring their locked hands from above the frozen gelfling's head to the side of the frozen gelfling. At the same time, they will say, "Go free little gelfling, go free little gelfling, go free little gelfling (say three times)." The once frozen gelfling can continue playing. Note: When any gelfling is helping free another, they cannot be tagged.

**SHOE FACTORY:** Have the group stand in a large circle shoulder to shoulder. Then have everyone remove their shoes and put them in the center. After the group has formed a pile with their shoes, the leader has everyone choose two different shoes other than their own. They should put them on their feet

(halfway if they are too small). The group then needs to successfully match the shoes and put them in proper pairs by standing next to the individual wearing the other shoe. This will probably result in a tangled mess - and lots of giggles!

**IS MRS. MUMBLE HOME?:** The group will sit in a circle formation. One person will start by turning to the person next to them and say, "Is Mrs. Mumble home?" To which the person replies, "Who?" Then the first person says, "Mrs. Mumble." To which the second person replies, "I don't know, let me ask my neighbor." The conversation continues around the circle. The object of the game is to get the conversation moving fast without the two conversationalists showing their teeth. NOTE: To make it more difficult, send the message in opposite directions.

## Teambuilders:

**Jump-rope:** using a standard climbing rope (20 feet min.), can have either whole group of participants jump together (lined up along rope) or go through one at a time, without skipping beat.

**Level:** group of 10-15 divide into two lines, facing each other. Hold index fingers straight out across, so intersecting with person across. Tent pole is laid across "ladder" of outstretched fingers. Participants may not curl fingers over. With entire group keeping both fingers on pole, object is to lower to ground. At all times, everyone must have two fingers on the pole.

**Silent Birthday Line-Up:** without talking, entire group must get in order by month and day.

**Blind Count Off:** group is in circle with backs to one another. Group must count as high as possible out loud, with only person saying a number at a time. There can be no planning, and no one can speak again until everyone has spoken at least once (i.e., if 10 people in your group, person who says "1" can't speak again until "11" at earliest).

**Paper Bag Notes:** each group member puts name on paper bag. Each participant writes notes to any or all other participants expressing appreciation for something done or complimenting on something, to be placed in bag.

**SLAPS:** The group begins by lying on their stomach in a circle with their heads facing the middle of the circle. Every participant's right arm goes underneath the left arm of person to their right. The left arm should be over the right arm of the

person on the left. One person will be designated to start by slapping the ground once with one of their hands. The person who's hand is to the right will do the same and so on counterclockwise. If someone decides to slap the ground twice, the direction will reverse. If a hand messes up by hesitating longer than two seconds, slaps prematurely or out of order, that hand is removed from the game. Once a player has removed both of his/her hands, they are out of the game until the next game. When there are only two people remaining, the game has ended. NOTE: This is a great cool down activity.

**HA!:** Have the group lie on the ground or floor. Position each to lie their head on another's tummy. One of the end people will start. The one that starts say one "HA!" The person that has his/her head on their tummy goes next and says, "HA HA!" With each person, add one "HA!" If there are 30 people, then the last person should say 30 "HA's!" (Keep in mind that it's best to have girls lay on girl stomachs, and boys on boy stomachs.)

**HAGOO:** Separate the group into two even groups and have them stand in two separate lines (shoulder to shoulder) facing the opposite group. The two groups should be about three or four feet apart. The players at the opposite ends of each line are opponents. They will step out of the lines, so they are facing each other and looking down the middle of the two rows (like an old cowboy shoot-off). They will both say, "Hagoo" and start to walk down the row toward each other. They must not break eye contact and the object is to get to the opposite end of the line without laughing or smiling. When the players pass each other, they must continue to maintain eye contact. If a person does break eye contact, laughs, or smiles, they then must join the end of the line of the opposing team. The teams can do or say any silly things to make the opposing player crack up, but they must be careful not to make their own player lose concentration. The teams may NOT touch another player. This process will continue until everyone has had a turn. The team with the most players at the conclusion of the game, wins.

**BACK TO BACK:** Every group member must find a partner of approximately equal height and weight, if possible. The partners will lock arms with their backs to one another. With arms remaining locked at all times, the partners will sit down on the ground, kick their legs out straight, and try to stand back up. Then groups of four will try the same thing. Then groups of eight, sixteen, and eventually, the entire group together. This is the perfect activity to begin a trust sequence.

**HUMAN KNOT:** The group starts out in one or two tight circles. Everyone in the group reaches across the circle with their right hand to grab another group member's right hand. The group then reaches in with their left hand to grab a different group member's left hand. The object is to untangle the group without letting go of hands until a circle is formed. If the group is having extreme difficulty, you can administer "knot first-aid" and break one set of tangled hands (with group consensus), otherwise group members may not let go at any time. You may have to decide as a group that the knot is not solvable, after prolonged attempt. NOTE: Can have group do without talking if they are advanced enough.

**MACHINE GAME:** The object of this game is to create a machine out of a group of people (i.e. ceiling fan, hot air balloon, watch, etc.). You might want to split your group into two or three smaller groups. Each person is required to be accountable for one noise and one motion of the machine. The group members should then put their motions and sounds together to create the machine. Give each group about 5 minutes to work together and prepare, and then have the groups present to everyone. Ask the other groups to guess what machine the group is.

**BIRTHDAY LINE:** Explain to the group that this is a nonverbal exercise. The group is to form a single straight line, according to birthdays. For example, persons with January birthdays will be at the beginning of the line, earliest January dates first followed in order by later dates. The line progresses by months and days with December birthdays at the end. Persons with the same birthday share the same place in line. You must communicate nonverbally (no lip-reading or spelling in the dirt allowed). When the line is completed, each person will shout out his/her birthday, beginning in January.

**HEIGHT LINE:** Ask participants to close their eyes (if they feel comfortable). Without opening their eyes, the group is asked to arrange themselves by height in a straight line. They may choose to arrange by feeling height or some say their height out loud. The only restriction is that they may not open their eyes.

**Lap-Sit:** Stand shoulder to shoulder in a circle. Everyone turns to the right and slowly sits down on the lap of the person behind them. Hint: Start out standing close together.

**Trust walk:** Set a starting line with 20 yards or so to the finish line. In open area area put objects (chairs, people, etc.) Each team member has to go (one at a time) from starting line to finish line without touching any objects in open area. They go through this open area with eyes closed (since this is about trust we need to trust them to keep eyes closed). Obviously the more objects tight

together in the open area the greater the difficulty. The navigation through this is there is a caller for each team member as he/she goes through open area. To generate more teamwork each team member should be the caller for one team member going through the open area. You could designate the caller being the individual that just completed the walk across (with the exception of the first person)

**Lake of Fire:** Set a starting line with 20 yards or so to the finish line. The open area can only be walked through once (either forward to the finish or back to the start) by each team member. The objective is to get everyone past the finish line without losing anyone in the fire (the open area). The person walking through the fire each time is protected ("magic shoes"). They are allowed to discuss before they start and throughout the teambuilder. This is a good teambuilder for teams with different sizes. In order for you to succeed this individuals carrying people across (that is really the only way to do it) will normally have to carry 2 people across. One of those individuals that have been carried (lighter person) will have to walk back across to the start and use their "magic shoes" to get someone else to carry people across. Another individual will carry again but that will also include the person that came back with the "magic shoes". In general it takes people carrying 2 across everytime for it to work. If someone does one someone will probably have to carry 3. This is a gender specific game. People become creative in carrying individuals. You can use something like a cup of water being carried instead of "magic shoes". From a spiritual perspective this shows the body of Christ working so that no one will perish. In this teambuilder someone often touches or falls in the open area and this person is basically "dead" Many times this is because of not paying attention and lack of focus and here is where we challenge not to "lose" anyone to the fire.

**Hula Hoop Suspension:** Find Two trees (poles) objects close together to suspend a hula hoop from with string. The Hula Hoop should be at least high enough to prevent anyone from just stepping through the hoop to the other side. The team starts out on the same side and everyone has to go through the hoop and end on the other side. The string (suspending string) and the hula hoop can not be touched by any part of your body (tuck in shirts, loose clothes etc.). Sounds hard to get started. Some will try to get someone to jump through but I have yet to see that work without a hand or foot hitting the hula hoop. If your arms/legs touch the hula hoop/string you have to go the rest of the teambuilder without the arm/leg that touched the hula hoop/string. If your head or stomach/back touch you are out of the team builder. Again the objective is to get everyone through. General start is to lift someone lighter and have others with hands reaching across to the other side (not touching the hula hoop/string).

Again this is gender specific and also good for teams with different size people to show the value of each.

\*\* A normal complaint from a football player is that they are too big to get through the hula hoop. I did this at huddle leader training years back and we had a 350 pound offensive lineman from Georgia that made it through (incredible, I was shocked).

**Name game:** Good teambuilder to get to know people. Get a ball (tennis ball works well). Everyone says their name and passes the ball to someone else not next to them. To start they say their name and the name of they are passing it to. Example - (I am Tom and I am passing the ball to Del). Everyone gets the ball once and then it comes back to the first person (Tom). You need to remember the order of how you passed the ball and you will keep it the same way throughout the game. You now encourage the team to get faster and continue the task. One important rule is that the ball can only be held by one person at a time. Two people can not hold the ball at the same time and the ball has to be passed in the same order everytime finishing with the person who started touching the ball. Use a stopwatch from start to finish. The goal for the team is to see how fast they can get. They no longer have to say names (they do keep the same order for passing the ball), they don't have to stay in the same formation. The normal question during this is how fast is the fastest team you have done this with. My answer is you are trying to have your best time for yourself. You really can't compare with different dynamics of numbers and other factors. They keep going until they are satisfied that they have done their best.

\*\*\*\*A key to all these teambuilders is to have a time of discussion afterwards. Ask people in the idea sharing did they feel like a leader/follower (important to have both), etc.