

## **Icebreakers and Teambuilders**

## **Icebreakers and Teambuilders**

The following pages provide a number of icebreakers and teambuilders. Consider your group and your purpose for the activity when choosing an icebreaker or teambuilder. Some are more appropriate for new groups, others for more established groups. Not all of these activities will appeal to everyone, but there are many for you to choose from to help get your group going!

### **INTRODUCTIONS**

Have people pair up. Give the pairs 5 minutes to each other and share vital information. Then have the people introduce their partners to the rest of the group.

Variation: "Silent Introductions" – same as above only the partners can't speak to each other. Partner receiving clues should write notes to self but should not give a response to the actor as to whether or not they understand the visual clues. Only those receiving clues can use pencil and paper.

### **DEAR DOLORES**

Have everyone sit in a circle. One person begins by giving their name, plus an adjective that begins with the first letter of their name. (e.g., Jolly Jim, Happy Holly). The next person repeats the person's name and adjective and then their own name the same way. Continue around the circle.

### **BALLOONS**

Prepare questions on small pieces of paper. Put one question inside a balloon and blow up the balloon. Have people pop the balloons to get the question and have everyone answer their questions to the group.

### **STRING NECKLACES**

Tie a string or yarn "necklace" around everyone's neck; the object of the game is to get as many strings as possible around your own neck by getting others to say "no" to questions you ask. When someone says "no" to you, she or he forfeits their necklace.

### **ANIMAL/BARNYARD SOUNDS**

Think of five or six different animals that make distinct animal sounds such as: cat, dog, snake, monkey, cow, pig, etc. Give each participant a piece of paper with one of the animal names and have them find each other by making that animal sound. For example, all the dogs would find each other by barking. You can use blindfolds to make it a little more interesting.

### **SENTENCE COMPLETION**

Have the group introduce themselves by completing a low risk sentence. Examples: favorite food, animal, cartoon strip, musical group, funniest story you have ever heard, best joke, hobbies or interests, funniest relative, what would you like to do if you had two extra hours today, what would you would do if you won the lottery, etc.

### **WALLET/PURSE INTRODUCTIONS**

Participants pull an object out of their wallet or purse, which represents them and explains why.

### **TOSS A NAME**

Standing in a circle, the person with the ball calls someone by name and tosses the ball to them. When the other person catches it, they say, "Thank you, \_\_\_\_\_" (the name of the person who threw it to him/her) and then calls upon another person to toss the ball to. After the balls have been tossed for a couple of minutes, start a second ball going at the same time, then a third, and finally a fourth.

### **HUMAN KNOT**

Participants should stand shoulder to shoulder in a circle. Each person should put his/her right hand into the middle of the circle and join hands with someone across the circle (and not directly to his/her right or left). Each person then places their left hand into the circle and joins hands with a different person, and not the person directly to their left or right.

When the participants have their hands tangled, inform them they need to be untangled without ever breaking grips within the group. Note that there are three possible solutions: a circle, two interlocking circles, or two circles with a knot in it. Participants should not make sudden or large movements since they're all connected.

Processing questions:

Was this challenging? Why? Or why not?

How did the group approach this task? What was done effectively? What could have been done more effectively?

What role did you personally take in this exercise?

For those who were facing out, and couldn't see what was happening, how did you feel?

How could each of you have increased participation in this activity?

How can you relate your freshman experience to this activity?

### **GOSSIP**

The group sits in a circle and Gossip begins with the facilitator sharing a secret with the person next in the circle. The secret is passed as each person shares it with the next person. In telling the secret, it may not be repeated twice to the same person (so the listener must get it all the first time.) When the secret is finally back to the facilitator, it is shared out loud. The facilitator then reads the original and a comparison is made.

### **IMPORTANT ITEM**

Have each person bring something to the meeting that means something special to him or her, and then take turns telling about it. Could have people try to guess who items belong to.

### **PAT ON THE BACK**

Have everyone draw an outline of their hand on a sheet of paper, then tape it to their back. Have group members mingle and write things on everyone's back that tells them something positive.

### **LIFELINES**

This exercise uses a huge sheet of paper with a long "lifeline" drawn across it. Each member marks dates on the line to represent the highs, lows, significant events, turning points, etc. of her/his life to date. (can also project the future). Each date should be labeled to help explain it. Members of the group each share their dates with other members. The group may ask questions about each other's lifelines.

### **BLIND POLYGON**

Ask the participants to form a circle and put on their blindfolds. Give them a rope. Ask each person to grab hold of the rope, and then, as a group, to form a perfect square. When they believe the task is accomplished, they are to stand in position and remove the blindfolds. Using the same procedure, ask them to form any geometric shape you think is possible with the group.

### **PERSONAL COAT OF ARMS**

Give each person a sheet of paper with a blank coat of arms on it. There are four quadrants on the "shield" and you ask participants to respond to specific questions/statements in each quadrant. For example, where your favorite place to escape is, favorite childhood memory, greatest fear, person who's most important to you, etc. Then ask each participant to draw a symbol or motto about his/her shield that represents him/her. Go around the group and have each participant share what they're willing of their shield with the group.

### **STAND-UPS**

Start off by breaking the participants into pairs. Have each participant sit back-to-back, link arms at the elbow, and stand up. Then have two pairs join together, introduce themselves, then sit down in a small circle and face outward so that all backs are in the center. Then arms at the elbow, stand up as a group. Then they grab another group so that there are 8 people, and do the same thing.

### **M&Ms**

Everyone loves M&Ms, so when the group is meeting for the first time, bring in a large bag of M&Ms to introduce the group to each other. Have the group sit in a circle. Pass the bag around and ask people to help themselves to the M&Ms, but not to eat them yet. When the bag has been around the full circle, each person must tell one thing about themselves for every M&M they took. A variation is to assign a number of things a person must tell about themselves to every color. Of course, don't tell people about this aspect of the game until they have already grabbed a handful.

### **PHOTO SCAVENGER**

Polaroid cameras will be needed for this exercise. Break the group in half, and give each group a list of places at which they need to get a group photo taken – and everyone needs to be in each photo! Meet at a designated time and place, and compare photos.

### **NAMETAG**

Paper, crayons or markers, and tape are needed for this activity. At the start of the meeting, have everyone make a nametag that includes a picture on it that says something about themselves (a caricature, cartoon, symbol, places, etc). Or ask people to put the answers to specific questions in the corners (i.e. – where you were born in the upper right, your favorite hobbies in the lower left, etc.). Go around the room and have each person explain their drawing. You can use note cards and felt pens or if you really want people to be creative, supply construction paper and scissors.

### **WHERE ARE YOU?**

Pick a year or a date before the meeting and give each person a chance to tell what they were doing on that date (summer '96, January '97, etc.).

### **SUPERLATIVES**

Participants are asked to study the composition of the group quietly to decide on a superlative adjective that describes themselves in reference to others (youngest, tallest, most uptight, etc.). They tell their adjectives, explain, and, if possible, test their accuracy.

### **HOMETOWN**

Post a large outline of the state or country on the wall or even tape it on the floor. Have participants put their hometowns and name on the map. Ask them to share about their hometown and how they decided to attend ISU.

### **DEMOGRAPHICS**

Brainstorm background data that participants would be interested in knowing about each other (age, education, birthplace, etc.). Have each participant tell who they are in reference to demographics.

### **PAPER PLATE DATES**

Give each participant a paper plate. Have them draw the face of a clock on their plate with a line next to each number. Then have the participants walk around and find a "date" for each hour, writing their date's name on a line. The catch is no one can make a "date" with more than one person per hour. After everyone has made their dates, speed up time to allow 1-3 minutes for each hour. The pairs will then get the chance to get to know each other.

### **BLANKET NAME GAME**

Have your group divide itself into two groups. Tell them to sit on the floor facing each other. Hold up a blanket between the groups so that each team cannot see the other. A member of each team is quietly selected to move up to the blanket. On the count of 3, drop the blanket so that each of the selected members is facing each other. Then race to see who can remember the others name first. Who ever loses goes to the other team.

### **CONTRASTING STATEMENT**

Think of several contrasting groups such as bread/butter, hammer/nail, etc. After saying each pair, have the group divide in two and join the group for which they best relate (to the word). Within the group, have them explain why they chose to say the hammer instead of the nail.

### **LOLLIPOP**

Pass out dum-dum lollipops to the group. For every letter that appears in the flavor, the participant has to say something about themselves to the group.

### **STRING GAME**

Participants select pre-cut lengths of string from the facilitator. Each member holds the string between his/her thumb and forefinger. For each "wrap" of the string around the finger, participants must share one thing about themselves.

### **SENTENCE STEMS**

Form dyads and triads and have participants complete the rest of the sentence. The leader can read the sentence to all of the participants or all participants can have sheets of paper with these listed and take their own time in covering them. Here are some examples:

Before I came to ISU, my main interests were . . .

The way I would describe my family is . . . .

The thing I remember most about high school is . . . .

My most unusual friend is. . .

The things I value most are . . . .

Where I hope to be 5 years from now . . . .

The thing I would most like to accomplish this year is . . . .

The thing that concerns me most about school is . . . .

For roommates:

The first day we met, the things I noticed about you were . . .

Since then, some things that surprised me about you were . . .

Something I like about you is. . .

It appears to me that an important difference between us is . . . .

I think we might have to compromise on . . . .

What I think I will get out of having a roommate is . . . .

I think the most important thing I have learned from this discussion is . . . .

### **HOG CALL**

Break the group into two pairs. Each pair must choose two things: a machine and an animal. They then have to decide who is which. The pairs then divide up on opposite sides of the room. Everyone must close their eyes, and by only making the noise of their character would make, the must find their partner. When they find their partner, they can open their eyes and wait until everyone is done. When conducting an activity with eyes closed, have the group raise their hands in front of their chests as bumper guards, and have at least one person (leader) acting as a spotter.

### **SOLEMN AND SILENT**

The facilitator explains that this exercise takes self-control. Members pair back to back. On the count of three, everyone must face their partner, look each other in the eye, and try to remain solemn and serious. No speaking! The first to smile or laugh must sit down. All who remain standing then take a new partner and the activity continues until only one person is left. If you get a pair at the end who are both keeping a straight face, the rest of the group can act as hecklers to disrupt them.

### **UNCLE FRED'S SUITCASE**

The group forms a circle. The first person states their name and the reason they picked this college. You continue going around the group, repeating the names of the persons preceding their name and why they chose to attend ISU. You can also substitute "Why you came here" with other things they like to do.

### **FAMOUS PAIRS**

In this exercise, group members will be asked to identify the names of famous pairs or persons. The leader tapes on the back of group members a nametag with the name of a famous pair or persons written on it (Fred and Wilma Flintstone, Hillary and Bill Clinton, peanut butter and jelly). The group member is not to see what is taped on his/her back. The leader then tells group members that their task is to find out who they are. Members are to mill around the room and ask questions that can be answered with only "yes" or "no." If the member receives a "yes" answer, he or she can continue to ask questions until a "no" reply is received. At that point, the member must move on to another participant. Questions may include, "Am I alive?," "Am I a movie star?," etc.

### **BIRTHDAY LINE**

Explain to the group that this is a nonverbal exercise. The group is to perform a single straight line according to birthdays. No lip reading or spelling in the air is allowed. When the line is completed, each person will shout out his or her birthday, beginning in January.

### **THE SHOE GAME**

Have the group stand in a large circle shoulder to shoulder. Next, have everyone remove their shoes and tie them together. At the leader's command, everybody runs to the center of the circle, and throws their shoes in a pile, returning to the circle. Have one volunteer choose a pair of shoes other than his/her own and make one statement about the owner of the shoes (for example, "The owner of these shoes must be very thrifty and economical to wear shoes in this condition."). The owner of the shoes then comes forward, introduces her/himself to the group, and picks out another pair of shoes to introduce. Repeat until everyone has been introduced through their shoes.

### **COUNT COUP OR ON-GOING TAG**

Count Coup is an ongoing tag that you can initiate at the first group meeting. You tell the group that one of them is "It" (pick someone right here). The object is not to be "It." The "It" may tag another person in anyway they like, i.e. touch, telephone, sight, mail, note through a friend, etc. So long as the new "It" is aware that they are now "It." The game can last for as long as you wish and makes for a lot of laughs and funny stories. The group need not know who "It" is so that the surprise factor is increased and ongoing. It may be distracting to start the game during the beginning of the meeting, so save it until the end. There are no rules and no limit to the number of times the "It" can change in any given time period. A fun variation to the game includes agreeing that the person who comes to the next meeting of the group as "It" brings refreshments.

### **KILLER**

Group sits in a circle, where one has been designated "It" (by draw of a designated card or a slip of paper marked "It" and the rest blank). The object is for the killer to wink at group members then they "die" or are out of the game. Encourage creativity in the death scenes. One can accuse if they suspect or catch the killer in action, but if they are wrong, they, too, are "dead."

### **COUNT TO TEN**

Have the group come together into one group, side by side with each other. When everyone is together, tell them the game is to count to ten as a group. But the catch is that each person is only allowed to say one number. If two people speak at the same time you must start over. The same person cannot start the exercise twice in a row. To make it even more challenging, have the group members close their eyes.

### **BODY ENGLISH**

Split the group into two groups. Each group must plan and spell out the words by using their bodies (no hand signals or signs). The other group must figure out what they are spelling. Start with single words and move into phrases as the groups are better at spelling.

### **MRS. MUMBLES**

The goal of this game is to never show your teeth. Participants sit in a close circle. All participants must hide their teeth at all times. If, at any time, a participant shows his/her teeth, that person is out of the circle. The first person to start looks at his/her neighbor and asks: "Is Mrs. Mumbles home?" Then the

neighbor responds: "I don't know! Let me ask my neighbor." He/she then asks the person seated next to him/her: "Is Mrs. Mumbles home?" and so on. If someone shows his/her teeth and thus leaves the circle, that person's job is then to do all he/she can, except for touching people, to get others to show their teeth.

### **PEOPLE TO PEOPLE OR ANATOMY SHUFFLE**

The group is divided into two circles of equal size. One circle stands outside the other so that the members of the inner circle face out to the members of the outer circle, creating pairs. During the game, the circles walk in opposite directions until the leader yells out two body parts (for example, head to knee or foot to elbow) at which time the partners must find each other touch those parts. The last ones to touch are eliminated from the game and the others return to the circles. The game continues until one pair wins.

### **HUM THAT TUNE**

Each person in the group is given a small piece of paper with the name of a nursery rhyme or other song written on the paper. Example, "Row, row, row your boat," "Rock-a-Bye etc. All the people who are given the song must hum that tune and find everyone else in the group singing that same tune.

### **BALLOON ROMP**

People line up into groups of six facing a row of chairs about eighty feet away. One chair per group. The first person in each group runs to their chair, blows up a balloon and breaks it and then runs back to their line. After they return, the second person runs to the chair and repeats the same process. An alternative way to play is for partners to run down in pairs, place the balloon between them and "squeeze" until it pops and then run back.

### **CHALKBOARD SENTENCES**

This exercise asks the participants, working in teams to race against one another to formulate a sentence to which each team member has added a word. The facilitator begins by explaining that participants will be competing to see which team is the first to complete a group sentence. Next the members are asked to divide into two teams. If the group contains an uneven number, one participant may compete twice. The teams are then lined up ten feet from the board. After giving the first person in each team's line a piece of chalk, the leader explains the rules.

- 1) Each member is to add one word to his/her team's sentence.
- 2) The first person in each line is to come forward and write the first word of their team's sentence, passes on the chalk to the next team member, and returns to the end of the line.
- 3) No preplanning of sentences is allowed.
- 4) Each player may add only one word
- 5) The winner is the team that is the first to build a full sentence using words contributed by all of its group members.

### **SOUNDS IN THE NIGHT**

A beach ball or basketball is needed for this game. Everyone sits in a circle with their eyes closed. The room is darkened. Each player selects an animal sound to mimic as his or her own personal signal. If group members run out of animals from which to choose, divide players into separate groups. The first player has the ball and makes their animal sound and then the sound of the animal to whom they want to roll the ball. The animal that is "called" replies so that the first player knows where to direct the ball. The first player then rolls the ball to the animal. If the intended player receives the ball, they respond loudly. All the other animals rejoice in unison by making their sounds as well. However, if the intended player misses, the ball goes back to the first player who tries another animal.

### **BALLOONS OVER AND UNDER**

A single line is formed with one person behind another. Four or five balloons filled with water are placed in front of the first person. One by one, the first person takes each balloon and passes it over their head to the person behind them. They pass it under their legs to the next person, that person passes it over their head and so on. When the balloons get to the last person they run to the front of the line and pass it

over their head. Adventurous groups can choose to toss the balloon over their head and hike it (toss it) between their legs.

### **CLAM FREE**

A Frisbee or ball type device is needed. We start by defining the boundaries of the playing field. One person volunteers to be the nuclear reactor and activates himself/herself with a Frisbee or nerf ball. The rest of the group members are clams and signify so by being as happy as possible. The object of the game is for the nuclear reactor to contaminate all the clams by tagging them with the Frisbee. Once contaminated, the clams become frozen in place. As the reactor chases and tags the clams, it would appear that doomsday is just around the corner, at least for the hapless clams who are getting zapped one after another. There is hope, however, a frozen clam can be defrosted if two mobile clams manage to link hands around him/her in a clamshell-like alliance and shout, "clam free!" Better yet, if seven clams can manage to link up in a circle and count to ten, then the nuclear reactor is shut down forever.

### **VALUES DISCUSSION**

Grab two other people who are wearing the same color as you. Sit down in a circle a little away from other groups. Instruct them they will be talking about some issues and you will give them new topics every few minutes.

- 1) Talk about the most important thing you did this year.
- 2) What are the easiest and hardest emotions for you to express and why?
- 3) What is something that few people know about you?
- 4) What do you value in a friend?
- 5) What do you want to be doing in five years?
- 6) What is one goal you have for next year?
- 7) What do you want to learn to do better?
- 8) What is a motto you try to live by?
- 9) What are five words a friend would use to describe you?
- 10) What is the greatest challenge you are facing?
- 11) What do you like most about yourself?
- 12) What do you value in a loving relationship?
- 13) What do you value most in life?

### **WEBS**

A ball of string or yarn is needed. The group is to sit in one large circle, preferably on the floor. The facilitator holds a large ball of string and tells the group that they are now going to discuss a particular topic such as why they chose to become a member of the learning community, their greatest personal experiences, etc. The first person to begin tosses the ball of twine to another member of the group seated across the circle. That person then shares his/her experience holds onto a piece of the string and tosses the string to another participant. This process continues until each member of the team has his/her time to share. By tossing the string around the group, participants weave a web, which connects all the members of the team in the same manner. The group facilitator then asks two or three members to "drop" their string. The web begins to sag and appears to be very weak and vulnerable. The facilitator can then discuss how important each participant is to the team and the effect that low levels of involvement and commitment has on the entire team. If time allows, the team can unravel the string and talk about another topic or issue while rewinding the twine. Group members can also cut a piece of the string from the web to keep as a reminder of the exercise and the thoughts the group shared.

### **POSITIVE BOMBARDMENT (OR FEEDBACK)**

One member is selected to be the recipient of positive feedback from the rest of the group. Once everyone has had a chance to give that member the gift of feedback, another person is chosen and the process is repeated. This can be done in writing with a positive comment to each member and putting them all in an envelope with the person's name on it. This can be adapted so that the member first gives some constructive criticism and then some positive feedback.



### **TINKER TOY COMPETITION**

The group leader brings a box of tinker toys and divides the pieces into two equal groups. The people in the group also divide into two equal groups. Each group of people is given the tinker toys and the following instructions:

- 1) You have 5 minutes to create the tallest structure you can with the pieces given to you.
- 2) You then have an additional five minutes to build the longest structure.
- 3) The winners get a prize.

A variation is to do this activity with balloons instead of tinker toys.

### **PROGRESSIVE STORY**

For this exercise, a group of people must know one another and feel comfortable discussing personal issues. Everyone must be able to hear the other members of the group, but people don't have to see one another. So, the group doesn't have to be sitting in a circle. A facilitator begins the story by setting the initial scene and mood.

i.e.: "on my way to class the other day . . ."

"A good friend called last night and . . ."

"I had them most amazing weekend! I. . ."

In no special order, members of the group then take over the story. They add another element to the plot. The information that is added can be light-hearted, serious, true, fabricated, etc. The main point is to make sure everyone adds something. The progression of the story indicates where the group members are emotionally and is representative of what is high on their lists of priorities/concerns/thoughts.

i.e.: If everyone returns to work-related examples, then work may need some discussion and processing. Maybe there are issues that need extra attention. If the story is hilarious, we can assume the group is feeling confident and secure – or at the other extreme, they may be on the verge of insanity.

### **FORCED CHOICES**

Tell everyone that you will be naming two different things and they have to choose which one they prefer of the two. Have one group go to one side of the room and one to the other for each category. Make up contrary dichotomies that you want, but here are suggestions: bath/shower, ping pong/pool, coffee/tea, city/country, Leno/Letterman, veg out/work out, ocean/mountains, morning/night, math/literature, movie/concert, museum/sporting event, etc. Process by focusing on commonalities each person shares with each other or their staff members and encourage them to find ways to form positive working relationship with everyone.

### **LIGHTHOUSE-ROWBOAT**

Have one person volunteer to be the lighthouse. He/she should stand at one end of the room on a chair facing the group. Have another person volunteer to be the rowboat. He/she should stand at the opposite end of the room with their back facing the group. The rest of the group should then position themselves around the room standing, sitting, and or lying on the ground in between the lighthouse and rowboat. These are the "rocks." The rowboat cannot talk and must close his/her eyes. It is the lighthouse's responsibility to give the rowboat instructions on how and where to move so that the rowboat can make it safely to the lighthouse without tripping or falling. The lighthouse can give any kind of instructions they want, as long as they do not leave the lighthouse stand.

### **HOT AND COLD**

Two people are chosen to be "it" and are sent out of the room. The remaining people choose a task for them to do (stand on the table, do a somersault, etc.). When the chosen two return, it is the group's job to encourage them to perform the task. However, the only encouragement allowed is applause when they're "hot" and booing when they're "cold."

### **ELECTRIC FENCE**

Prior to beginning this exercise, the facilitator needs to tie a rope approximately 5-10 feet long between two poles or trees. The rope should be about shoulder height and should be tied very tightly. All members of the team should be standing on one side of the rope. The facilitator then tells the group that they are chased by a group of crazed maniac and their only means of escape is to climb over the electric fence. Each member of the team must climb the fence without touching the rope. If any member of the

team does touch the rope during this exercise, the entire team must return to the starting point and begin the climb all over again.

### **FRUIT BASKET TURNOVER**

The group starts out sitting in a circle with one group member standing in the middle. Each person is given the name of one of three fruits. When the person in the middle calls out the name of a fruit, all those people must find another seat.

### **HEADLINERS**

Each member of the group is asked to reflect on his/her freshman experience. After pondering this issue for several minutes, the facilitator will distribute newsprint and markers to each team member and relay to them the following instructions: You have just joined a learning community, and recently received a copy of your hometown newspaper describing your first experience as a learning community member. Write the headline for this article. After all participants have completed this assignment, each team member displays his/her headline and describes it to the group. This exercise is a great way for team members to get to know each other better while reflecting on their learning community experience.

### **EMBARRASSING MOMENTS**

Divide the large group into smaller groups of 10-15 and arrange for each group to sit in a circle. Each participant is asked to take 3-5 minutes to think of an embarrassing moment that has occurred in his or her lifetime. After several minutes of contemplation, each participant shares his/her experiences with other members of the group.

### **FIND YOUR TWIN**

Write a list of traits on one side of the page, and then put two columns on the page beside these traits. The headings above one column should read "yours," and above the other, "autograph of twin." For example, some of the traits may be color of eyes, favorite movie, favorite city, favorite NFL team, school colors. Direct the participants to complete the "yours" column first, then to find their twin.

### **GET UP AND MOVE**

Make a circle large enough for everyone in the group, except for one person. The person standing says, "Get up and move if. . . " and fills in the blanks with a phrase of his/her choice. For example, "Get up and move if you watch Survivor religiously." After the person makes the statement, everyone it applies to gets up and changes chairs. The one remaining standing makes up a new phrase and the game continues.

### **FIRST IMPRESSIONS**

Have participants sit in a circle. All participants should be wearing nametags. Give each one a piece of paper, tell them to write their name on the top and number it according to how many people are in the group. Have each member of the group pass their papers to the left and quickly write their impression of the person next to them as a fruit, car or other object. For example, one person may remind you of an apple, another of a banana, or one of a Ferrari, and someone else a Volkswagen, etc. Keep passing the papers around the circle with each person writing the impression of the other person in the group, until the sheets get back to the original owner. The participants can then share what others wrote, and see if they are any similarities.

### **GETTING CREATIVE**

Start with a word, and throw it out to the group. Have the first person say the first thing that comes to his/her mind. Then have the next person say the first thing that comes to mind about the previous person's answer. Go all around the room.

### **INNOVATIVE IDEAS**

The facilitator should set up a collection of unrelated items (computer disk, calendar, picture, baseball. . . anything goes) on a table in the front of the room. Divide the large group into smaller groups of 3-4. Have a member of each group select 4-5 items from the table and bring them back to the group. Instruct each group to plan a program using all of the items they selected in some way. You can specify a type of program: social, educational, alcohol awareness, etc., or leave the floor open.

### **MOCK THUMPER**

Each participant of the group decides on a hand sign or motion. The participants of the group introduce themselves with their name and their sign. After the introductions, one person starts the game by saying their name and sign, then someone else's name and sign. Continue on until you have a good grasp of the group member's names.

### **NAME AEROBICS**

Have all participants stand in a circle. Have them think of the first letter of the name they would like to be called, and think of an adjective that begins with the same letter and describes them (e.g. Jolly John, Crazy Chris). Then have them think of how many beats or syllables are in the adjective and their name (e.g. Crazy Chris would be three beats: Cra-zy Chris). Ask each participant to take a moment and think of series of movements so that there is one distinct and repeatable movement for each beat in his/her adjective and name.

Have one person in the group start with his/her adjective and name, and the movements that go along. The entire group then repeats with the same movements. The second group member follows with his/her adjective name, and then the group repeats. Follow this pattern until everyone in the group has done theirs and the group has followed.

### **RECEPTION LINE**

Divide everyone into 2 groups; have them stand facing each other.

Each person talks to the person across from him or her until signaled.

At the signal, the person at the end of one line moves to other end, consequently, every one has a new person to talk to.

Possible conversation topics include:

What is your favorite movie/TV show/ music group, and why?

Who is your biggest role model and why?

Why did you decide to enroll at Iowa State?

If you could travel any where in the world, where would it be?

What is a quote that you live your life by?

What's your favorite hobby or pastime?

### **COLOR, CAR, CHARACTER**

Each person writes his or her name on a piece of paper.

Under their name, they write which color they feel best fits their personality.

Beneath the color, each writes the name of a car that fits their self-image.

Finally, under the name of the car, each participant is to write the name of a fictional character with which they identify.

One at a time, group members identify themselves by stating their names, colors, cars, and fictional characters. In the introduction, each participant is to provide a brief rationale for each of his/her three choices. It is not necessary to always use color, car, character; similar topics may be used.

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

Draw on a piece of paper a table with chairs.

Participants write the names of the people who they would like to have as their board of directors.(e.g., family members, teachers, friends, coaches, etc.)

Participants share their list of mentors and why those people are important to them.

### **SOMETHING UNIQUE**

Everyone stands in a straight line side-to-side.

Someone says something they think is unique about them (e.g., I spent last summer in Africa).

If others have done the same thing they step forward too.

Everyone steps back into place and the next person shares something unique about him/herself.

### **TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE**

Have each participant write three unique statements about him/herself – two of which are true, and one, which is false.

Each participant reads his/her statements, and the other members try to guess which one is false.

### **PEOPLE PLATFORM (15 minutes)**

Illustrates: Teamwork and the importance of listening to everyone's contributions.

Participants may only touch the ground on the outside of the outer square and the inside of the inner square as they complete the task. The area in between the squares is off limits. The entire group must participate. They may not stand or sit on each other's shoulders; everyone must be touching the ground. The objective is to have everyone on the inner square without touching outside of it. After the group creatively attempts this exercise, they must hold everyone off the ground for 10 seconds (the time it takes to sing "row, row, row your boat. . .")

An inner 2' x 2' and outer 6' x 6' tape outline of a square should be arranged prior to the exercise. Facilitators should take great care in ensuring participant safety throughout this exercise.

Variations: If the group is slow to actively attempt the exercise, after a few minutes, announce a time limit by which they must finish. If a participant touches the area between the squares, tell them that they may no longer use that body part. If one member dominates the group, take away his/her ability to speak.

Processing Questions:

- What were some of the challenges in completing this activity?
- How did you overcome them?
- What similarities do you find between this activity and your house operations?
- What did this activity demonstrate to you about leadership?

### **BEACH BALL TOSS (10 minutes)**

Illustrates: Collaboration and Commitment

The group's goal is to hit the beach ball 100 times in a row without it falling to the ground. In addition, each team member must hit the ball five times (and no participant can hit the ball twice in a row). If the ball ever hits the ground, the group must start over. A group may exceed 100 hits, if that's what it takes to get everyone to hit the ball five times.

Processing Questions:

- If you were successful, what caused this success?
- What strategies did you use to make sure that everyone was included?
- What was challenging about this exercise?
- What did this exercise illustrate to you about leadership?
- How does this activity relate to our group?

### **YURT CIRCLE (10 minutes)**

Illustrates: Trust, support, and the importance of each person's contribution.

The group forms a circle facing each other and counts off by two. You must have an even number of participants for this exercise. Individuals with shoulder and/or arm problems should not participate in this activity for their own safety. Members grasp hands in the circle. Make sure that height and weight of participants is evenly distributed around the circle.

Instruct the group to simultaneously lean in the opposite direction while supporting each other. This means that the 1's lean forward and the 2's lean backward. Lean gradually, not all at once. Do it again. Change directions. Do it with eyes closed.

Variations: Do it silently. Face outward and work through the process.

Processing Questions:

- Was anyone tentative at the beginning of this exercise?
- How did it feel to be reliant on others for support?
- What would have happened if only one person let go? How does this relate to working in teams?
- How is this exercise representative of our houses?
- How can we develop more trust in our group?
- How important is the support we give to others?

**BLIND NUMERICAL ORDER (20 minutes)**

Illustrates: Communication and listening.

- a) There is no talking
- b) You must keep your blindfolds on at all times
- c) Each of you will have a number whispered into your ear
- d) The goal is for the group to arrange itself in numerical order without speaking and without the use of sight.

Blindfold all the participants. Whisper a number to each of them (do not allow other participants to hear). The number should be RANDOM (not just 1-12, etc). For a few participants, use negative numbers, "0", really high numbers, etc. After whispering the number, move the participant to a random location. Once every participant has a number, they should begin. Make sure all participants are safe throughout the exercise.

Some participants can be restricted even more by not allowing them to use their right arm, etc.

Processing Questions:

- What was the most difficult aspect of this exercise?
- Did you have a sense of working together? Why/why not?
- How frustrating was it when you could not talk.
- What was necessary in order for you to be successful?
- Did you assume that the assigned numbers would be in order (like 1-12)?
- How important is good communication in groups?
- How does this activity relate to our group?

**SHERPA WALK (10 minutes)**

Illustrates: Industrial vs. Postindustrial leadership, empowerment (good transition activity from one location to another)

Assemble the group in a single line and then blindfold them. Each person holds onto the shoulder of the person in front of him/her. The leader is not blindfolded. He/she will lead the group from one place to another. The facilitator may choose to limit talking or allow talking only for safety commands. The leader works to navigate the surroundings and keep his/her group safe. At different points, the leader may change; the former leader will now join the rest of the group and be led.

Processing Questions:

- How did it feel being led by only one person?
- How trusting were you of the person in front of you? Of the leader?
- Did anyone ever question where they were going or demand an explanation?
- Why did so many individuals simply follow the person in front of them?
- How many times in our houses, do we just follow our leaders (i.e., President, RA/CA, Peer Mentor) because we are supposed to?
- Why do they continue to "go with the flow" and not question what we are doing?
- What happens if we trust certain leaders and they lead us astray?
- How do we encourage more team-based leadership?

### **PICK A SIDE**

Students are asked to choose their preferences between the following dichotomies. They go to one side of the room or the other (designated by the facilitator) to show which one they prefer. No one can be in the middle. Discuss why people made the choices they made.

- 1 - Play before you work or finish your work so you can play
- 2 - Design a car or build one
- 3 - Jeans or Khakis
- 4 - Would you rather be a bat or a baseball
- 5 - Texas or Montana
- 6 - Plan your vacation or decide what to do when you get there
- 7 - Liberal or conservative
- 8 - Morning or night
- 9 - Would you rather go see a play or go to a football game
- 10 - Chocolate or strawberry
- 11 - Love or money
- 12 - New York or California
- 13 - Hangout with a few close friends or get together with a large group of people
- 14 - Listen or speak
- 15 - Country or pop music
- 16 - 007 or Batman
- 17 - Happy Gilmore or Terminator (I or II)
- 18 - kissing in public, "get a room" or "isn't that sweet"
- 19 - Memorized your ISU ID or have to get it out
- 20 - ISU or Iowa

### **BUILDING A GUMDROP STRUCTURE**

Materials needed: gumdrops & toothpicks. In an area unseen to the participants, structures made of gumdrops and toothpicks should be previously constructed by the facilitator. These are the structures that the participants will need to re-construct (within the given guidelines) in their groups.)

This is a teambuilding exercise for larger groups & most groups will have six people.

Each group will be told to choose one "Seer," three "Runners," one "Builder" and one "Observer."

Explain:

In a separate room (or space) is a structure made of gumdrops and colored toothpicks.

Seer: Only person allowed to see the structure. Unlimited opportunities. Must communicate what the structure looks like to the Runners.

Runners: Carry messages from the Seer to the Builder. Runners may not ask questions of Seers. Nonverbal signals are ok, but only the Seer can talk to the Runner. Runners may only talk to the Builder, and then only one at a time.

Builders: will be in a separate space where they cannot see the Seer or observe the instructions being given.

Builders are provided with building supplies. Builders may not face each other or look at each other's work. They may not speak to anyone.

Once a Runner has received instruction, he/she will go to the Builder.

The Runners may then (one at a time) relay the instructions to the Builder, using words only. Runners may not touch or respond to what Builders are doing. Relay instruction only. The Builder may only listen, without asking questions or responding.

Observer: observe the group's process without visibly reacting to them or interacting with them. Observations and comments will be a crucial part of the discussion at the end of the activity.

There is a time limit of 25-30 minutes (depending on how things are going).  
At the end of the time, we will bring over the original structure to compare to each of the new creations.  
How close did everybody get? Colors count!!

Wrap-up in large group:  
What was difficult about this process?

How did the Seers feel? Was it hard to give instructions without seeing what was needed? Or was it liberating? How did you feel about the lack of concrete feedback about what was happening to your careful instructions?

How did the Runners feel? Was one-way communication difficult? Was it frustrating to envision one thing and see the Builder doing something else?

How did the Builders feel? Was it easy or hard to construct something with only verbal instructions and without being able to ask questions? Or did anybody feel liberated by having only instructions to follow?

Does anybody have personal reactions or challenges to share?

What does this activity tell us about our communication styles? What are the benefits of two-way communication? Would it have been easier to construct something resembling the original structure if questions were allowed? What would you have done differently? What if only a certain number of questions or words were allowed? Would you have known what to ask? Would it have helped?

### **ROOTS AND LEAVES**

Provide group members with paper and markers and ask them all to draw their own personal tree. It must include ROOTS: things about you that are not easily visible (where you are from, values, important life events, achievements, things you struggle with, long term goals, secret dreams, etc.) and LEAVES: things about you that are readily visible (hobbies, demographic information, important people in your life, distinguishable personal traits, favorite music, things you do well, etc.) Have members share and describe their trees to the group.

### **BEACH BALL**

Get a beach ball and write questions all over the ball. Then, get the group together in a circle. Throw the ball to someone and the first question they see they must answer. Then that person passes the ball and the game continues. You can add in that people need to say the name of the person they are throwing it to in order to learn names better.

*This list is a compilation of teambuilder lists from and individual memories of many different people. For this reason, no citation is available.*