

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION

- Learn what motivates each volunteer and make your recognition appropriate to what he or she thinks is important.
- Give volunteers tasks in which they will be successful.
- Give volunteers whatever training is necessary to perform well.
- Thank volunteers genuinely and appropriately.
- Give volunteers feedback.
- Invite volunteers to participate in decision making.
- Promote volunteers to other roles that take better advantage of their talents.
- Ask volunteers for their feedback.
- Ask volunteers to recruit others.
- Make sure the volunteers are doing work that is meaningful to them and the community.
- Let the volunteers know about the outcomes from the program.
- Never forget the power of a simple thank you, oral or written."

Ball Toss / Group Juggle

Icebreaker for Day 2 of a multi-day training session. Good for a group of at least 12 and up to 30 where some people know each other, but the whole group is still getting acquainted:

Have 3 tennis balls handy. Get the group in a circle.

Facilitator tosses 1 ball to someone in the group whose name they know saying their name and then the other person's name (e.g. Sandy to John). John (person who receives the ball) tosses ball to someone whose name he knows (e.g. John to Phil). Phil tosses to someone whose name he knows and so on, saying both names all the way around the circle. The ball is tossed to each person one time only until everyone in the circle gets it and all names have been said.

THEN, facilitator starts again and tosses the balls to the same person (Sandy to John to Phil, etc.) only this time with 2 balls in succession (not at the same time) saying both names, both times. Balls get tossed to the same people they were originally tossed to; first one ball, then the next, all the way around the circle stopping when they get back to the facilitator.

THEN, facilitator starts again only with all three balls this time. Saying names each time, all three balls get tossed, in succession, in the same order until they get back to the facilitator.

By the time there are three balls going, it gets pretty chaotic and fun. By now all names have been said so many times everyone should have a pretty good idea of who's who and they are pretty warmed up and ready to go. If (I should say, when) someone drops a ball, simply give them a chance to chase it down and just pick up where you left off--no need to start again.

Two Truths & a Lie

Objectives:

To allow people 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.

To begin to facilitate the process of people exposing something of themselves and their ideas to a group.

But most of all -- to have some FUN!

Design:

In groups of three to eight (depending on how much time you want to devote to this exercise) have individuals take turns making three statements about themselves -- two which are true; one that is a lie.

After an individual makes their statements, the other folks in the group discuss among themselves which seem most plausible and what is most likely to be the lie.

Once they come to some sort of consensus, the individual who made the statements not only tells which is the "lie" but also provides a bit more background about the "truths" as well as what made them think folks might have thought the "lie" was a "truth."

A group of three can easily do this in less than 10 minutes. A group of eight can take from 20 to 30 minutes.

Comments:

This game works well with groups that are new to one another. It is often surprising how relative strangers can instinctively pick up the nuances between truths and lies based on very little information.

The game also works well with groups that have been together awhile and Think they know a lot about each other.

The first person or two asked to make statements can find it pretty difficult, but after a couple of folks have taken a turn others typically find it easier to do. One way to help alleviate this and make the process run smoother is to alert a couple of people beforehand to begin thinking so that they can be somewhat more ready to volunteer. This type of a "plant" can make it much easier for folks who come later because they won't see someone "struggle" and get "uptight" about their ability to "perform." Another way to get around the difficulty the "first" folks have is to start it yourself.

This exercise can also be done "electronically" with groups that aren't physically located together, but have been "assembled" to work together on some task -- for example a cross-functional committee or a committee of a national association that has folks from across the country participating. It takes a little longer -- a group of seven I once participated in took a month of calendar time to do an e-mail version of this -- but it provided the same benefits.

All My Neighbors #1

You need an odd number of people for this game that is a distant cousin to musical chairs.

Everyone begins by sitting on chairs in a circle with the facilitator standing in the middle. Explain that the person in the middle needs to find some "neighbors." To do so, they'll make a true statement about themselves and hope that it will be true for others. Everyone that "identifies" with the statement has to then stand up and find an empty chair. The person in the center is also looking for a chair, so once again someone will be without a chair, and they get to go to the middle and find some "neighbors."

The facilitator then begins with something like: "All my neighbors wearing blue jeans." At this, everyone who is wearing jeans should jump out of their seats and look for an empty seat. The odd person out goes to the middle

This game can easily last ten to fifteen minutes.

All My Neighbors #2 (for more "sedate" groups)

The group is in a circle, standing up. The facilitator is standing in the middle of the circle. Explain that you are going to make a variety of statements and you'd like everyone who "identifies" with the statement to join you in the center of the circle for "high fives."

The facilitator then begins: "All my neighbors wearing white underwear." At this, everyone who is wearing white underwear should join the facilitator in the middle of the circle for a high five. Folks then return to their seats.

The facilitator then goes on through 10 to 15 other such statements. Example can include:

All my neighbors who:

- are wearing socks
- have an older sibling
- were born in a month without an R in it
- whose last digit of their social security number is odd
- haven't been caught speeding in a year
- like Frosted Flakes
- don't eat meat
- were engaged to be married more than once
- remember the name of Yogi Bear's sidekick
- have watched Gone With the Wind in one sitting
- know how to tie a bow tie
- play the piano (even a little bit)
- have been to a Grateful Dead concert
- have voted with an absentee ballot

Figure on ten minutes tops for this activity.

Blob Tag

It's helpful to have a pretty large, open space for this energizer. The facilitator is it. When she or he tags someone they lock arms and then jointly attempt to tag someone else. As each person is tagged they lock arms with those who are already it. The game is over when the last person is "captured." Some boundaries must be set up for this activity to keep folks from roaming too far afield. This game typically takes less than 10 minutes to complete.

Honey I Love You

In this game everyone is sitting in a circle. As the facilitator you will normally go first. The object is to identify someone in the circle, go up to them, and say "Honey, I love you, but I just can't make you laugh" with the express purpose of making them laugh. The person you are saying this to has to look at you and work at keeping a straight face. If after three tries at getting them to laugh you haven't succeeded, pick another target. If they laugh or even smile they move into the middle of the circle and select a target. You can do just about anything to get someone to laugh except touch them. Funny faces, strange voices, props, etc. are all fair game. Once a person has been made to laugh, they can no longer be a target. The game goes on until the last person either breaks down and laughs or withstands the final three attempts at getting them to laugh. Note that depending on the size of the group and the ability of folks to keep a poker face, this is often not a quick game. Nevertheless, its always a lot of fun.

Hospital Tag

In this activity everyone is "it". The objective is to keep from being "tagged" by another player, but to tag as many other people as possible. The first time you are tagged you have to put a hand on where you were tagged - for instance, if you are tagged on the top of the head you then have to play with one hand on top of your head. You can then resume attempting to tag others. The next time you are tagged you have to put your other hand where you are tagged that time. The third time you are tagged you're dead (sit down to signify this) and can no longer attempt to tag other people.

It helps to have a fairly large, open space for this activity, but it normally helps to set up some boundaries to keep folks from roaming too far afield. Depending on people's creative "tagging" abilities this can get pretty interesting. It shouldn't take more than ten minutes for this energizer to run its course.

Person-to-Person

There has to be an odd number of people for this activity to work. The facilitator stands in the midst of the group and asks everyone else to pick a partner. Explain that you'll give them from two to five commands that they must perform as a pair. The last command is always "Person-to-person" and everyone, including the person giving the commands, will have to scramble to find a new partner. The odd person out gets to go into the middle of the group and provide the next set of commands.

The game begins with the person in the center (initially the facilitator) giving instructions such as: "Elbow to elbow" and the pairs must put an elbow to elbow. The facilitator can then say: "Ear to ear" and the pairs then have to put an ear to an ear, as well as keeping the elbow to elbow. Then the facilitator says "Person-to-person," everyone finds a new partner, and you go on to the next person calling out commands. Depending on the group, this can get pretty interesting!

Stop the game when you feel like it.

Secret Agent

In this game its best to have a pretty good sized, open area. Have folks begin by standing around in a circle. Tell them that there is someone in the group out to get them -- a "secret agent" -- and only you know who they are. Each individual also has a "bodyguard" who only they know about.

Then, quietly, without pointing, and without telling anyone, each individual identifies to themselves who their "secret agent" is for this game. After everyone seems to have made a selection, have them then select another individual -- quietly, without pointing, and without telling anyone -- who will serve as their "bodyguard" for the activity.

After everyone has made their selections let them know that they are now free to move around, but they must keep their "bodyguard" between themselves and their "secret agent" at all times. This can get pretty funny and interesting as people move about. It often turns into utter chaos because of the odd combinations of "bodyguards" and "secret agents."

Stop the game when you feel like its over.

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Introduce Your Partner

Pair off the audience. Have the teams interview one another. Then have each take a turn introducing the other to the audience at large.

You can prepare questions ahead of time or provide just general guidelines for the interview.

Take off from "...and the cheese stands alone"

This exercise should have a very skilled facilitator - emotions can run high. Used by Sharon Dittman on occasion in AIDS training. Works well with co-workers who know each other well.

Have everyone stand in a circle. Ask a series of questions. Start out with simple, common questions, e.g. all who like red enter into the middle. Build up to tough questions: All vegetarians in the middle. All white people in the middle. All gay people, etc.

The facilitator needs to recognize that these are risky areas but the point is to give people a chance to see what it is like to be alone or to be on the outside