

ICE BREAKERS, ENERGIZERS & TENSION REDUCERS

These exercises can be used to introduce people to each other, break down initial inhibitions, reduce anxiety, and increase group energy.

Throwing a Name

Using a kooshball or hackeysack, have everyone stand in a circle. Begin with one ball. The ball is thrown around the circle randomly. Each time it is caught the catcher says his/her own name. Keep this going until everyone has had a turn. Now ask participants to call the name of the person to whom they are throwing as well, and keep this going until everyone has had a turn.

In the next round participants stop saying their own names as they catch, but continue to say the name of the person to whom they are throwing. Everyone is to throw the bag just once. When the round is completed, repeat it in exactly the same sequence. Each person has only to remember who they threw to last time. Halfway through this round introduce another bag, to be thrown in exactly the same sequence. You can continue adding other bags. The game can be further extended by having everyone move out of the circle and walk around the room. Participants must now be even more aware from whom they receive and to whom they throw, while continuing in the same sequence.

Lifeboats

Have the participants call out their favorite item, *e.g.* pizza, toothpaste, candy, fast food restaurant, cereal, etc. Those with identical similarities form a group or "lifeboat."

M&Ms

Pass around a bag of M&Ms and tell people to take a few, but don't eat them. For every M&M they have, they have to tell something about themselves. You can assign categories to different colors (green - sports, orange - classes in school, red - something embarrassing that happened to them, etc.). Be creative but don't ask for information that is too personal.

Kooshball/Hackeysack

Using a kooshball or hackeysack, have the participants form a circle. Whoever has the ball, states their name and one additional piece of information about themselves, like their grade level, number of brothers and sisters, etc. Then they toss the ball to someone else, and that person has to say the person's name and information who tossed them the ball and their own. Try using more than one ball at a time if you have a large group.

Shake All Hands

Everyone in the room shakes everyone else's hand within a strict time limit of one minute. This gets energy up, and obliges each participant to acknowledge everyone else.

Hula Hoop

Very easy. Have a hula hoop contest.

Touch These Things

This is a race to see how quickly participants can touch four or five named objects. Call out a short list of things in the room, such as a hard chair, a windowsill, someone's trouser-leg, something red, and a light switch. Participants touch them as quickly as they can, not necessarily in that order. The last person to finish can call out the next list.

The Human Knot

Form groups of an even number (8-10 people works best). Each group stands in a circle facing each other. Individuals first reach out with the left hand and grab another left hand of someone across from them. (*Rule: Do not grab the hand of the person to your immediate right or left.*) Repeat with the right hand. NOW . . . untangle yourselves. This exercise is 99% possible.

Balloon Sit

Prepare slips of paper with matching numbers: two 1's, two 2's, etc. Do a preliminary count of the group to determine how many pairs of numbers you will need, and then pass out a number to everyone (must be an even number of people). Pass out a balloon to each person and instruct each person to insert their number inside their balloon before they blow it up. Once everyone has their balloon blown up and tied off, everyone bats the balloons around for 20-30 seconds. When the word is given, everyone is to grab a balloon, sit on it to pop it, and take the number inside. Then individuals are to find their "match." This is a good time to have people introduce and/or share something about themselves. The first pair to find each other wins.

Find Someone Who . . .

Have a list of things people may know (German, what the math term *pi* is, how to make tamales, etc.) or have done (been scuba diving, been to Canada, etc.). Participants go around trying to find someone who has done this thing, or knows the answer, and then must sign their name next to the activity. You can also have participants do activities (form a group hug of six people and have everyone sign "Mary Had A Little Lamb," do five push-ups, etc.). For an example see *Get Psyched*.

People Bingo

Have a sheet already made into a grid with as many rows and columns as you like (*contact OCFNLP for attachment*). In each square, put facts or characteristics of individuals such as:

- The oldest child
- Someone who has visited another country
- Someone who can juggle
- Comes from a family of 5 or more children
- And so on . . .

Pass out the grid to all individuals (make sure they have a pen or pencil) and instruct them to fill their grids with signatures of individuals that match the facts on the grid. First one to fill the grid wins.

Cultural Pursuit

Like *People Bingo*, only the topics are related to various cultures (*contact OCFNLP for attachment*).

Silent Birthday Lineup

Instruct the group that they must organize themselves by birthday (day/month/year) in a line from youngest to oldest. The catch is they must do this without saying a word or drawing on a piece of paper.

Get Psyched!!! & Get Psyched Too!!!

Pass a copy of *Get Psyched!!!* or *Get Psyched Too!!!* to all of the participants (*contact OCFNLP for attachment*).

Participants try to get the appropriate signatures. This is a good exercise for a large group (25 or more) to interact and get to know each other.

Zip Zap Zup

You will need a beanbag or kooshball for this exercise. Assemble everyone into a big circle (20 or more). Explain the following directions:

- Zip:** The person to your right.
- Zap:** Yourself.
- Zup:** The person to your left.

Ask each individual to know the names of the persons on their left and right. The exercise is started by throwing the ball to a person and at the same time saying either Zip, Zap, or Zup. The person who catches the ball must give the information on the correct person. Once people get good at this begin to up the stakes for a couple of rounds:

1. Name and city born.
2. Name, city born, and number of brothers and sisters
3. Etc., etc., etc...

Find Your Shoes

Everyone takes off their shoes and puts them in the middle of the room. The leader muddles all other shoes around and retreats to the side of the room. Put a time limit on the next stage, depending on how many there are in the group (about 30 seconds for twenty people). When the facilitator calls, participants must find and put on their shoes within the time limit. If the group is small, have them do it blindfolded.

What Are You Doing?!?

Form a large group and identify one person to stand in the center. Give that person a weird, slightly embarrassing action to do (*i.e.*, scratch their head). The person in the center must act their task for 10 seconds and then point to anyone in the circle. The selected person then asks the person in the center, "What are you doing?" The person in the center then says, "I'm . . . (comes up with a new embarrassing activity)." The selected person becomes the new person in the center doing the new embarrassing activity for 10 seconds and the whole thing repeats until everyone has a chance to make an absolute fool of her/himself.

Mime the Lie

Stand round in a circle. One by one everyone goes into the middle of the circle and mimes an action, such as mowing the lawn. The next person asks them what they are doing. They lie and say, for example, "I'm feeding the dog." The person who asked now goes into the circle and mimes whatever the previous person said. When they are asked what they are doing they again lie, and so the games continues.

Hunter, Woman, Bear

This is a variation to the rock, scissors, paper game. Each person is to find a partner and stand back to back. When the word is given, partners turn around and pick the following character by exhibiting the following actions:

- Woman:** Put one hand behind your head, and the other on your hip while you stick your hip out.
- Hunter:** Point a bow and arrow at your partner.
- Bear:** Make a claw with your hands as you put your arms up and growl.

HUNTER BEATS BEAR • BEAR BEATS WOMAN • WOMAN ALWAYS GETS HER HUNTER!

Winners continue to play each other until there is one winner left. (In the case of a tie, both people progress until there is a winner.)

Bunny Hop

To the song "Farmer in the Dell" form a conga line (hands on shoulders) and follow this pattern:

- Kick right two times
- Kick left two times
- Hop forward once
- Hop backward once
- Hop forward three times.

Card Relay

Form participants into two lines and blindfold them. Using a half or full deck of cards, hand them off one by one. First team to hand all the cards to the last person wins.

Creative Contraptions or Human Machines

Form participants into groups of five and give them 60 seconds to form their bodies into the shape of a machine. Some examples are:

- Donut hole puncher
- Book binder
- Toaster
- Riding lawn mower
- Bottle capper
- Hot-dog roll maker
- Fuel pump
- Milk shake maker

Duck Duck Goose

Everyone knows this one!

Newspaper Shuffle

Disorganize a newspaper. Have groups of four collect the pieces and reorganize the paper!

Think Fast

Form participants in a group around one person in the middle. The person in the middle throws a kooshball to one person and yells out a letter. The person who caught the ball has to say three nouns starting with that letter. The person stays in the middle until someone doesn't say three nouns. That person is then in the middle.

Hi – Low

While in a group, have everyone share their highest moment of the day and their lowest moment of the day.

Name Game

Have everyone in the group think of an adjective that starts with the first letter of their name, such as "Famous Frank" or "Jealous Julia." Have everyone form a circle, have one person start, and the next person has to recite the name of the person that went before them and then their own name, so that last person in the circle repeats everyone's name and their own.

Name Explanation

Have each member of the group introduce themselves by talking about his or her name and how their name was chosen, the history of their name, and how she/he feels about their name. As a variation or addition, you can have people explain their nick names.

M & M Count

Get any size jar and fill it with M & Ms – but remember how many you put into the jar. Have each participant guess how many M & Ms are in the jar and write this number down. Now have the participants find a partner. Ask each pair to decide on one number that they both agree on. When each pair is done, ask them to write their number down. Ask the group the following questions:

- Did your last guess change after talking with your partner?
- Why or why not?

Something You Don't Know About Me

Break the participants up into two equally sized groups. Have them get into inner and outer circles, with the outer circle facing the inner circle. Have each participant share something about themselves that the other person doesn't know about them. After each pair has shared, have the outer circle take a step to the right, in order to face a new person. Again, have them share something that the other person doesn't know about them. Continue until everyone has shared with one another.

I'll Bet You Can't ... Make Me Smile!

Break the participants into two groups. Have the two groups form lines facing each other with enough room for two people to walk down the middle. One person from each line walks down the middle of two lines trying not to smile. Participants standing in the lines do everything they can, without talking or touching the two people, to get them to smile. If the chapter member smiles they become part of the other line.

2 Truths and 1 Lie

Have everyone think of two statements that are true about them and one that is a lie. Have everyone in the group state their truths and lie out loud and everyone must guess which of the three statements is a lie.

Back Art

Divide the participants into two groups. Have each group stand in a single file line facing the front of the room. The last person in line from each group is shown the same picture. After seeing the picture, the participants go back to their group and place themselves at the end of line. From this point on, no one speaks. At the starting command, they use their finger to draw the picture they saw on the back of the person in front of them. Once they are done drawing, the person in front of them tries to draw the same thing on the back of the person in front of her or him. This continues until it reaches the first person in line. This person draws what they think was drawn on their back onto a piece of paper. When done drawing the picture, the paper goes upside down on the floor. When both groups are done the drawings are given to the leader of the game. The pictures are checked for accuracy.

Group Treasure Hunt

Divide participants into two groups. Give each group a pencil and a sheet of paper. Have each team designate a recorder. This person will keep track of the group's score. Read the following questions and provide enough time so the groups can write down their answers. After all the questions have been answered, have the groups add up the score from each question for a total group score. Have the teams share their scores. Don't play this up too much since the object of the activity is not to produce a winning group, but to provide an opportunity for chapter members to interact with each other.

Treasure Hunt questions and scoring:

- One point for each person living in your home.
- One point for each button on your clothes.
- One point for each pet in your family.
- One point for each sport you know how to play.
- One point for each musical instrument you play.

The Clapping Game

Everyone stands in a circle. Each person takes a turn creating a clapping pattern. The first person claps their pattern and then everyone else has to copy the pattern. The next person creates a pattern and everyone copies it. Do this until everyone has had a turn.

A Good Buy

Divide the group into teams of three to four people. Explain that they are to write a newspaper, TV, or radio ad to sell a leader. The advertisement can be just words, a rap, a song, a poem or skit. The key is that it must advertise the characteristics of a leader. They cannot tell you about the looks or body features of the leader. Each group has to share their ad with the entire group and then ask the group the following questions.

- What qualities were expressed by more than one group?
- Could your group agree which qualities of a leader should be in your ad?
- Are people born with these qualities or can they learn them?
- What are some of the characteristics of a leader that you already have?
- *Variations:* They can sell a friend or an advisor. You can tailor it to your activity.

Boundary Breaking

Using the Boundary Breaking sheet (*contact OCFNLP for attachment*), have the participants pair off. Instruct them to ask one another the first four or so questions. Then have them find a new partner and ask the next four or so questions. You can also have only one person ask each other all the questions. Then have them share with the group one thing they learned about another person in the room.

Elbow to Elbow

Divide all participants into pairs and have the pairs facing each other. Then shout out a body part that they are to have touching, like “knee to knee,” “head to head,” “heel to heel,” etc. Pairs have to keep all body parts touching which have been called out. See how long they can remain standing and balanced.

Cross the Line

In this activity, participants can see what they have in common with one another or learn something new about someone else. Have the participants form one line at the back of the room, facing the front of the room. Participants respond to each question by either crossing the line or remaining where they are. After each question, have members look around and see who stepped up or remained where they were. Questions can be deep or simple, depending on the age, and how well the group members know each other. Example questions could be: “Please cross the line if.....”

- either of your parents were born outside the U.S.
- you are the oldest sibling in the family
- you are the youngest child
- you have ever felt...left out/sad/angry/embarrassed/fortunate
- you, a family member, or a friend has ever been discriminated against.

Spider Web

Have participants form a circle. Hand one person a ball of yarn, ribbon, or string. Have the first person hold on the end of the string and toss the ball to another person in the circle. Then that person holds onto the string and tosses it to another person, until everyone has had the ball of string thrown to them. It should resemble a spider web. Then have the participants, while still holding the string, unweave the web by untangling the string. They have to help one another by communicating and giving ideas.

Trust Walk

Using tape, create a “maze” on the floor. Participants pair off and one person in each pair is to have their eyes closed, while the other person leads them through the maze while holding their hand. The partner leading the person who is “blind” is to give instructions such as “take a step to the right,” “take two steps forward,” etc., until they have completed the maze.

Catch the Dragon’s Tail

Divide participants into straight lines of six to eight people. Instruct them to put their arms around the waist of the person in front of them. The last person in line puts a handkerchief in the back of his or her belt or pocket becoming the “tail” of the dragon. The first person in line is the “head” of the dragon. The dragon has to chase its own tail. The person at the head of the dragon must try to get the handkerchief from the tail of the dragon. The goal is not to let the handkerchief get grabbed. When the person in the front finally does catch it, he or she becomes the tail and the next person in line becomes the head.

Building an Ice Cream Sundae

Have participants pair off. Each person builds an ice cream sundae for their partner. After each ingredient, they have to ask their partner a question, anything which helps them to get to know one another better. You can use this activity to build a sandwich, salad, etc.

Common Ground

Break the group into smaller, equally sized groups. Have each group come up with six things they all have in common. Each group then shares their list with everyone.

Five Fingers Icebreaker

Have each participant give the following information using the five fingers on their hand as a prompt.

- Thumb* – Name something you're good at
- Pointer* – Say where you're headed in life, what you'd like to be when you grow up
- Middle* – Tell others something that makes you mad
- Ring* – Name someone or something special to you
- Pinky* – State something to remember you by

An Outline of Me

Using the trace sheet of the outline of a person (*see attached*), copy off as many paper people as you need and cut them out. Have each participant draw themselves on one side and write three strengths they possess on the back along with their name. Each person must share one strength they wrote down. You can use the paper people to create a poster of all the group members.

Group Resume

Have the group create a group resume with headings such as educational experience, hobbies, and skills. Provide the group with a flip chart and markers to create their resume. If you have a large group, you can divide them into smaller clusters.

Favorite T-shirt

Ask participants to bring or wear their favorite t-shirt. Ask each person to show the shirt to the group and explain how this t-shirt best resembles their personality.

Favorite Animal

Ask participants to express what their favorite animal is and include three adjectives describing that animal. Have the participants write down those three adjectives and share with the group how each adjective best describes their own personality.

Guess the Appliance

Form small groups of up to four people. As each group acts out a household appliance the other participants try to guess what appliance they are.

Palms-Up

Have each member outline their hand onto a piece of paper. They then write their goals and their name inside of the outline.

Body Of

Draw the outline of a person's body on poster paper. List group's goals and what helps the group accomplish them inside the body. List what hinders achievement outside the body.

Animal Call

Line up the participants and assign each to be an animal. Two participants must be the same animal. Have participants separate far apart and then close their eyes. When you say go, they have to begin making the sound of the animal they have been assigned in the attempt to find their partner making the same sound.

"Honey, if you love me, smile"; "Honey I love you, but I just can't smile"

Have the group sit in a circle. The person who is "it" has to say the phrase: "*Honey, if you love me, smile*" to another person. They reply with: "*Honey I love you, but I just can't smile.*" If he or she laughs or smiles while saying that statement, they then become "it."

Fortune Cookie Says....

Give each participant a fortune cookie telling them not to open it yet. Go around the room and have everyone introduce themselves, open up their fortune cookie, read it aloud, and share how it relates to their role in FNL Kids, Club Live, or their FNL chapter.

Pretzel Knot

Break the participants into groups of 8 to 12. Have them stand in a circle about shoulder-width apart. Instruct them to reach into the center of the circle with their right hand and grab the right hand of someone who is not on their immediate left or right. Repeat with the left hand. Without letting go of each other's hands, the group must "untie" the knot they have gotten themselves into.

Lean In, Lean Out

Form a circle with everyone holding hands. While maintaining a good grasp on the hand of the person on both sides of them, have everyone move back until they are an arm length away from each other. Have the group count off by ones and twos. On the facilitators' signal, all the ones slowly lean into the circle, while all the twos slowly lean out of the circle. Try it until the group successfully supports itself without one person carrying all the weight. Then have the ones lean out and the twos lean in.

Bumper Cars

Pair participants into groups of two. Have one partner stand behind the other. The partner in the front (the car) is blindfolded. The partner in the back (the driver) places his or her hands onto the car's shoulders. Give the drivers two minutes to maneuver their cars around the room without bumping into the other cars. Have the participants switch roles and give them two additional minutes to drive around.

Personal Interview

Pass out the *Personal Interview* sheet to each group member (*contact OCFNLP for attachment*). Divide group into pairs. Once each person has a partner, the partners are to interview each other. Bring the group back together and have them share one interesting thing they have learned about their partner.

Signature Search

A *Signature Search* sheet is to be passed out to each member of the group (*contact OCFNLP for attachment*). The participant is to "search" for a person who can sign their sheet. You can't sign your own sheet and only one signature per person can be obtained.

All About You!!!

Pass out to each participant an *All About You!!!* sheet (*contact OCFNLP for attachment*). Have each participant answer all questions. You can have them share their answers with the entire group, in pairs, or in small groups.



Orange County Friday Night Live Partnership (OCFNLP) is sponsored by the Orange County Department of Education and partially funded by the County of Orange Health Care Agency, Alcohol and Drug Education and Prevention Team. For more information on the OCFNLP call 714/966-4356 (FNL/CL) or 714/966-4427 (FNL Kids) or e-mail us at: ocfnl@ocde.k12.ca.us

