

OPENERS

Play-Doh's "What is It?"

When participants arrive for training, give each person a can of Play-Doh (it works best if there are chunks of different colors in each can). The group is then instructed to form something out of the dough that represents them in some way. Emphasize that the sculpture can be anything.

At each table, participants try to figure out what each sculpture represents. This process promotes intimacy between group members because it allows them to learn something unique about each other. Additionally, it provides an outlet for fidgety people, as they can play with their dough throughout the session.

Personalized License Plate

Give each participant a form designed in the likeness of a blank license plate, and ask them to create their own personalized plates, using no more than seven letters or numbers.

Ask participants to introduce themselves to the rest of the group using their new "vanity" plate as a starting point. Ask each person to give the group a few moments to "decode" the plate before explaining it, as some can be fairly tricky.

(Samples: SLSMN = salesman; WKG MOM = working mom; DADOV3 = dad of three; INVSTR = investor; H20SKER = water skier)

The Same Difference

Ask participants dealing with problem-solving to use their thinking skills on a new level by trying to find similarities between two completely unrelated objects - such as "a beaver's dam and a typewriter" or "customer service and groceries." The object of this exercise is to force attendees to view existing objects (and ultimately, problems that need to be solved) in a more creative fashion.

"Poker, Anyone?"

As participants enter the room, give each a poker chip with a "secret" word written on it and ask them not to share it with anyone. Once the whole group has gathered, explain the object of the activity is to meet as many people as possible. The incentive to do that is a prize awarded to the person who collects the most secret words.

To collect a word, a participant must say the word in normal conversation with the person who holds it. When the word is said, the owner of the secret word fesses up and shows the other person the poker chip with the word on it. Each person keeps track of his or her score. Choose words with a high probability of being part of a "getting to know you" conversation. The secret words remain active throughout the activity, so participants can run up a large score.

In group discussions, the poker chips should be shown only to the individual who says the secret word. Variations of the word do count.

Facts, Facts, Facts

Often introductions center on sharing a few personal details with the class. A handful of M&M candies can help.

When attendees arrive, greet them with a large bowl of the candies, inviting each to take some, but to save them until further instructions (with larger groups, ask them to go ahead and eat all but three of the M&Ms).

Each M&M color represents a category:

Green - family goals

Dark brown - professional background

Yellow - hobbies and interests

Orange - famous moment

Red - home town

Ask participants to share one fact about themselves for each M&M, according to the chart. They are free to eat their treats after introductions. This exercise can be customized by changing the categories to meet specific needs.

I'm In!

Hand out a blank piece of paper or a 3 x 5 card and ask each supervisor, manager, or vice-president to write his or her name and title on it. Then ask each of them to crumple it up, walk to the wastebasket in the back of the room and throw it in, with as much fanfare as they can muster.

The act symbolizes the level playing field in the classroom. It tends to lessen the ego factor, the need to appear omniscient, and it builds some immediate camaraderie.

Uniquenesses and Commonalities

Each group of five to seven is given a sheet of flip chart paper and several magic markers, preferably water based, such as Mr. Sketch™. Each group is instructed to draw a circle and to put the name of each participant on the outside of the circle.

The group is then to do a five minute interview looking for two things:

1. At least two things that are unique about each person; that is, they are the only person in the group that it is true for.

2. At least three to five things that the group has in common, that is true for everybody in the group.

Go for the *unusual* things. A common thing would be that we are all in this group, we are still at this meeting, etc. Those are boring. What we want to be is unusual, like everybody in this group is a chocoholic, everybody in the group has at least one brother and one sister, etc. The groups have five to seven minutes to do this.

They then have three minutes to pick a name for their group and add that and also to identify the most unusual thing about one person and the most unusual thing about the group that they have in common. Do several rounds going from table to table and sharing the most unique thing about one person and then go back around with the most unique thing the group has in common.

Alliterative Names: Getting Acquainted

Goals:

- I. To facilitate the getting-acquainted process in a small group.
- II. To promote self-disclosure in a new group.

Group Size: Eight to sixteen participants.

Time Required: Approximately one-half hour.

Physical Setting: A circle of chairs.

Process:

- I. All participants are seated in a circle, and the facilitator briefly discusses the goals of the activity, establishing the expectation that learning the names of group members can be fun.
- II. The facilitator directs that each participant is to select an adjective that begins with the same letter as his/her first name, e.g., Dandy Don, Judicial Jack, or Serious Sally.
- III. The participant seated to the right of the facilitator is instructed to say, "Hello, my name is ____ ____," using the alliterative name. The next person to the right then says, "Hello, may I present ____ ____, and my name is ____ ____." The third person presents the first two and himself, and so on, until the end. When the facilitator takes the last turn, presenting each of the participants (in order) and then himself. (When someone cannot remember a name, the group gives hints and any other help needed.)
- IV. The facilitator leads the group in debriefing the activity. Members may wish to ask questions of others about their adjectives. The facilitator can conduct a discussion of personal meanings of names, learning/forgetting names, and how individuals wish to be perceived during the group experience.

Variations:

- I. More than one adjective can be chosen, or adverb-adjective combinations can be permitted. (Examples: Energetic, Eager Ed; Terribly Tasky Trish.)
- II. Members can be instructed to make the introductions in any order, not just around the circle.
- III. Members can compare first impressions of each other and the adjectives chosen.

Daffodil: Getting Acquainted in Small Groups

Goals:

- I. To assemble the participants into small groups in a nonthreatening manner.
- II. To facilitate getting-acquainted by generating contact among the participants.

Group Size: Unlimited. Most successful with a minimum of 20 participants.

Time Required: Approximately 45 minutes. More than 35 participants require more time for Steps III and VI.

Materials:

A name tag for each participant. Prior to conducting the activity, the facilitator divides the name tags into groups of 4-6 each and assigns the common name of a different flower to each group. The following common names of flowers may be used to designate the groups: Daffodil, Petunia, Periwinkle, Hollyhock, Begonia, Geranium, Magnolia, and Camellia. The facilitator may choose other names to accommodate additional groups.

Using the participant roster, the facilitator assigns 4-6 participants to each group and fills out a name tag for each participant. To do this he/she writes the appropriate flower name on each tag within each group as the participant's *middle name*. For example, a participant names John Smith who is assigned to the Daffodil group will receive a name tag reading "John Daffodil Smith."

Physical Setting:

A room large enough to allow the participants to move around easily and to congregate in groups.

Process:

- II. As each participant arrives, he/she is given a name tag and is asked to wear it throughout the activity.

- II. The facilitator begins by making the following statement:
"Kurt Vonnegut wrote a book entitled *Slapstick*¹ in which one of the characters decides to run for President of the United States. A major part of his campaign involves the theme of loneliness. He says that the principal problem in our country is that most people feel lonely and isolated from others. Consequently, he promises that if he is elected, he will take immediate action to correct this situation by designating specific middle names for all citizens and having these names added to phone-book listings. All people in the country with the same assigned middle name will be considered cousins. Then, for example, when a person with the assigned middle name of 'Daffodil' travels or moves to another city or town, he/she can look in the local phone book for other people with the middle name of 'Daffodil,' visit these people, and get to know and trust them."

The facilitator states that as the participants look around the room, they, too, may be experiencing a feeling of isolation and that this feeling will be dealt with in much the same way as that suggested by the *Slapstick* candidate.

- III. The facilitator points out that each participant's name tag bears an assigned middle name, such as Daffodil. Each participant is instructed to stand up, walk around the room locating others with the same assigned middle name, and congregate with these people. (5 minutes)
- IV. After all groups have been formed, the facilitator asks the members of each group to be seated in a circle and to conduct their first "family reunion" by sharing information about their hobbies, recent positive or negative experiences, their career goals, or any other personal matters that they choose. (10 minutes)
- V. The members of each group are instructed to take turns discussing their feelings and behaviors at the beginning of the activity, during the previous step, and at the present moment. (10 minutes)
- VI. The facilitator reassembles the total group and elicits the participants' reactions to the activity by asking the following questions:
 1. What reactions did you experience while locating the members of your group? How did those reactions change after sharing information and feelings with your fellow group members?
 2. What did you notice about how you and the other members formed yourselves into a group? What does this process suggest to you about the members of your group?
 3. What can we conclude about making contact with others in small groups? What can we conclude about shared interests? What about feelings of comfort and discomfort?
 4. How can you use your experiences during this activity to enrich your personal and work life?

Variations:

- III. After Step VI the "family groups" may be reassembled for subsequent small-group activities.
- II. After Step VI the participants may be reassembled into their "family groups" for discussion and contracting with regard to applications of this learning experience.
- III. Names other than those of flowers (for example, signs of the zodiac) may be used. If the participants share a single profession, terms common to that profession may be used.
- IV. In Step IV the participants may be asked to share information about their job duties or personal values instead of their personal interests.

- V. If subsequent activities require that all of the participants know one another, more than one round of this activity may be conducted using different name tags with new groups.

Group Savings Bank: **An Introductory Experience**

Goals:

- I. To help the participants to become acquainted with one another.
- II. To develop the participants' readiness for involvement at the beginning of a group session.
- III. To provide the participants with an opportunity to experiment with abandoning old behaviors and/or adopting new behaviors.

Group Size: A maximum of 10 triads.

Time Required: Approximately 45 minutes.

Materials:

- I. Three large signs designated as Sign 1, Sign 2, and Sign 3, respectively, and printed with copy as follows:
Sign 1: Welcome. You are to work on your own to complete the first phase of this group session. Start now with Sign 2.
Sign 2: Think for a moment about two services offered by banks: the use of a safe-deposit box and the provision of loans.
Sign 3: This is the newly formed Group Savings Bank, which offers unique safe-deposit and loan services that will be of use to you. Pick up a copy of the handout entitled "Group Savings Bank Procedures" and follow the instructions provided.
- II. A copy of the Group Savings Bank Procedures for each participant.
- III. Masking tape with which to hang the signs.
- IV. A pencil for each participant.
- V. An envelope for each participant.
- VI. A number of index cards equivalent to approximately 10 times the number of participants.
- VII. A shoe box.

Physical Setting:

A room large enough to accommodate all participants as they complete their individual banking activities. Movable chairs should be provided for the participants. Sign 1 should be placed at

the entrance to the room, Sign 2 further into the room, and Sign 3 on the wall above a table holding the pencils, envelopes, index cards, and shoe box.

Process:

- I. As each participant arrives, he/she follows the written directions on the three signs and the procedures handout. The facilitator monitors and observes this process and answers questions as necessary. (15 minutes)
- II. After all of the participants have arrived and completed the introductory banking activities, the facilitator assembles the participants into triads and instructs the members of each triad to share the contents of their deposits, loans, and grants. (10 minutes)
- III. New triads are formed, and the members of each triad again share the results of their banking transactions. (10 minutes)
- IV. New triads are formed again, and Step III is repeated. (10 minutes)
- V. The facilitator directs the participants' attention to the rest of the session.

Variations:

- I. Between Steps IV and V, the facilitator may ask the participants to form groups on the basis of similar desired qualities or behaviors. Within these groups the participants contract for new behaviors.
- II. This activity maybe used at the beginning of an extended workshop. In this case the procedures handout should be altered to include the following paragraph:

“The bank will remain open during the entire workshop. If, at any time, you find it necessary either to make a withdrawal from your safe-deposit box or to take out a loan or grant in order to use a specific quality or behavior, you are welcome to return to the bank to do so. Similarly, you may make a deposit whenever you wish.”

The facilitator may also want to lead a total-group discussion between Steps IV and V by asking the following questions:

1. How did you feel when you deposited some of your characteristic qualities and behaviors? How did you feel when you assumed loans or grants?
2. From what you have heard about the qualities and behaviors deposited and assumed, what is your sense of the members of this group?

3. How can you help yourself to retain the qualities and behaviors that you desire for this workshop? How can you obtain help from the other members in this regard?

Intermittently throughout the workshop and at the closing, the participants share feedback with one another regarding their success at abandoning and adopting specific behaviors.

Group Savings Bank Procedures

The bank materials on this table include pencils, envelopes, index cards, and a shoe box. Write your name on the outside of one of the envelopes, which will serve as your safe-deposit box. It is to be stored at the bank in the shoe box.

Next, think of several different qualities or behaviors that you see as characteristic of yourself. If you would like to abandon one of these qualities or behaviors from time to time, write it on an index card and place it in your safe-deposit box. Use as many cards as you need for this purpose.

In addition, the bank will provide qualities or behaviors that you desire but do not already possess. Such a provision can be either a short-term loan or a permanent grant. To make use of this service, designate on an index card whether you want a loan or a grant and write the quality or behavior that you wish to assume; then keep the card. Again, use as many cards as you need for this purpose.

If you have any questions regarding bank services, direct them to your facilitator. After you have completed the tasks described in this handout, wait until the facilitator instructs you further.

Needs, Expectations, And Resources: *Beginning a Workshop*

Goals:

- I. To allow participants in a long-term training workshop to become acquainted with one another.
- II. To identify and clarify the needs, expectations, and resources of the group facilitator and the participants in a long-term training workshop.
- III. To establish a cooperative, nonthreatening climate in the workshop group.

Group Size: Five to fifteen dyads.

Time Required: One and one-half to two hours.

Materials:

- I. Two blank 3x5 index cards for each participant.
- II. A pencil for each participant.
- III. Newsprint and a felt-tipped marker.
- IV. Masking tape.

Physical Setting:

Space for each dyad to sit and conduct the interviewing phase without being disturbed by other dyads.

Process:

- I. The facilitator explains the goals of the activity and distributes one blank index card and a pencil to each participant.
- II. The participants are instructed to form dyads, preferably each with a person whom he/she does not know well, and to seat themselves so that the members of each dyad can converse without being distracted by the conversations of other dyads.
- III. The partners are instructed to interview each other - one at a time for approximately 3 minutes each - about their *learning needs from* and their *expectations of* the workshop. After each interview is concluded, the interviewer is to take a minute or two silently to record the most pertinent information that he/she can remember about the needs and expectations of the person who was interviewed, but not the person's name. The facilitator announces time segments (3 minutes, change roles, etc.) as the activity proceeds. (7 minutes)
- IV. The index cards are collected, and the participants are informed that each card will be read aloud and that if the information on the card is descriptive of any member of the group, that member is to stand up. If more than one member stands, the person who

wrote the description identifies the person about whom it was written. The member being described then states his/her name and occupation and briefly clarifies any errors in the information

read. Other members who have stood up add their names and any additional comments on the data that have been expressed. While this is occurring, the facilitator lists all major needs and expectations on newsprint and notes any duplications and any polarities. This list is posted where all can see it. (20-30 minutes)

- V. The facilitator's needs from the participants and expectations for learning outcomes from the workshop are posted on newsprint. (5 minutes)
- VI. The entire group reviews the list of participants needs and expectations, clarifies any items in question, and selects the most frequently mentioned items or those that the group decides are "priority" agendas. These are starred or posted on a new list. (5 minutes)
- VII. Discrepancies between the facilitator's list and the participants' list are clarified and negotiated. (5 minutes)
- VIII. The participants share any feelings about this part of the activity and agree to proceed to the next step. (5 minutes)
- IX. A blank 3x5 card is distributed to each participant, and the participants are directed to form discussion groups of 3-4 members each. These groups are given the task of discovering the resources that each of their members has brought to the workshop and of listing the resources that the group can offer to the workshop to facilitate its objectives. (10 minutes)
- X. The group members are directed to review their expectations of the workshop in light of the information they have received during the activity and to meet again in their groups of 3-4 to discuss their revised, clarified, expanded, or confirmed expectations. (10 minutes)
- XI. The groups then are directed to consider and discuss the concept of mutual cooperation in responding to the needs of the workshop community. (5 minutes)
- XII. Each member is requested to reflect silently for a few minutes on how he/she can best help the workshop community to achieve its goals by sharing resources and responding to the needs of others. (2-3 minutes)

Variations:

- I. If ongoing groups are to be used within the workshop design, the size and composition of the discussion groups can be adjusted to allow these groups to begin working during this activity.
- II. The activity can be divided into two segments (after Step VIII) and continued after a break or a meal.
- III. Depending on the nature of the workshop, the facilitator can participate in the initial

interview and all subsequent activities.

- IV. Step VII can be expanded to include strategies for meeting the expressed desires of the participant group through redesign, special-interest sessions, etc.

I Represent: A World Meeting

Goals:

- I. To facilitate the getting-acquainted process.
- II. To enable participants to express indirectly how they would like to be perceived.

Group Size: Twelve to twenty-four participants.

Time Required: One to one and one-half hours.

Materials:

- I. A blank self-stick name tag for each participant.
- II. A narrow felt-tipped marker for each participant.

Physical Setting:

A room large enough for participants to move about and converse with one another.

Process:

- I. The facilitator announces the first goal of the activity.
- II. Each participant is given a blank name tag and a felt-tipped marker.
- III. The facilitator asks each participant to select a country that he/she would like to represent at a world meeting and to write the name of that country on the name tag. Any country may be selected except the country in which the participant was born. Each participant is instructed to leave room on the name tag to write his/her own name and three more words.
- IV. After all participants have selected their countries, the facilitator asks each participant to write 2-3 words on the name tag to indicate why he/she would be a good representative of that country.
- V. Each participant is then asked to write his/her own first name on the name tag and to wear the tag throughout the rest of the activity.
- VI. The participants move about the room and ask one another questions about the personal importance or significance of the words on the name tags. (2 minutes per participant)
- VII. The facilitator reassembles the total group, explains the second goal of the activity, and leads a discussion on the following questions: (20 minutes)

1. What kinds of words are on the name tags?
2. What were the reasons given for the choice of words?
3. What connections can you make between the person's choice of words and the way that person wants to be perceived?
4. What conclusions can be drawn about self-presentation from this activity?
5. What changes would you like to make in your initial self-presentation?
6. What back-home benefits could this experience have?

Variations:

- IV. The participants can be divided into small groups for the conversations.
- II. Cities in the United States can be selected. The participants would be instructed to choose cities in which they were not born.
- III. Participants can be instructed to select individual countries or states that they have visited. Each participant then shares an experience that he/she had in the chosen country or state.