

1 GETTING ACQUAINTED _____

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1**Alphabetical Circle: A Fun Way to Learn Names and a Lot More****Introductory Remarks**

This activity gives a unique twist to traditional introductions. Participants are asked to form a circle and then rearrange themselves in alphabetical order by first names. One challenge is that they must remove any name badges and use only sign language. The second is that they are not told in which direction the alphabetical order goes—clockwise or counterclockwise. It's a fun activity with many interesting debriefing possibilities.

Objectives

- To experience a novel way for people to get to know each others' names.
- To begin training with a challenging task.

Group Size: eight to eighteen participants

Time Required: 10 minutes

Materials: none

Activity Flow

1. Ask participants to form a circle. Ask them to remove any name badges. Quickly, have each participant say the first name he or she wants to use during the training, starting with the person to your right or left. (Include yourself in the introductions.)

2. Next, ask participants to rearrange themselves alphabetically without talking. Any other nonverbal strategies are allowed. If asked for the direction of the circle (clockwise or counterclockwise), tell the group they can choose (without using words).
3. As the newly arranged circle emerges, observe what is happening (don't play an active role). Are some people lining up clockwise while others are counterclockwise? Which participants are taking leadership roles? Which participants are passive?
4. When the group seems to be finished, have each person say his or her name in alphabetical order. If they discover that the group has used two ways of lining up or if a person is out of place, let participants rearrange themselves.
5. Go around the group, asking each person to say his or her name and one unusual fact about him- or herself.
6. Debrief the activity with the following questions:
 - How difficult was it to communicate your first initial without talking?
 - (If appropriate) When did you realize that the circle was formed in two different ways?
 - What did you do to assist the group to be successful?
 - Was there a conflict among "leaders"?

Other Options

1. Have each participant give nonverbal signals conveying his or her first name. Let other participants take guesses until correct.
2. As participants enter the room, have them sign in alphabetically. They can erase another person's name and reenter it somewhere else.

2 Group Résumé: Who We Are Collectively

Introductory Remarks

Résumés typically describe an individual's accomplishments. A group résumé is a fun way to help participants become acquainted or do some team building with a training group whose members already know one another. This activity can be especially effective if the résumé is geared to the subject matter of the training.

Objectives

- To learn information about the participants in a group.
- To build connections among participants.

Group Size: any

Time Required: 10 minutes per group to prepare and another 5 minutes per group to present

Materials

- Newsprint and markers

Activity Flow

1. Divide participants into subgroups of three to six members.
2. Tell the group members that they represent an incredible array of talents and experiences!

3. Suggest that one way to identify and brag about the group's resources is to compose a group résumé. (You may want to suggest a job or contract the group could be bidding for.)
4. Give the subgroups newsprint and markers to use in creating their résumés. The résumés should include any information that promotes the subgroup as a whole. The groups may choose to include any of the following information:
 - Educational background
 - Knowledge about the course content
 - Total years of professional experience
 - Positions held
 - Professional skills
 - Major accomplishments
 - Publications
 - Hobbies, talents, travel, family
5. Invite each subgroup to present its résumé. Then celebrate the total resources contained within the entire group.

Other Options

1. To expedite the activity, give out a prepared résumé outline that specifies the information to be gathered.
2. Instead of having participants compile a résumé, ask them to interview one another about categories that you provide.

3 Things We Have in Common: Getting to Know You

Introductory Remarks

This icebreaker is a version of the well-known game *To Tell the Truth*. I have given it a few new twists. It works as an instant method to build cohesion. It is particularly suited for training programs that encourage self-disclosure.

Objectives

- To discover commonalities with other participants.
- To quickly introduce games into a training program.

Group Size: up to twenty

Time Required: 20 to 30 minutes (depending on the number of participants)

Materials: none

Activity Flow

1. Pair off participants. If there is a participant who does not have a partner, become the partner for that participant.
2. Tell each pair to find as many facts about themselves *held in common* as they can. Ask them to dig for commonalities that are not evident from physical appearance alone. To get them started, list these categories on newsprint:
 - Family background (e.g., we are both the oldest sibling)
 - Hobbies and interests (e.g., we like to read mysteries)

- Preferences (e.g., we dislike decaffeinated coffee)
 - Life experiences (e.g., we have been to China)
3. After 10 minutes, request that pairs stop generating commonalities and pick two that might seem the most “intriguing” to the other participants. Then ask them to also make up a commonality that *in fact* is not true. Suggest that they try to “trick” others with their selections.
 4. Reassemble the full group with partners seated together. Have each pair introduce themselves to the group and report the three commonalities they selected (two are in fact true and one is false). As they do so, invite other participants to speculate which commonality is false. Then ask pairs to reveal the truth.
 5. Debrief the activity by asking for participants’ feedback and reactions to the experience.

Other Options

1. Every time you create new partners in the training program who will remain a pair for at least 30 minutes, have the pair search for three commonalities.
2. Have participants discover ways in which they are different rather than similar.

4 Predictions: Making Guesses About Co-Participants

Introductory Remarks

This activity is a fascinating way to help participants become acquainted with one another. It is also an interesting experience in first impressions. The twist in the activity is that participants do not begin by the standard introduction. Instead, other participants guess some details of the person being introduced.

Objectives

- To learn not to make assumptions or leap to conclusions based on appearances.
- To experience self-disclosure as a way to get acquainted.

Group Size: any

Time Required: 20 minutes

Materials: none

Activity Flow

1. Form subgroups of three or four participants (who are relative strangers to one another).
2. Tell the participants that their job is to predict how each person in their subgroup will answer certain questions you have prepared about him or her. The following are some all-purpose possibilities:
 - Where did you grow up?
 - What were you like as a child? As a student?

- Were your parents strict or lenient?
- What type of music do you enjoy?
- What are some of your favorite leisure activities?
- How many hours do you usually sleep nightly?

Note: Other questions can be added or substituted, depending on the group you are leading.

3. Have subgroups begin by selecting one person as the first “subject.” Urge participants to be as specific as possible in their predictions about the chosen person. Tell them not to be afraid of bold guesses! As the subgroup members guess, request that the “subject” give no indication as to the accuracy of the predictions. When the predictions about the “subject” are finished, the “subject” should then reveal the answer to each question about himself or herself.
4. Continue the same process with each person in the subgroup.
5. Debrief the exercise, using the following questions:
 - How well did you do with your predictions?
 - How did it feel to be the person about whom others made predictions?
 - What can you take away from this activity?

Other Options

1. Create questions that require participants to make predictions about one another’s views and beliefs (rather than factual details). Try to connect the questions to your training topic. For example, a question might be: What is a weakness I have in communicating clearly?
2. Eliminate the predictions. Instead, invite participants, one by one, to answer the questions immediately. Then ask subgroup members to reveal what facts about one another “surprised” them (based on their first impressions).

5 **Introductory Go-Arounds: Brief Self-Disclosures**

Introductory Remarks

This activity gives participants a safe way to disclose information about themselves. There are several different ways to conduct this activity. Choose what you like. I have found from this activity that the participants and I learn a lot about each other in a short period of time.

Objectives

- To experience a safe way for people to get to know each other through self-disclosure.
- To set a norm of honest communication.

Group Size: up to fifteen participants

Time Required: 10 minutes

Materials: none

Activity Flow

1. Prior to the session, create at least four sentence stems. (The larger the group, the fewer sentence stems you should use.) Here are some choices:
 - I am a member of _____.
 - I am happy to be here because _____.
 - One thing I remember from the last training I attended is _____.

- A favorite movie or book of mine is _____.
 - As a child, I was _____.
 - My dream job is to _____.
 - My favorite leisure activity is _____.
 - My attitude toward risk is _____.
 - I wish that I could _____.
2. At the session, explain that a go-around is a rapid way for everyone to share something. You will use it as a way for participants to learn a lot about each other.
 3. Go around the group asking each person to complete a sentence stem of your choosing. Pick as many sentence stems as time and energy warrant. Let any participant “pass” at any time in the go-arounds. If you have a very large group, divide into smaller groups and display the sentence stems. Have each group respond at its own pace.
 4. Debrief the activity by asking: “What have you learned about us as a group?”

Other Options

1. Have participants create their own sentence stems.
2. Instead of using a list of sentence stems, use a fishbowl format in which a small group discusses a question you provide (e.g., What is one thing you remember from the last training you attended?) and then is replaced by another group for a different question and so forth. Choose a different question for each fishbowl group.

6 What's in a Name? My Story

Introductory Remarks

This activity is an unconventional way to learn names and gain some connections to other participants. It is based on the idea that most people have a story to tell about their first names: how they got the name and their fondness or lack thereof for the name. The stories participants tell each other begin a shared experience that helps to create a new group identity.

Objectives

- To learn names in an unusual way.
- To have an initial group-building experience.

Group Size: any

Time Required: 2 minutes per participant plus time for a short debriefing

Materials: none

Activity Flow

1. Go around the group and ask participants to state their first names. After their names, ask them to tell the group some things about their names within 2 minutes. They can go into as much detail and background as time allows.
2. Include any of the following information:
 - Why he or she was given that name (if known)
 - Whether he or she ever had another name, such as a nickname

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- Their feelings about their names
 - Another name he or she would prefer
3. Some participants may have “stories” about their names. Permit the “stories” if they can stay within the time limit.
 4. Debrief the exercise by asking participants how important their first names are to them.

Other Options

1. Have other participants guess the answers to each question, followed by the participant’s own answer.
2. Discuss any cultural factors related to their names.

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