

Community Building Icebreakers



Self Disclosing Train Wreck

Description:

Similar to musical chairs, it is a great way to bond students.

Required Items:

Chairs

Directions:

- Arrange the chairs in a large circle. One chair is taken away so there is one person left standing.
- This person stands in the middle of the circle and calls out an attribute, personal trait, experience, etc. You can tailor this to service or SLC classroom experience.
- Then all who share this characteristic must find a new chair other than a chair immediately next to you.
- Whoever is left standing calls out the next attribute



React and Act

Description:

Players randomly select a sheet of paper that has an occurrence on it and they must react to the occurrence using animated expressions, gestures, and words. After a set amount of time, other players try to guess what happened that caused those reactions and actions.

Required Items:

- Slips of paper
- Writing utensils
- A bag or hat to put the slips of paper in

Directions:

- Hand out a slip of paper to each student
- Each student should write occurrences on the slips of paper. The occurrences can be emotions, winning the lottery, etc.
- Divide the group into 2 teams
- Depending on the size of your 4th Hour, have each group select 2-4 students to act out occurrences.
- The “actors” will act out their occurrence simultaneously for about 30 seconds. The actors can use gestures, facial expressions and their voice. Actors can interact with each other but they must stay in character.
- When 30 seconds are up, each team can try to guess what the occurrences were. The team with the most right answers wins!



Fear in a Hat

Description:

An ice breaker that fosters interpersonal empathy.

Required Items:

- A hat
- Slips of paper
- Writing utensils

Directions:

- Have each student write down personal fears anonymously on pieces of paper.
- Each piece of paper is placed in the hat.
- Circulate the hat and have each student take out a piece of paper. The student should then read the fear to the group and explain how the person may feel.



Cupcake Compliment

Description:

This is a good activity once the students have gotten to know each other. It ensures that they are truly bonding as a group.

Required Items:

- Cupcakes
- Little flags, or post-its attached to tooth picks

Directions:

- Prior to the 4th Hour, write a positive attribute of each student in your 4th Hour
- Have students guess which cupcake describes each student.



Candy Introductions

Description:

This is a good activity to get your students acquainted with each other.

Required Items:

- A bag of different colored candy (M&Ms, Skittles, Gum Drops)

Directions:

- Pass the bag of candy around and have each student take 3 pieces of candy. Tell them to not eat it yet.
- Assign each color to an attribute i.e. red- favorite hobby
- Each person introduces themselves including facts based on the color of candy.



Inspiration through Art

Description:

This activity allows students to reflect upon their service learning experience

Required Items:

- Paper or Poster Board
- Paint or Markers
- A book of quotes or a laptop with wireless access

Directions:

- Have each student paint/draw a picture. Whatever they feel like.
- Once their picture is finished, have them write a quote on the picture that draws in the picture and is inspirational to their experience in SLC.
- Have each student go around and explain what they drew and what quote they picked and why.



Specific Issue Icebreakers



Screamer

Description:

This is a therapeutic way for students to feel comfortable with one another and to relax.

Required Items:

None

Directions:

- Have the students form a circle. Everyone should be close together.
- Have everyone look at the ground.
- When you exclaim “heads up” each student should raise their head and look directly into someone else’s eyes.
- If 2 people are looking at each other, they scream and both are out.
- Continue to see who is out last.



Respect Activity

Description:

A way to establish respect. This is useful for future discussions

Required Items:

None

Directions:

- Have everyone in the room find someone who they do not know well and introduce themselves.
- Each pair should spend 5-10 minutes talking about respect. What does it mean for you to show respect, and what does it mean for you to be shown respect?
- After the allotted time, ask the participants to return to their seat, and open the discussion. What ideas did people come up with?
- The point is to learn from our differences, to understand each other's understanding. The point is NOT to agree. Another important part of respect is knowing each other's names, and how to pronounce them. Also, respect includes keeping the conversation in the group. This type of community building – and the safety which people feel with it --- can make or break an attempt to facilitate discussions on multicultural issues.



Conversation Inflator

Description:

This breaks the ice when conversation dies.

Required Items:

- A balloon

Directions:

- When the conversation dies, take at the balloon
- Blow it up.
- Tell the group that the conversation is like the balloon. The group needs to support it to keep it going or else it dies. While doing this, toss the balloon to a student and have the student tap it to keep it in the air.
- This helps to energize the group.



How Close Can You Go?

Description:

This exercise teaches students the importance of active listening.

Required Items:

- None

Directions:

- Divide students into 2 groups and have them make 2 parallel lines.
- Each person in line begin a conversation with the person across from them on the question: "If you had a wish, what would you wish could come true?"
- Next the lines of students move toward each other while continuing to discuss this question.
- When one partner feel uncomfortable, he or she can say "Stop!"
- At the end compare the space differences of each group.



Social Issue Icebreakers



Circles of My Multicultural Self

Description:

The circles activity engages participants in a process of identifying what they consider to be the most important dimensions of their own identity. Stereotypes are examined as participants share stories about when they were proud to be part of a particular group and when it was especially hurtful to be associated with a particular group.

Required Items:

- Circle Handout (see next page)
- Writing utensil

Directions:

- Ask participants to pair up with someone they do not know very well. Invite them to introduce each other
- Ask participants to write their names in the center circle. They should then fill in each satellite circle with a dimension of their identity they consider to be among the most important in defining themselves. Give them several examples of dimension that might fit into the satellite circles: female, athlete, Jewish, brother, educator, Asian American, middle class, etc.
- In their pairs, have participants share two stories with each other. First, they should share stories about when they felt especially proud to be associated with one of the identifiers they selected. Next, they should share a story about a time it was particularly painful to be associated with one of the identity dimensions they choose.
- The third step will be for participants to share a stereotype they have heard about one dimension of their identity that fails to describe them accurately. Ask them to complete the sentence at the bottom of the handout by filling in the blanks: "I am (a/an) _____ but I am NOT (a/an) _____." Provide your own example, such as "I am a Christian, but I am NOT a radical right Republican." Instruction for steps 1,2, and 2 should be given at once. Allow 8-10 minutes for participants to complete all three steps, but remind them with 2 minutes remaining that they must fill in the stereotype sentence.
- Probe the group for reactions to each other's stories. Ask whether anyone heard a story she or he would like to share with the group. (Make sure the person who originally told the story has granted permission to share it with the entire group.)
- Advise participants that the next step will involve individuals standing up and reading their stereotype statement. You can either simply go around the room in some order or

have people randomly stand up and read their statements. Make sure that that participants are respectful and listening actively for this step, as individuals are making themselves vulnerable by participating. Start by reading your own statement. This part of the activity can be extremely powerful if you introduce it energetically. It may take a few moments to start the flow of sharing; so allow for silent moments.

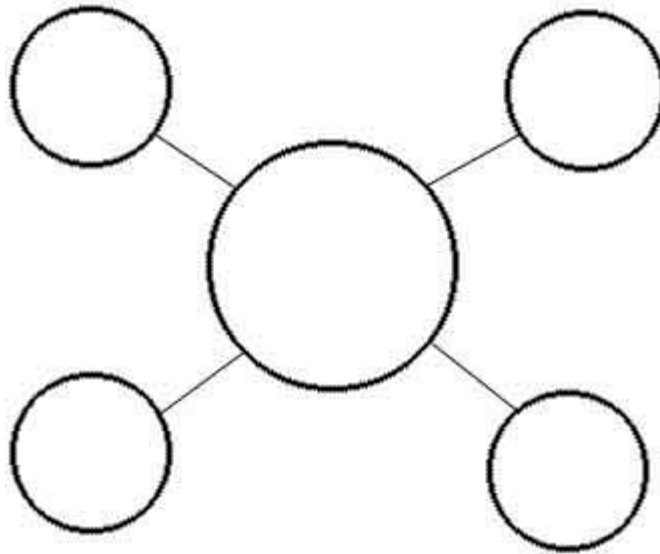
- Several questions can be used to process this activity:
 - How do the dimensions of your identity that you chose as important differ from the dimensions other people use to make judgments about you?
 - Did anybody hear somebody challenge a stereotype that you once bought into? If so, what?
 - How did it feel to be able to stand up and challenge your stereotype?
 - (There is usually some laughter when somebody shares a common stereotype such as “I may be Arab, but I am not a terrorist” or “I may be a teacher, but I do have a social life.”) I heard several moments of laughter. What was that about?
 - Where do stereotypes come from?
 - How can we eliminate them?



Circles of My Multicultural Self

This activity highlights the multiple dimensions of our identities. It addresses the importance of individuals self-defining their identities and challenging stereotypes.

Place your name in the center circle of the structure below. Write an important aspect of your identity in each of the satellite circles -- an identifier or descriptor that you feel is important in defining you. This can include anything: Asian American, female, mother, athlete, educator, Taoist, scientist, or any descriptor with which you identify.



1. Share a story about a time you were especially proud to identify yourself with one of the descriptors you used above.
2. Share a story about a time it was especially painful to be identified with one of your identifiers or descriptors.
3. Name a stereotype associated with one of the groups with which you identify that is not consistent with who you are. Fill in the following sentence:

I am (a/an) _____ but I am NOT (a/an)_____.

(So if one of my identifiers was "Christian," and I thought a stereotype was that all Christians are radical right Republicans, my sentence would be:

I am a Christian, but I am NOT a radical right Republican.

Who I Am Poems

Description:

This activity begins the introspective process while continuing to provide opportunity for individuals to make connections with each other. Participants write short poems, starting each line with “I am,” encouraging them to describe in their own words who they are and what’s salient to their identity. This is a good activity to do towards the end of the semester.

Required Items:

None

Directions:

- Ask participants to take 10-15 minutes to write a poem called “Who I Am.”
- Instruct them that the only rule for the piece is that each line must start with the phrase “I am...” Leave it open to their interpretation as much as possible, but suggest that they can, if they wish, include statements about where they’re from regionally, ethnically, religiously, etc., memories from different points in their lives, interests and hobbies, mottos or credos, favorite phrases, family traditions and customs, and whatever else defines who they are.
- Be sure to let them know that they will be sharing their poems.



Trust Me!

Description:

Allows students to dissect a major social issue. Facilitators are welcome to introduce a social justice or activist aspect to the activity inviting students to come up with solutions to the social issues that affect their service sites.

Required Items:

- A ball of yarn or string

Directions:

- Have students sit on the floor in a circle
- One person begins by asking a question, i.e. Why does racism exist? He or she then passes the ball of yarn to another student, holding onto the end of the yarn.
- The next student makes a comment and tosses the ball to another student while holding on to his or her part of the yarn.
- When the string is completely used, a large web is formed



Taxi Cab

Description:

Demonstrates conflict management, stereotyping, and cultural sensitivity

Required Items:

- A few “types” of people that the students should act out and where each type wants to go

Directions:

- Arrange the students into groups of 2-4.
- Each group should select a person to be the cab driver
- The other members of the group will act out the description of the type of person
- Each group has 2-3 minutes
- After the role-plays, discuss the stereotypes and conflicts each character had





Get to know you Icebreakers

Setup for Four Corners what makes me unique

Distribute a pen and sheet of paper for each player. Each person divides the sheet into four boxes/squares either by folding the paper in half twice (vertically and horizontally) or simply by drawing a horizontal and vertical line that crosses in the middle. For each square, each person will describe themselves in the form of drawings.

Choose these four topics in advance. For example, in the top left square, everyone could draw “favorite hobbies,” while in the top right, people could illustrate “favorite place on earth for vacation,” the bottom left could be something like “if you were an animal, which one would you be?” and the bottom right could be something like “what are the most important things in your life?” Feel free to be as creative, hypothetical, or deep as you like.

Allow five to ten minutes to draw.

When everyone is finished, gather them together and share the drawings as a group. This icebreaker is an excellent way for students to show-and-tell what makes them unique!

Never Have I Ever is an icebreaker game that helps people get to know each other better. Everyone sits in a circle and take turns saying something they have never done. Each player starts with ten fingers showing. Each time says something that you've done, you drop a finger. The goal is to be the last player remaining.

This *get-to-know-you* game can be played indoors or outdoors. The recommended number of people for this game is ten to fifteen, but all group sizes can play by dividing into appropriate sized groups. Recommended age is 8 and up. No special materials are required.

Instructions for Never Have I Ever

Instruct everyone to sit in a circle. If you have an extremely large group, tell people to form smaller circles of about ten to fifteen people. To start each round, each player holds out all ten fingers and places them on the floor. Go around the circle and one at a time, each person announces something that they have never done, beginning the sentence with the phrase "Never have I ever..." For example, a person could say, "Never have I ever been to Europe." For each statement that is said, all the other players drop a finger if they have done that statement. So, if three other people have been to Europe before, those three people must put down a finger, leaving them with nine fingers. The goal is to stay in the game the longest (to be the last person with fingers remaining). To win, it's a good strategy to say statements that most people have done, but you haven't.

Playing this game, along with the benefit of getting to know each others' experiences better, can be very humorous (e.g. saying silly statements such as, "Never have I ever skipped a class in school" or "Never have I ever soiled my pants.") Have fun!



TWO TRUTHS AND A LIE

Two Truths and a Lie is a classic get-to-know-you icebreaker. Players tell two truths and one lie. The object of the game is to determine which statement is the false one. Interesting variations of this game are provided below.

This game is a *get-to-know-you icebreaker*. Recommended group size is: small, medium, or large. Works best with 6-10 people. Any indoor setting will work. No special materials are needed, although pencil and paper is optional. For all ages.

Instructions for Two Truths and a Lie

Ask all players to arrange themselves in a circle. Instruct each player to think of three statements about themselves. Two must be true statements, and one must be false. For each person, he or she shares the three statements (in any order) to the group. The goal of the icebreaker game is to determine which statement is false. The group votes on which one they feel is a lie, and at the end of each round, the person reveals which one was the lie.

Variations to Try

“Two Truths and a Dream Wish.” – An interesting variation of Two Truths and a Lie is “Two Truths and a Dream Wish.” Instead of telling a lie, a person says a wish. That is, something that is not true — yet something that the person wishes to be true. For example, someone that has never been to Europe might say: “I often travel to Europe for vacation.” This interesting spin on the icebreaker can often lead to unexpected, fascinating results, as people often share touching wishes about themselves.

Who Done It? is an icebreaker that reveals interesting (and sometimes incredible!) things people have done. It’s a simple guessing game that is straightforward to play.

This game is a *get-to-know-you* style icebreaker in which players try to guess which person corresponds to each item written on note cards. The recommended group size is a medium sized group of about eight to sixteen people, although the game can be adapted to accommodate other sized groups. Playing this icebreaker indoors is most ideal. Materials required are: several note cards and pens. Who Done It? is playable by all ages, including college students and adults in corporate settings.



WHO DONE IT? WHODUNIT?

Setup and Gameplay for Who Done It (Whodunit?)

This game can be played individually or with two teams. For extremely large groups, choose ten volunteers and split them into two teams of five.

To set up the game, pass out an index card and a pen for each participant.

Ask each person to write down something interesting they have done. Examples include the following:

- I went skydiving once.
- I got arrested before.
- I once drank a gallon of milk.
- I lived in seven different states.
- I ate bugs before.

Try to instruct people to write a fact that most people don't already know – the sillier (or more unbelievable) the better.

Collect all the cards (separate them into two piles if two teams are playing).

Shuffle the cards and then pass them back out.

Each person (or team) takes turns reading aloud their card and then the reader must guess whose fact he or she read. After he or she guesses, the guessed person simply says “yes” or “no”. If the person guesses correctly, the guessed person can briefly explain what they wrote (if desired). The guessing continues until all cards are exhausted. Everyone reveals who wrote which card at the end.

The *Who Done It?* game is a good, simple get-to-know-you game that is especially good for groups with new people, or for whenever you wish to help people get to know each other better to break the ice. Sometimes humorous facts can be revealed, leading people to exclaim, “You did WHAT?”

A silly icebreaker game for a small group.

Have each person secretly write on a post-it note the name of a famous person. Keeping the name hidden, stick the post-it to another's forehead.

Each person takes turns to ask the group questions to figure out whom the unknown person is. The catch is that only yes or no answers can be asked e.g.

- Am I alive?
- Am I female?

If the answer is no your turn is over. If the answer is yes, you can ask another question. Keep going until you get a no or make a guess at whom you are. If you guess right, you win or if you guess wrong your turn is over.

Keep going until everyone has guessed or if time is tight, maybe stop after a few right answers.

Chat Show

Great for groups of strangers, and avoids the dreaded pain of introducing yourself.

Get the group to pair off and take turns in being a chat show host and guest. The chat show host has to find out 3 interesting facts about their guest. Switch the roles and repeat.

Bring everyone back to the big group and ask them to present briefly the 3 facts about their guest to the group. Maybe go round the group randomly so people are less aware of their turn coming up next and panicking about it.

Watch timing on this one as it has a tendency to go on too long if your group likes to chat too much.

My Name Means...

A good game for small groups who need to know a little bit more about each other.

Split the group into pairs. Each pair has to come up with words that describe the person using the letters in their first name. The phrase is then shared with the group.

As an example, Lyndsay could stand for "Loud, Young, Nerdy, Dreamer, Strong, Adventurous, Yearning".

As a more creative alternative, each pair has to come up with a silly phrase based on the letters in their first name.

Lyndsay could be "Lively Young Nurses Dance Salsa All Year"

Marooned!

Separate your group into smaller groups of not more than 5 people. Ask: "If you were stranded on a desert island, what 3 items would you bring with you?" Be sure that participants explain their suggestions to the group. Have the groups go back to the larger group and explain what tools they would bring with them, and why.

This exercise can give you insight into how your group members think. It is also an exercise in group decision-making as participants have to discuss and debate what objects