

### Getting Started on the Right Foot

Icebreaker exercises are important as groups come together again each year and especially when bringing in new members. The following are some reasons for using icebreakers:

- Good techniques to help people feel more comfortable with themselves and others and feel more at home in a group.
- Break up cliques, invite people to form random groups, and help individuals meet others in a nonthreatening, fun way.
- Set a tone for the time a group will be together, encourage people to feel safe, evoke lots of laughter, and release tension.

The key to icebreakers is to provide fun, creative, lighthearted activities for each member of your group to get to know one another. The ideas below can be implemented throughout the year to create a strong organizational team or to liven up a meeting.

**Circle Introduction:** Have the participants stand in a circle. They have two minutes to find out who the person to their left is and some interesting facts about him/her. Each person will introduce the person on their left to the whole group.

**Do You Love Your Neighbor?** All group members form a circle with one person left in the middle of the circle. The caller (the person in the middle) says, “Hi, my name is....” Everyone else repeats the caller’s name aloud, (Hi...). The caller goes up to another member in the circle and asks the person their name. The person tells the caller their name, then the caller asks the person if he/she loves his/her neighbors (the two people on either side). If the person loves his/her neighbors, he/she says, “Yes, I love my neighbors, but I don’t like people who are wearing tennis shoes. (The person can name any type of characteristic they want for example, people who have brown eyes, people who are freshman, people who own their own cars, etc.) Then everyone whom the characteristic pertains to must move to a different spot in the circle at least two places away from their original spot. The caller’s object is to get into someone else’s spot so someone else is left in the middle. If the person does not love his/her neighbor, the person will say, “No, I don’t love my neighbors” and the two people on either side of this person have to change places before the caller gets in their spot. The person left in the middle in either situation is the new caller and the game continues. Keep your circle tight, shoulder to shoulder, so you can see where your empty spaces are. Have fun!!

**Getting To Know You:** Divide a large group of people into smaller groups and have them answer the questions listed below and have each group share their answers.

- Personal:
- A moment in my childhood I’ll never forget
  - What I wanted to be when I grew up, what I want to be now
  - The best time of my life was...
- Organizational:
- My expectations of the group
  - What I can give to the group
  - Something that bothers me about the group
  - I will strive to...

**Favorite Songs:** The object of Favorite Songs is to collect all of the songs that your group holds dear to them, for one reason or another, or that best represents them or the organization. For a surprise, this should be done with no explanation as to why. After all the music has been collected, put it together on a CD or MP3 file. Play the music for the group and have them guess which music belongs to which group member. Then have the group member explain why they chose that particular piece of music. As an added bonus, you may choose to have copies of the original recording made to give to your group after the fun is over - a great gift.

**Frisbee Anyone?** Have a frisbee at the meeting. Throw it around the room and have people that catch it answer a question or tell about themselves to the others in the group. Once that person is finished throw the frisbee to someone else in the group. This game ought to be played in a large area or outside.

**Human Lines:** Have the participants line up according to some criteria. It could be according to the alphabet, length of membership, or height. Have each person introduce the person on their left to the whole group. Allow two minutes for the participants to gather information before starting the introductions.

**Name Tag Game:** Introduce yourself to another person in the group and after conversing two minutes, exchange name tags. Share the information about your partner with another member in the organization.

**Name Whip:** Not recommended for groups over twenty: Have the group sit in a circle. Each participant will introduce themselves by saying their name and a word using the first initial of their first name. The topic on which the word is based is flexible. The facilitator would start by asking the group to think of a favorite food item, or some other topic, that begins with the first letter of their first name. Each person will be responsible to remember the names and matching items for every person who precedes him or her in the circle. The whip ends when the last person in the circle names everyone in the room and the item they like. The facilitator should ask if anyone in the group can name everyone in the circle and the item they liked.

**People to People:** Everyone is directed to pair off except one person left standing in the middle of the group. The person who does not have a pair calls out directions for the partners such as nose to nose, finger to forehead, ankle to shoulder, etc. (body parts to body parts). The partners will do whatever the person in the middle calls out (like Simon Says). The person in the middle gives between one and five directions and calls out "People to People." Everyone grabs a new partner, including the person in the middle, so you are left with a new person in the middle. The game continues. This game ought to be played in a large area or outside.

**Scavenger Hunt:** Have each participant write down their name and an obscure fact about themselves that few people know about. These are typed up on a sheet of paper, but with the names left blank. Hand out the sheets to all the participants and tell them that they are to match the obscure facts with everyone's name. This could be done in two ways, one way is to have everyone just guess and see how many they get right. Afterwards they could discuss first impressions and stereotyping. The second method is to have everyone work on the sheet throughout the meeting, week, or until next meeting and offer a prize to the person with the most correct answers. If there is a tie, have a runoff to see who can remember the most without looking at his or her sheet.

**Take As Much As You Think You'll Need:** Props: M & M's, peanuts, a roll of toilet paper, Skittles or anything else with lots of pieces (choose one) and small cups.

To begin, the leader passes around the bowl of M & M's or the roll of toilet paper. Each person is given the instructions to "Take as much as you think you will need." No further instructions are given until each person has received their M & M's. Once everyone has some, the first person begins by telling one thing about himself/herself for each M & M or piece of toilet paper they have taken. When the first person has finished, you move on to the next person in the group. As an interesting twist, and to be sure that you find out some different information on each person, you may give each color M&M a different meaning or category. We suggest the following: (example using Skittles)

Red: personal information (name, major, school, age)

Yellow: family information (parents, brothers, sisters, pets)

Orange: free category - use it to say something fun about yourself or you don't have to say anything

Green: dating experience (favorite date, worst date, significant others)

Purple: hobbies, other interests (sports, dancing, talents)

**What's In There:** Have everyone pull out their wallet or purse and pick two items they always carry and explain why they keep them (pictures, tickets, receipts, etc.).

You will find that after you have conducted a few of these icebreaker activities, your group members will work cooperatively to successfully accomplish the group's goals. Your members will feel connected to your organization because they know others and feel comfortable around the group. Attendance should remain steady, if not higher, because group members will enjoy going to your meetings, activities and events and will most likely tell a friend about the fun they are having with your organization. Your members will be happier because they are having fun!

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**WHAT DO YOU WANT TO DO TODAY?**

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