

Leadership Category: Team Development

Overview and Purpose

Simple Thing to Do

Games and Icebreakers

The primary goal for an icebreaker is the development of an environment which is anxiety-reducing and which allows individuals to "break the ice" or get acquainted by having fun. Icebreakers are intended to be tension-reducing rather than providing deeply personal encounters on a direct interaction basis. Icebreaker exercises should be used with any group that appears to be extremely anxious in the initial stage of development (i.e., the first meeting of clubs, program boards, etc). Icebreakers should help to provide a less threatening environment.

Purpose

Icebreakers can...

- Be excellent devices to help people feel more comfortable with themselves and with others and feel more "at home" in a group;
- Break up the "cliques," invite people to form random groupings, and help individuals meet others in non-threatening and fun ways;
- Be used to set a tone for the time a group will be together, encourage people to feel "safe," and hopefully evoke lots of laughter in releasing tension; and
- Make way for more meaningful interaction and relationships during the life of the group.

Activities

Icebreaker Activities

Purpose: To help your organization's members feel more comfortable and part of the group.

1. Human Scavenger Hunt

Ask members of your organization to find someone who:

- is a graduate student
- owns cross-country skis
- has been to Africa
- wears contact lenses

2. Favorite Possession

Members describe their favorite item in their room or home and why.

3. Name Games

Members explain how they got their names or tell the group a hobby; members try to memorize information as you go around group. Or, tell a personality characteristic of yours that begins with the first letter of your name. Make up your own!

Getting Acquainted Exercises

Purpose: Each of the exercises listed below give your members the opportunity to get acquainted with each other and to learn each other's commonalities and differences.

1. Dyads

Materials needed: A copy of the following questions for each team of members.

Time needed: 10 minutes for each member to interview the other; 5 minutes for each team to share the information about their partner to the rest of the organization. Attributed to the AntLeader Leadership Series. Special thanks to the Dean of Students Office at U.C. Irvine

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Members get into groups of two and find out information about each other.

- Who do you think is the most important person who has lived in the past 100 years?
- What is the title of the last book you read?
- If you could be any animal other than human, what would you be?
- If you could travel to any place in the world, where would you go?
- What is your favorite sport?
- One adjective to describe me is . . .
- The emotion I find most difficult to control is . . .
- If a movie were made of your life, which actor/actress would you want cast to play you?

2. Crest or Coat of Arms

Materials needed: Paper and crayons or markers

Time needed: 10 minutes for each member to create his/her coat of arms and 1 minute per member to share his/her coat of arms.

Members create their own "Coat of Arms" by filling in information about themselves using words or drawings. Information can include:

- Hobbies
- Favorite emotion
- Hometown
- Family members
- Major five- or ten-year goals
- Favorite food
- Favorite animal
- Favorite hang-out

3. Forced Choice

Materials needed: Your organization's members

Time needed: 10 minutes

Ask members to stand in the middle of the room and have them move to either side to indicate their choice:

More of a saver or a spender?

More like New York or Colorado?

More yes or no?

More like a student or a teacher?

More here or there?

More religious or non-religious?

More like the present or the future? More like a file cabinet or a toy chest? More intuitive or rational?

More like a tortoise or a hare?

More like a roller blade or a pogo stick? More like a gourmet meal or fast food?

After you have concluded with this activity, ask your members what this activity taught them, what they learned about each other, and what surprised them.

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