

PART TWO

THE ACTIVITIES



CHAPTER 3

Welcoming: Introductions and Icebreakers



BET YOU DIDN'T KNOW THIS

- This is . . .** An icebreaker activity in which participants share little-known facts about themselves.
- The purpose is . . .** For participants to learn something interesting about each other. This information may prompt some small talk later.
- Use this when . . .**
- Individuals already know each other at least a little bit.
 - A new team is forming, especially with participants who already know each other.
 - People seem bored with each other and need a boost of energy.
- Materials you'll need . . .**
- One index card for each participant.
 - A straight pin (or tape) for each participant.
 - A pen or pencil for each participant.
- Here's how . . .**
1. Divide the group into two teams.
 2. Give everyone an index card.
 3. Have all participants write one little-known fact about themselves on their card.
 4. Collect all the cards from Team 1 and Team 2. Place the stack of Team 2's cards aside for now.

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5. Randomly distribute Team 1's cards to Team 2, keeping them face down (so participants can't read them).
 6. Have the Team 2 participants pin the card they have on their back, written side showing (so that everyone can read the card except the one wearing it).
 7. All the participants mingle. Each Team 1 member finds his or her card on the back of a Team 2 member and pairs up with that person.
 8. When paired up, the Team 2 member asks the Team 1 member yes/no questions to determine (guess) what is written on the card.
 9. Repeat the process for Team 2's cards.

Ask these questions . . .

- How much did you learn about each other? (*I had no idea that she . . . ; I don't want to mess with this guy; Looks are deceiving!*)
- How difficult (or easy) was it to guess what was on your card? (*Harder than I thought, because I kept wanting to ask more open questions; Easy once I figured out it was a sport she liked.*)
- What questions helped you the most? (*Questions that were broader; Questions that didn't assume too much to begin with; Just asking lots of questions fast.*)
- Why do you think it's important to get to know each other here at work beyond just knowing the tasks that each other performs? (*Because we work with the whole person, not just a part of that person; So we can enjoy our time together more; It allows us to appreciate each other better.*)
- How can we get to know each other back on the job?

Tips for success . . .

- After each round, give the group a little time for discussion. Many people will have read the cards

that others wrote and be curious who wrote this one or that one. Undoubtedly, there will be a few stories that simply *must* be told!

- ▶ Make sure no one looks at or reads the card that goes on his or her back.

Try these variations . . .

- ▶ Have participants write two statements on their card, one true and one false. Follow the same procedure, but, after the wearer has guessed both statements, he or she then must guess which one is true and which one is not.
- ▶ At Step 2, rather than a little-known fact, have participants write a provocative question. At Step 7, Team 1 participants do not pair up with whoever is wearing their card. Instead, everyone mingles freely. As participants read the questions on others' backs, they merely respond to the question (without telling what the question was). Team 2 participants are challenged with guessing what the question on their back is.
- ▶ At Step 2, have the participants write a fact that is well known about themselves. At Step 7, Team 2 participants mingle with Team 1 participants and ask them yes/no questions about the fact on their back. The challenge is to guess what is written and who wrote it.

For virtual teams . . .

This activity works well for groups that are able to communicate with each other via instant messaging, e-mail, or telephone.

1. Pair everyone up.
2. Person A keeps his or her information secret while Person B asks the yes/no questions.
3. Each of the variations listed can work for a virtual team.



CELL PHONE RINGS

- This is . . .** A fun introduction or icebreaker activity in which participants introduce themselves by playing their cell phone ring.
- The purpose is . . .** For participants to learn a little bit about each other that is not work related.
- Use this when . . .**
- Participants don't know each other well.
 - You want the participants to warm up, begin talking to each other and connecting without getting too personal or intrusive.
 - You don't have prep time and/or materials for anything more elaborate.
- Materials you'll need . . .**
- Each participant needs a cell phone.
- Here's how . . .**
1. Have each participant introduce himself or herself with relevant information (name, position, location, etc.).
 2. The participant then plays his or her cell phone ring tone and explains why he or she chose that particular tone.
- For example . . .** "My name is Lynn. This is my cell phone ring. I chose this one because I'm often outside watching

my son's baseball games. If my phone rings in my purse, I need it to be loud and obnoxious so that I'm sure to hear it!"

Ask these questions . . .

- ▶ Why did you choose that ring tone? (*I wanted something that reminded me of the telephone ring I heard when I was a kid; It just came with the phone, and I never changed it; My son likes to change it on me periodically.*)
- ▶ Do you have separate ring tones for special individuals or numbers? (*No, I hardly know how to change this one; Yes, so I can know ahead of time if I want to answer or not; No, that would take too long to set up.*)
- ▶ When do you turn your phone to vibrate? Off altogether? (*As a single mother, I never turn it off completely; I turn it off in meetings; I only use it to make emergency calls, so I rarely ever turn it on.*)
- ▶ How can we get to know more about each other back on the job?

Tips for success . . .

- ▶ This may be a great way to introduce the idea of turning off the cell phones during the meeting. After the tone is played, the phone goes off (or to vibrate)!
- ▶ Be prepared to call others' numbers to make the phone ring—not everyone will know how to demonstrate the ring tone.
- ▶ This can be a fun way to introduce or reinforce policies about cell phone usage in the workplace.

Try these variations . . .

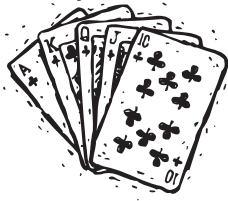
- ▶ Rather than sharing cell phone tones, pass around your cell and show everyone your favorite picture that is saved on it.
- ▶ Make a list of everyone's cell number. Put all the cell phones in the center of a circle. Use your

phone to call any number on the list. Upon hearing the tone, the owner retrieves his or her phone and then explains the reason for that tone. (This is especially fun if more than one person has the same tone!) Then he or she calls another number on the list, and the game continues.

For virtual teams . . .

This activity works well when the technology used includes audio capability.

1. Follow the steps above.
2. A variation: Gather everyone's cell number. Randomly call the numbers. The owners of the numbers tell the group about their ring tone.
3. A variation: Participants take a picture of themselves with their cell phone and send it to each other. Participants then comment on what they are wearing and why, or on what is in the background, or about what the look on their face really means!



HUMAN POKER

This is . . . An icebreaker activity in which participants form good poker hands with cards handed to them at the beginning.

The purpose is . . . For participants to have fun mingling and loosen up a bit and to increase the energy in the room.

Use this when . . .

- ▶ The group is large (more than 25 participants).
- ▶ Most people don't know each other.
- ▶ You don't have time for long introductions or icebreakers.
- ▶ You want a fun way to break a large group into teams of 5 members each.

Materials you'll need . . .

- ▶ A deck of playing cards for every 30–40 participants (use three to four decks for a group of 98 participants)—all decks shuffled and mixed together.

Here's how . . .

1. As participants enter the room, hand each one a randomly chosen playing card from the mixed decks.
2. Give participants 5–10 minutes (depending on the size of the group) to compare cards and form groups of five members to construct the best five-card poker hand they can.

For example . . . Winning five-card poker hands in order from highest to lowest:

1. Royal Flush (10, J, Q, K, and Ace of the same suit).
2. Straight Flush (all five cards in sequence and of the same suit).
3. Four-of-a-Kind (four cards of equal rank).
4. Full House (three of equal rank with two different cards of equal rank).
5. Flush (any five cards of the same suit).
6. Straight (all five cards in sequence regardless of suit).
7. Three-of-a-Kind (three cards of equal rank).
8. Two Pair (two cards of equal rank with two different cards of equal rank).
9. Pair (two cards of equal rank).
10. High card (no pairs, the highest of the five cards determines strength).

Ask these questions . . .

- ▶ How did you decide which poker hand to pursue?
(I had a 9 and so did the person next to me when we started, so we figured we just needed two more; I don't know how to play poker, so I held up my card and waited for someone to grab me; As soon as I figured out there were more Queens in the room, I let go of the straight I was looking for and went after Queens.)
- ▶ Did anyone change teams after joining one? Why? How did it make the other team members feel?
(I did, but I felt guilty about it; She changed because they bribed her.)
- ▶ How much did the time limit factor into the game?
(We were going for a Royal Flush, but the time limit made us settle for a straight; We were done long before time was up, so we started trading players to go from a Full House to Four-of-a-Kind.)

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- ▶ How might you play the game differently if we did this again next week? What strategies did you learn that would improve your hand?

Tips for success . . .

- ▶ Don't worry about having too many decks of cards to play with. More is better than not enough (it allows teams to form "good" poker hands).
- ▶ You may want to award a small prize for the winning hand(s).
- ▶ For those not familiar with the rules, post the 10-item list of poker hands or pass them out on paper.
- ▶ You can make it easier to form good hands by using more decks and pulling out all the 2s, 3s, 4s, and 5s.
- ▶ Beforehand, decide whether participants can begin forming the poker hands as soon as they get their cards (as a reward for being early or on time) or whether they must wait until everyone is present so that everyone starts at the same time.
- ▶ If more than one deck is used, be prepared to handle a tie breaker (because it's now possible for two groups to get an identical Full House, for example).
- ▶ With multiple decks, be prepared for poker hands that are not possible with one deck (e.g., five Kings) and either outlaw them or include them in the hierarchy of winning hands that you post.

Try these variations . . .

- ▶ Use a different card game, such as gin rummy.
- ▶ Use this activity to divide large groups into teams of 5 for later work sessions, team-building exercises, brain-storming sessions, and so forth.
- ▶ For smaller groups, or to help a group just pair up, post four randomly chosen cards and play a version of Texas Hold'em. Participants pair up

with someone whose card, with theirs and those posted, create the best hand.

- Make the game easier (and quicker) by eliminating many of the winning poker hands. For example, ask people to get into teams of Four-of-a-Kind or a Flush.
- Hand each participant two cards. Participants can choose only ONE to play with (which may depend on what card others are looking for).
- Allow participants to select their cards. Don't let them talk with anyone or get cues from anyone already in the room before they select their card!
- Have a Round 2. Once all the poker hands are made, announce that everyone must get into another hand. No one can be in a hand with anyone they were with in Round 1. Did the poker hands get better (stronger?) or not?

For virtual teams . . .

This activity isn't suitable for virtual teams.