

Ice Breakers

Engaging Activities

1. **Personal Scavenger Hunt.** Take 3 minutes and find the following items in your wallet or purse:

Something that:

- a) You've had a long time
- b) You're proud of
- c) Reveals a lot about you
- d) Reminds you of a fun time
- e) Concerns or worries you.

Have each person share the first item. Go around again on the second item, and again until you have gone through each one. Don't feel like you have to use the whole list because it may take too long.

2. **Two Truths & a Life.** Have each person make three statements about themselves: two true statements and one lie. (For example: "I've never broken a bone. I have five sisters. I was born in Costa Rica.") The group tries to guess which statement is the lie.

3. **You Write the Question.** Give each person a 3x5 card. You pick the topic and let the group members write the questions. (For example: you choose "friendship" as a topic, and they each write out a question for anyone in the group to answer about friendship. For example: "What do you value most in a friend?" or "Who was your best friend growing up and why?") Then pile all the cards face down in the middle of the group and let people draw.

4. **My Life in Pictures.** Set out a newspaper or magazine. Have each person tear out a picture, article or anything they think tells something about themselves. If there's enough time they can make a collage that tells more about themselves.

5. **Guess Who!** Give each person a piece of paper (or 3x5 card) and something to write with. Have them take a couple minutes and write down "my most embarrassing moment" (you could substitute the topic with "Few people realize that I. . ." or "Ten years from now, I will be. . ."). They should write it in such a way as to conceal their identity. But they should also make sure that it is true. Collect the cards and read them to the group one at a time. After each one, ask the group members to try and guess the identity of the writers. You can vote on each one to come up with the most likely candidate. The actual writer can then confess.

6. **Do You Hear What I Am Saying?** Give each member of your group an 8 ½-by-11-inch sheet of paper. Then:

a. Tell the participants the following: "We are going to play a game that will show us some important things about communication. Pick up your sheet of paper and hold it in front of you. Now, close your eyes and follow the directions I will give you—and no peeking! Participants cannot ask questions.

b. Give the following directions, carrying them out yourself with your own sheet of paper and pausing after each instruction to give the group time to comply:

"The first thing I want you to do is to fold your sheet of paper in half.
Now tear off the upper right-hand corner.

Fold it in half again and tear off the upper left hand corner of the sheet.

Fold it in half again. Now tear off the lower right-hand corner of the sheet."

c. After the tearing is complete, say something like “Now open your eyes, and let’s see what you have. If I did a good job of communicating and you did a good job of listening, all of our sheets should look the same!” Hold your sheet up for them to see. It is highly unlikely any sheet will match yours exactly.

d. Observe the differences. There will probably be much laughter.

e. Ask the group why no one’s paper matched yours. (You will Probably get responses like “You didn’t let us ask questions!” or “Your directions could be interpreted in different ways.”) This easily leads into a non-threatening discussion (if you choose to do so) on the need for two-way communication.

7. Complete the Circuit (for larger groups but could be adapted for smaller). Divide the participants up into small groups of about eight to ten people and have them arrange themselves in a circle. Give a tennis ball to one person and explain the rules of the game:

1. Each group is in competition with the other groups in the room. The group who can complete the most "circuits" in a given time will be the winner.
2. A completed circuit occurs when every person in the group has touched the tennis ball.
3. Only one person in the group can touch the tennis ball at one time (therefore the ball must be tossed rather than passed.)
4. If the ball ever touches the floor, then production must stop for one-minute.

Have the teams complete a few circuits to get comfortable and begin creating patterns that make them more efficient. The facilitator may want to stop the groups and get feedback as to how they are becoming more efficient and help them understand that this is a natural progression in life (business, work, family) as well. Have the groups continue to complete circuits, but as time progresses, the facilitator will add additional rules to make the process more difficult.

- **A Co-Worker calls in Sick**--Remove one of the group participants and tell the group that the participant called in sick. After they complete a few circuits, remind them that just because someone calls in sick, doesn't mean that that person's work doesn't need to be completed. (They will probably have just continued to complete the circuit just as they had before the person left.) Remind them that each of their last few circuits have had one fewer touches than before, so they do not count. Someone will have to pick up the slack for the absent person. After a new pattern is established, have the person come back.
- **Double Production**--Throw a second ball into the mix and tell the group that our client wants us to double production. Only one ball can be held by any one person at a time. You can add a third or even fourth ball later.
- **Diversity**--New federal legislation states that we need to include more minorities and women in our production line, so every other person who touches the ball must be either a woman or a minority. (You can put a ‘spiritual twist’ on this by stating that a church is ‘One Body’ there is no distinction based on race, gender, or social status so ‘minorities and women’ need to be included.)

Use your imagination to come up with other rules and be sure to have a prize for the winning team. At the end of the game, ask the group how did the game relate to things they face in the real-world world.

Conversation Starters

The following questions are open-ended questions, designed to allow people (even complete strangers) the non-threatening opportunity to get acquainted.

To add a little variety to the question-asking, try:

- a) printing one question per each person you expect to attend (choosing a different question for each person), write them on a sheet of paper and place them in a bowl, pass the bowl around the group and the question they draw is the question they answer.*
- b) having each participant answer the question without saying “ah,” or “um”. Add a consequence each time they use the “forbidden” words. For example, distribute M&M’s to each person before they share and have them return an M&M for each “ah” or “um”. OR, give each person a sour-type candy (sour patch kids; lemon heads) for each “ah” or “um”.*

Did you ever have a great teacher - in school or out? Tell me.

What would you be learning if you had time?

What would you have learned to do if you knew then what you know now? (eg. learn another language)

What would you teach, if you were asked?

Do you know any silly tricks? Coins, cards, face contortions? Show me.

If you could be an eyewitness to some event in history, which one?

If you could see any place in the world before human history - where would you go and why?

Answer an unasked question - something you know but nobody would ever ask about and you would never volunteer.

Pick another place/time in modern history - since 1700 - to live. Tell me why.

What was your best/worst moment this past week?

Book or movie you’ve read/seen more than once. Why?

What ability/talent do you not have but would like to have?

Ever thought about changing your appearance or identity? And . . . ?

If you were a spy, what would be your cover?

What was the best/worst summer job you ever had?

If you could know how your life will end but you still could not change it, would you want to know? Why or why not?

Have you ever experienced the kindness of a stranger? How?

If you had three wishes what would you wish for? why?

Which wild animal would you keep as a pet and why?

Name your favorite cartoon character. Why?

What is the strangest thing that you have eaten?

What would be your ideal job and why?

Name one unique thing about yourself.

Who is your hero? why?

What is the craziest thing you have ever done?

If you were an animal, what would you be and why?

What do you do to have fun?

Have you been told you look like someone famous? Who? (Have you ever met someone famous? Who?)

If you were to name one piece of clothing that describes you, what would you say?

If you could eliminate one thing from your daily schedule, what would it be and why?

If you turn into your partner for a day, what would you do?

If you were to write a book about yourself, what would you name it?

What is your pet peeve? Why?

Name one thing that drives you crazy.

What's the one thing, you can't live without?

As a child, what did you wish to become when you grew up?

What's your motto in life?

If you could have an unlimited storage of one thing, what would it be?

What's the funniest prank ever played on you?

What's the funniest prank you played on someone?

If given a chance, who would you like to be for a day?

Share one of the silliest status' you have put up on a social networking site.

How would you spend your life if you didn't have to work?

What is the hardest decision that you have ever taken in your life?

What is the most precious thing in your life?

Where are you from originally?

How many siblings do you have?

Which figure in history inspired you the most?

Which person in history has influenced you the most and why?

What are the most basic skills that you need in order to succeed in life?

If you could be invisible for a day, how would you spend the day?

If you could have a dinner party with four people you admire the most, who would you invite?

Which is your favorite restaurant?

What is an ultimate goal that you would like to accomplish?

Were you closer to your mother or father?

What is your favorite ice cream flavor?

What is your dream vacation destination?

Are you a cat person or a dog person?

If your place was on fire, what three things would you grab, before rushing out of it?

Who is your favorite singer?

What is one thing that you will never do, even under tremendous pressure?

Which is your favorite sport?

Are you a morning person or a night person?

If you could be granted three wishes, what would they be?

What is your favorite TV show?

What is your favorite food?

If you could choose your own name, what it would be?

Which is your favorite genre of movies ? (Comedy/ Romance/Suspense/Action/etc)

What do you do when you are feeling very sad or depressed?

Which is the best vacation you've ever had in your life?

Which is your most cherished childhood memory?

If given a complete freedom to start afresh, what profession would you choose and why?

What is your idea of fun?

If given a choice to skip work for a day, how would you spend the entire day?

If you were to change one thing about yourself, what would it be?

What do you appreciate most about your life?

Are you still in contact with any of your childhood friends?

If you were to get an opportunity to live anywhere in the world, which part of the world would you choose?