
Compendium of Icebreakers Volume 3

Beginnings and Endings

Michèle Barca and Kate Cobb

HRD Press, Inc. • Amherst • Massachusetts

Copyright © 1993, 2007, Kate Cobb and Michèle Barca

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the permission of the publisher.

Published by: HRD Press, Inc.
22 Amherst Road
Amherst, Massachusetts 01002
1-800-822-2801 (U.S. and Canada)
413-253-3488
413-253-3490 (fax)
www.hrdpress.com

ISBN 978-1-59996-069-2

Production services by Jean Miller
Editorial services by Sally Farnham
Cover design by Eileen Klockars

Contents

Introduction.....	v
How to Use This Manual	ix
Matrix Index—Beginnings	xi
Matrix Index—Endings	xiii
Part I: Beginnings.....	1
1 Alphabet Game.....	3
2 Animals.....	7
3 Apples and Pears	9
4 Back-to-Back	11
5 Behind My Back.....	13
6 Book Jacket.....	15
7 Breathing Through Your Toes	17
8 Bunny Game.....	19
9 Creating Rapport	21
10 Deliveries.....	23
11 Dings and Dongs	25
12 Do I trust you?	29
13 Fruit	31
14 Getting to Know You.....	33
15 Great Expectations	35
16 Guess Whose	37
17 Hobbies	39
18 How are you feeling?.....	41
19 I want to be... ..	43
20 Journey to the Group.....	45
21 Left Luggage.....	47
22 Life Collage.....	49
23 Messages from My Past	51
24 My Fantasy	53
25 My Secret Self	55
26 Obituary	57
27 Personal Shield	59
28 Picture of Myself	61
29 Reincarnation	63
30 Shaking Out.....	65
31 Shapes	67

32	Snapshot	69
33	Success Story.....	73
34	Suitcases.....	75
35	Three Faces of Me	77
36	Travel Agents	79
37	Where do I fit in?	81
38	Where in the world?.....	83
39	Who cleaned their teeth this morning?	85
40	Zodiac Game	87
Part II: Endings		89
41	Action!.....	91
42	And Now Goodbye	93
43	Card to Remember Me By	95
44	Closing Circles.....	97
45	Color This Group	99
46	Compliments.....	101
47	Different Ways to Say Goodbye	103
48	Do I trust you now?.....	105
49	Gallery of Wants and Offers	107
50	Gift to the Group	109
51	Group Shield.....	111
52	Group Sound	113
53	How do I feel now?	115
54	Import/Export Game	117
55	Letter to Myself	119
56	Letting Go	121
57	Messages in the Shoe	123
58	My, how I've changed!.....	125
59	My Message to You.....	127
60	Over the Rainbow	129
61	Pairs Appreciation	131
62	Remember Me.....	133
63	Review of Expectations	135
64	Snapshot	137
65	Story Time	139
66	This is Goodbye.....	141
67	This is Our Group	143
68	Traffic Lights	145
69	What do I take away with me?.....	147
70	You're great as you are, but... ..	149

Introduction

The purpose of this manual is to provide a set of exercises to use either to begin or to end a training course. Whether you are new to this type of exercise or not, this manual provides a variety for you to choose from.

If you already use these exercises, then you will appreciate their value in the formation, development, and effectiveness of your training. When appropriately used, they can increase the cohesiveness of the group of participants and create a relaxed atmosphere, thus enhancing the learning experience. You will find that the level of group participation rises in response to such activities.

So why doesn't every trainer use them all the time? Obviously you need to use such exercises—ice breakers, energizers, etc.—appropriately and sparingly; you can have too much of a good thing! More often, reluctance to participate comes, not from the group, but from the trainers themselves. Sometimes you may not be particularly alert at the beginning of a course; you may not be in the mood to be a fruit (see page 31); you may be tired at the end of a program and just want the group to leave so that you can pack up and go home. Trainers are human beings and no doubt we've all felt this way at some time, but if you can raise enough enthusiasm for the exercise, you will find that your energy rises too and the benefits to all will be enormous.

Sometimes our own feelings about ourselves and our role prevent us from using a particular exercise. Some trainers may find it uncomfortable miming their hobbies (see page 39) in front of a group of strangers. In that case, don't use that type of exercise: if you force yourself to, your own embarrassment will communicate itself to the group and the exercise may fail. The exercises in this manual were designed for all trainers, from the most reserved to the most extroverted, so choose what you are comfortable with and, probably, once you see the results, you will become confident enough to take more risks.

There is no point pretending that using such exercises doesn't involve risks on your part—it does, and you may find that nobody wants to join in. But this is highly unlikely if you show the right amount of enthusiasm and commitment, as you would do with any other training exercise. The reason for this is clear, especially at the beginning of a course when people are probably feeling anxious and uncertain. Generally, they do not want to see the trainer “fail” because, in terms of the dynamics of the group, you are the “leader” (whether you like this or not). Challenges to your leadership may arise from group members. This can be healthy or

destructive depending on the way they are handled. But even so, you provide security for the group as leader, and generally no one wants to see you “go under.” People will, therefore, support you by participating in your exercises, even if they need a little encouragement to start with. If anyone still refuses to join in, they shouldn’t be forced to participate. Take care not to express any negative feelings you may have about them (it’s natural in these circumstances to be a little angry with those who do not wish to join in with your carefully planned exercises). Try to find them another role in the activity—perhaps as observer or timekeeper—so that they are still involved.

This brings us to another important point. Normally you should explain the purpose of the exercise before you start (there will be occasions when doing this destroys the impact) and tell the groups what the outcome of the exercise is (the discussion, the drawing, etc.). If, for example, participants don’t know whether their fantasies (see page 53) are going to be revealed to the whole group or just their partner, this will increase their anxiety and as a consequence their level of hostility toward the exercise (and you!) and reduce their level of participation.

As with everything you do as a trainer, you need to be sensitive to your group as a whole and to the individuals in that group. That means being aware of how your exercises may affect people on the basis of their race, age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, size, and so on. This might seem obvious, but when planning exercises, take care that you don’t choose (or invent) something that could exclude a member of your group because of their membership of other groups outside. For instance, if you give examples of names in an exercise, avoid using all “white, English” names. This is equally true when working with a mixed race group or one you perceive to be all white because it gives everyone a wider perspective. If you are giving examples of hobbies to a group of women, don’t restrict your choice to traditional women’s activities such as cooking and sewing—you might well have a bricklayer in your midst.

Be sensitive to any members of your group who have a disability and adapt exercises to suit them where possible. If you can’t adapt a particular exercise, then don’t leave them out—choose another exercise instead and don’t assume that you can judge a person’s capabilities. Ask them what they can and can’t do.

You may or may not consider it appropriate to join in some of the exercises suggested in this manual. Sometimes it is appropriate and useful, but oftentimes it isn’t. Beware of using the opportunity to discuss too much about yourself inappropriately with the group. In each exercise, it is made clear whether it is useful to join in or not, but ultimately you must decide for yourself. So remember:

1. Choose appropriate exercises for your desired objective.
2. Don't expect participants to do things you wouldn't do.
3. Be clear about the purpose and outcome of each exercise.
4. Be sensitive to individual differences.
5. It's worth taking risks!

How to Use This Manual ———

This manual contains 70 exercises that we have tried out during our years as trainers and that we hope you will find useful. They are classified as either “Beginnings” or “Endings.” Each exercise includes a section on “Context,” that indicates the type of group the exercise is particularly useful for, and a section called “Purpose” that will clarify further objectives for that exercise.

You will be able to see at a glance what materials you will need and how much time to allocate, although this is obviously only a guide and you might find that you take less or more time than we suggest.

All the exercises in this manual are based on a group of 12 people, but can be adapted to larger or smaller groups.

The “Method” section contains your instructions as the trainer, and the “Suggested Explanation” is a guide to what you might say to your group about the exercise.

Where we know of other “Variations” from the basic exercise, we have given them to you, and under “Possible Pitfalls,” we describe dangers to watch out for.

There is space at the end for you to make your own notes, if you wish to, about how the exercises have gone, what changes you might like to make, etc.

We hope you will try many of these exercises and that they add energy and fun to your training as well as learning.

Matrix Index—Beginnings

While all these exercises are useful beginnings of training sessions, some have specific coverage. The “beginning” exercises marked with an asterisk have optional “ending” exercises for use with the same group.

	Page Number	Awareness (of self/others)	Career Planning	Communication Skills	Energizer	Expectations of Course	Learn Participants' Names	Ongoing/Modular Training	Personal Development	Stress Management	Team Building	Introductions/Learning About One Another
Alphabet Game	3				•						•	
Animals	7							•	•			•
Apples and Pears	9					•						
Back-to-Back	11			•								•
Behind My Back	13											•
Book Jacket	15											•
Breathing Through Your Toes	17	•								•		
Bunny Game	19						•					
Creating Rapport	21	•										
Deliveries	23					•						
Dings and Dongs	25				•							
Do I trust you?*	29	•							•		•	
Fruit	31				•		•					
Getting to Know You	33	•										•
Great Expectations	35					•						•
Guess Whose	37											•
Hobbies	39						•					

	Page Number	Awareness (of self/others)	Career Planning	Communication Skills	Energizer	Expectations of Course	Learn Participants' Names	Ongoing/Modular Training	Personal Development	Stress Management	Team Building	Introductions/Learning About One Another
How are you feeling?	41	•										•
I want to be...	43											•
Journey to the Group	45	•										
Left Luggage	47											•
Life Collage	49		•					•				•
Messages from My Past	51	•										•
My Fantasy	53											•
My Secret Self	55											•
Obituary	57	•							•			
Personal Shield	59					•		•				•
Picture of Myself	61							•				
Reincarnation	63											•
Shaking Out	65				•							
Shapes	67								•			•
Snapshot*	69							•	•			
Success Story	73								•			
Suitcases	75						•					
Three Faces of Me	77	•										•
Travel Agents	79						•					
Where do I fit in?	81	•						•				
Where in the world?	83											•
Who cleaned their teeth this morning?	85							•				•
Zodiac Game	87					•						•

Matrix Index—Endings

While all these exercises are useful endings of training sessions, some have specific coverage.

	Page Number	Action Planning	Evaluation/Feedback on Course	Giving/Getting Positive Feedback	Ongoing/Modular Training	Ongoing Support	Personal Development
Action!	91	•					
And Now Goodbye	93				•		
Card to Remember Me By	95			•			
Closing Circles	97		•				
Color This Group	99			•	•		
Compliments	101			•			•
Different Ways to Say Goodbye	103				•		
Do I trust you now?	105				•		
Gallery of Wants and Offers	107					•	
Gift to the Group	109			•	•		
Group Shield	111		•	•	•		
Group Sound	113				•		
How do I feel now?	115						•
Import/Export Game	117		•				
Letter to Myself	119	•					
Letting Go	121						
Messages in the Shoe	123			•	•		
My, how I've changed!	125			•			
My Message to You	127			•	•		
Over the Rainbow	129			•	•		
Pairs Appreciation	131			•			

	Page Number	Action Planning	Evaluation/Feedback on Course	Giving/Getting Positive Feedback	Ongoing/Modular Training	Ongoing Support	Personal Development
Remember Me	133			•			
Review of Expectations	135		•				
Snapshot	137			•			
Story Time	139			•			
This is Goodbye	141			•	•		
This is Our Group	143			•	•		
Traffic Lights	145	•					
What do I take away with me?	147			•	•		
You're great as you are, but...	149			•			•

Part I

Beginnings

How you open a session is vital—it may not make or break a course (though sometimes it comes close!), but it can certainly save a great deal of time and energy later.

A training course starts as soon as you or the participants (whichever happens first) enter the room, and the process of creating rapport with your group begins then. You can set the tone you want by the way you greet people, make them feel welcome, help them be comfortable, and so on. Also the way you set out the physical environment communicates much about the tone of the event to participants—are they to sit behind desks and thus expect a “teacher-led” formal course or sit in a circle with the trainer in a more informal layout?

The importance of creating rapport—getting on the same wavelength as the group—cannot be over-emphasized: it means that right from the start the group will be “with” you and thus open and enthusiastic to learning. This doesn’t mean that they won’t have fears and anxieties, but a relaxed atmosphere should encourage a sense of safety and security.

You will see that many of the “Beginning” exercises start with: “Ask participants to sit in a circle....” We believe that the most effective way to run training courses is informally so that people don’t feel they are back at school, but rather are equals to and not inferior to the trainer. Even if we are running writing skills courses, we still have people sitting in a circle for discussions, but with available tables for writing exercises when needed.

However, your style may be different, and so try to develop ways of working with which you are comfortable. Bear in mind, though, that physical barriers create psychological barriers, so have the confidence to do away with them where possible.

We have already created an atmosphere with our group before we have even begun the course. Why, then, bother with a “beginning” exercise? The reasons include:

1. To provide a shared experience for the whole group that helps build cohesiveness and trust
2. To focus people’s attention on the course and away from their other preoccupations

3. To continue the rapport-creating process
4. To learn and remember people's names so that nobody has to resort to badges or name plates (which depersonalizes the training process and defeats its object)
5. To extract any particular learning point pertinent to the topic of the course
6. To raise the energy level and prepare for learning
7. To have fun (but not at the group's or an individual's expense)

As with any training, exercises should be selected that are relevant and appropriate to your group and to your objectives. Be careful not to choose something too challenging for a group of people new to one another and do not expect them to reveal too much about themselves until you have created the right atmosphere for this to happen. Always be sensitive to the “baggage” people bring to training courses—the experiences and feelings of their whole life (not just work) that they are carrying around with them. They may or may not reveal any of these things, and certainly no one will reveal anything until they feel safe enough with you and the group, but certain exercises may bring unpleasant memories to the fore (e.g., a participant may have recently suffered a bereavement, or be very unhappy in their job, or have had an argument with his or her partner that morning). If anybody does express particularly heightened emotions, either anger or tears, then deal with it sensitively and try not to be embarrassed or defensive.

Choosing a beginning exercise that starts off the course well can improve the way the group responds to your other learning activities and to the training as a whole.

1 Alphabet Game

Context Useful in team building

Purpose

- Energizer
- Demonstrate the concept of synergy in a group

Materials

- Flipchart paper and markers
- A text to read from
- Paper for participants to write on

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Write the letters of the alphabet A through Z down the left-hand side of a piece of flipchart paper, one under another.
2. Ask participants to write this in the same way on their paper.
3. Choose a sentence or two (which has 26 letters) from any text, and beside each letter of the alphabet, write a second letter taken from your text so that you end up with 26 pairs of letters; e.g., AT, BH, CE, DC, EA, FT [*the text chosen here is “the cat sat on the mat”*]. Read these letters out as you are writing them so that participants can also add them to their first list.
4. Explain that these pairs of letters could be the initials of famous people, living or dead, real or fictional. Tell them they have 5 minutes to think of as many names as they can of people with these initials and write them down.
5. Give them time to do this and then ask them to swap their list with someone else in the group. Their partner will now review the list and agree or disagree with the names written down—whether they are in fact famous people. If they agree, then their partner scores one point; if they disagree, then their partner has to try to convince them that they are right. If they can convince them, they score another point, but if they cannot, they have to cross out that name and score

nothing. Allow enough time (about 5 minutes) for both people to look at each other's list.

6. Go around the group and make a note of the scores of each person.
7. Divide the group into subgroups (about six maximum) and ask each group now to repeat the process of finding names of famous people using the same letters. They can offer the names they have already thought of individually or find new ones; it doesn't matter. Give them the same time (5 minutes) and a sheet of flipchart paper to prepare their list.
8. While they are doing this, you can calculate the average by adding together all the individual scores and dividing by the number of people in the group.
9. At the end of the time, each group presents their list, and the other group(s)—or the trainer if there is only one group—has the right to challenge as before.
10. Look at the score(s) for each subgroup and write the average for the group you calculated earlier (see #8 above). On almost every occasion, you will find that the scores achieved by people working together in groups are greater than that achieved by each individual.
11. This can lead to a discussion or further exercises relating the importance of effective teamwork.

Suggested Explanation

[After writing the pairs of letters]

"Each of these pairs of letters could be the initials of a famous person, living or dead, real or fictional. What I want you to do in 5 minutes is to think of as many famous people with these initials as you can. You only need to find one person for each pair.

"Now share your list with a partner and see if they agree with you. If they do, you score one point; if they don't, then you have to try to convince them that you are right and, if you can convince them, you score another point.

"Now I want you to do the same thing, but as a group this time."

Possible Pitfalls

In the very unlikely event that you arrive at a group score that is smaller than the individual average, you will need to explain what usually happens.

Notes:

2 Animals

Context Any group but most useful for personal development or ongoing group

Purpose To introduce one another and share some information about each participant with the group

Materials None

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to think of an animal they would like to be, e.g., lion, rabbit.
2. Ask each participant to say their name and their animal, e.g., “I am Michele the antelope,” and then to speak as this animal, saying what they like and don’t like about being that animal.
3. Go around the room so that everyone takes their turn.
4. When everyone has spoken, ask participants to pair up with someone else in the group. Have the pairs share with their partner why they chose that animal, whether there are similarities between their life and the strengths and weaknesses they spoke of, and whether they want to achieve any of the qualities that the animal possesses. Allow 10 minutes for this stage.
5. After 10 minutes, invite the participants to regroup in a circle and ask participants to share significant elements from their discussions. Don’t force anyone to reveal anything they don’t want to.

Suggested Explanation

“To start to share some information about ourselves, I would like you to think of an animal you would like to be and why, and then to introduce yourself to the group as if you were that animal, talking about the strengths and weaknesses you possess as that animal.

“The next stage is to pair up with someone and spend 10 minutes sharing why you chose that animal, whether any of the qualities you spoke about are present in your life, and if you strive to develop some of those qualities. When we regroup, I will ask you to share anything significant you want to with the group.”

Variations

1. Ask participants to draw the animal and “wear” the drawing while they introduce themselves.
2. Use any other class of things, e.g., plants, cars, furniture.

Possible Pitfalls

Some people may self-disclose quite personal things, e.g., they might realize they have certain qualities lacking in their lives, so you need to be supportive and sensitive to this.

Notes:

3 Apples and Pears

Context Any group

Purpose

- To learn people's expectations for the course and any concerns or fears they might have
- To clarify the objectives of the course and deal with any misunderstandings or concerns at the outset

Materials

- 2 sheets of flipchart paper
- Markers

Time 20 to 30 minutes

Method

1. Explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation) and ask participants to think about their expectations and possible concerns about the course. These should be hopes and fears about the course itself rather than any possible outcomes or work issues related to the topic.
2. While they are doing this, draw a very large tree on each piece of flipchart paper and, on one sheet, draw apple shapes inside the tree (this is for expectations) and on the other draw pear shapes inside the tree (this is for fears/concerns about being in the course). There should be enough apples and pears for each person to write something in each, and these should be large enough for people to write a few words inside. (You may prefer to prepare this before the start of the course.)
3. Ask participants to explain in turn their expectations and concerns (if any) about the course and then to write on the flipchart paper a word or short phrase that sums these up inside either the apple or the pear as appropriate.
4. Once everyone has spoken, go through the expectations sheet with the group, pointing out what will and will not be covered in the course.

5. Then go through the concerns sheet, reassuring people (if appropriate) about the content/methodology of the course.
6. These sheets can then be displayed until the end of the course and checked throughout with the participants as part of your evaluation of the course.

Suggested Explanation

“We’re going to be together for X days, and it would be useful to know just what you expect to gain from this course and any fears or concerns you might have about being here. I’d like you to think for a few minutes about what your expectations are of this workshop and any concerns you might have and then come up and tell us what they are. I’d then like you to write a word or short phrase that sums up what you feel in either an apple for expectations or a pear for concerns. You don’t have to have any concerns about being here of course, but I hope you do have some expectations.”

Variation

Ask people to pair up at the beginning and spend 5 minutes each verbalizing expectations and fears to each other before they tell the rest of the group and write on the flipchart.

Possible Pitfalls

Any exercise that seeks to elicit expectations from a group can run into problems if, for example, someone has been sent to a course and is clearly resentful about being there. If this comes up, you need to treat it sensitively, explore the person’s feelings a little at this stage, and maybe (depending on the context and the norms of your organization) give them the option to withdraw. Participants may also express other negative feelings about attending the course, and it is just as well to know about these feelings early on and deal with them at the beginning. If you don’t, they may well emerge in other ways later on and could result in sabotaging your entire course.

Notes:

4 Back-to-Back

Context Any group but especially useful for courses about communication skills

Purpose

- To introduce one another
- To become aware of the importance of feedback in communication (both nonverbal and verbal)

Materials None

Time 20 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to pair up, preferably with someone they don't know. (If you don't have even numbers in the group, you may decide to join in yourself. The exercise is difficult to do with an odd number.)
2. Ask the pairs to decide who is going to be A and who is going to be B (i.e., who's going first and second).
3. Ask each pair to place their chairs back-to-back so that they can't see each other. Tell them to spread out as much as possible to avoid being distracted by other pairs.
4. Ask A to speak to B for 3 minutes. A should introduce themselves during that time, say where they work, and tell something about themselves, e.g., interests, hobbies.
5. At the end of 3 minutes, B should briefly confirm what they heard with A so that they will be able to introduce A later.
6. The pairs switch roles so that B now speaks to A for 3 minutes. A confirms what they have heard from B.
7. The group reforms a large circle, and each participant introduces their partner to the rest of the group.

8. When all introductions are completed, ask participants what it was like:
 - a) As a speaker
 - b) As a listener

You can draw many learning points from the difficulties most people encounter in listening attentively when they cannot see the other person.

Suggested Explanation

“As a way of introducing ourselves, I’d like you to pair up with someone you don’t know and decide who is going to be A and who is B. Move your chairs so that you sit back-to-back, and I’d like A to start introducing themselves to B, saying their name, where they work, and something about themselves (e.g., hobbies or interests).

“I’ll stop you after 3 minutes and ask B to quickly check what they’ve remembered from A so that they can introduce them at the end. Then we’ll switch roles and do it the other way around.”

Variation

Participants can specifically be asked to talk about their expectations of the course rather than hobbies and you can write these on a flipchart during the feedback session.

Notes:

5 Behind My Back

Context Any group

Purpose To introduce one another and gain insight into how other people see you

Materials

- Flipchart paper and markers
- 2-sided tape and/or plastic adhesive

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation).
2. Ask each person to take a piece of flipchart paper and write their name at the top and then ask someone else to stick it to their back (use 2-sided tape or adhesive, depending on people's clothes).
3. Ask the group to mingle and, when each participant encounters someone, they should write something about that person "on their back."
4. After everyone has written "on" everyone else (allow about 15 or 20 minutes), ask the group to take the sheets off their backs and sit in a circle.
5. Give them time to read the comments others have made and to make any comments they want to the group about the exercise.
6. Ask each participant to choose one of the statements that has pleased them most or is most significant to them. Then have participants go around the circle introducing themselves by saying their name and reading out loud the statement from their own point of view, e.g., "My name is Doug and I look confident."

Suggested Explanation

“I’d like you to think about the people you see in this group and what first impressions you have about them. They may look very confident or full of fun or you may feel you’d like to know them or whatever you pick up from them that feels positive to you.

“Then, when you all have a piece of paper with your name on it stuck to your back, I’d like you to mingle and write a comment about each person on their ‘back.’

“When everyone has done this, you will have the chance to read what everyone has written about you. Remember, first impressions don’t have to be accurate, for example, you may appear to be confident when you are actually very nervous inside, but it is useful to learn what other people feel about you from the start.”

Notes:

6 Book Jacket

Context Any group

Purpose To introduce one another

Materials Paper and pens

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask each participant to imagine they have written a book that is about to be published. They have to write a short piece about themselves (not more than 50 words) that will appear on the book jacket under the heading “About the Author” (see Suggested Explanation). Allow up to 10 minutes for participants to write.
2. Ask each participant to read their description to the rest of the group.

Suggested Explanation

“I would like you to imagine that you have just written a book and now have to write a short piece about yourself that will be printed on the book jacket under the heading ‘About the Author.’

“You need to include your name and you might want to say something about where you live or your family or your achievements in life—whatever you think is significant. There is only enough space for about 50 words, so you need to be concise. When everyone has finished, I’ll ask you to read your bios to the rest of the group.”

Variation

Ask participants to write their descriptions on flipchart paper and attach them to the walls until the end of the course. Participants may then like to add or amend the piece in some way.

Notes:

7 Breathing Through Your Toes

Context Any group—particularly useful for stress management and personal awareness groups

Purpose To help participants relax before starting

Materials None

Time 20 to 30 minutes

Method

1. Explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation).
2. Offer participants the option of sitting or lying on the floor for this exercise, whatever they find most comfortable.
3. Ask them to close their eyes, and deliver—distinctly but slowly—the instructions for this exercise.
4. Once you have completed the exercise, allow a few seconds for people to come back to full awareness and ask them how they are feeling.

Suggested Explanation

“Once you are really comfortable, I’d like you to imagine that your toes are nostrils and that each time you breathe in, the air goes in through your toes, moves slowly through your body, and goes out through your nose. Then imagine that you breathe in through your toes and as you breathe out, each muscle of your whole body becomes very relaxed. Again, breathe in through your toes and out through your nose.

“Now I would like you to recall a wonderful time that you had, perhaps a vacation, and enjoy looking at it again in your mind’s eye. I will give you a few minutes to regain the feeling of that experience (*allow silence for 2 to 3 minutes*).

“Now gently open your eyes and return your attention to the room and to the course. How do you feel?”

Possible Pitfalls

Sometimes when people are really relaxed, they become tearful, so be prepared to be supportive at first, and then help any affected participant return to the task at hand.

Notes:

8 Bunny Game

Context Any group

Purpose To learn participant's names

Materials A soft toy (e.g., a bunny)

Time 15 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to stand in a circle.
2. Go around the circle twice, asking each participant to say their name.
3. Explain that you are going to toss the toy to someone and say their name, and if you get their name right, they then toss the toy to someone else, saying their name, and so on (see Suggested Explanation).
4. If a participant can't remember someone's name or if they pronounce it incorrectly, then that person tosses the toy back to the participant, saying their name correctly. The participant then throws the toy back, saying the name correctly.
5. Once everyone understands the game, you can begin to speed up for more fun.
6. Finish when you feel everyone knows everyone else's name.

Suggested Explanation

"This is a game to help us remember one another's names. Let's just go around first and hear everyone's name a couple of times.

"Okay, now to see if we can remember, I'm going to toss this bunny [*or other toy*] to someone, saying their name as I throw it. I hope they will catch it and then toss it on to someone else, again saying that person's name, who in turn will toss it to someone else, and so on.

“If the person tossing to you can’t remember your name or if they pronounce it incorrectly, then you must toss the bunny back to them, saying your name. Then they will toss it back to you, this time with the correct name.”

Variation

You can use this purely as a reminder of people’s names once participants have already introduced themselves in some way. In this case, you would omit step #2 in the Method above.

Possible Pitfalls

If you have wheelchair users in your group, you can play this game sitting down. If anyone has a particular disability with their hands or arms, first explain the game to them (not in front of the rest of the group) and ask them how they feel about playing it. If they are uncomfortable with it or can’t join in, choose something else.

Notes:

9 Creating Rapport

Context Any group, but better for a personal awareness group

Purpose For participants to become acquainted

Materials None

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask the group to form pairs (or a group of three if necessary).
2. Ask them to decide who is A and who is B (or C if there is a group of three).
3. A is going to mirror B—adopt the same posture, the way they are sitting, the position of the head, hand/foot movements, etc.—while talking with B about a topic of interest for 5 minutes.
4. After 5 minutes, ask for feedback from A about what it was like to be B and any comments from B.
5. Switch so that B now mirrors A for 5 minutes and gather feedback as before. *[C acts as an observer and gives feedback in their small group. You can allow more time so that C also has a chance to mirror in the group of three.]*
6. Reform the whole group and ask for general comments.

Suggested Explanation

“So that you can have an idea of what it is like to be someone else in this group, I am going to ask you, in your pairs, to mirror the other person—to sit in the same position as them, to hold your head the same way, and to copy any movements they make with their hands, feet, etc. While you’re doing this, have a normal conversation with them about something you enjoy, and when they make other movements, mirror those too. After 5 minutes, you’ll switch roles so that you both have a chance to do this and then offer some feedback about what it was like.”

Notes:

10 Deliveries

Context Any group

Purpose To gain an idea of people's expectations and what may be issues for them

Materials Flipchart paper and markers

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Explain that training is like going on a journey (see Suggested Explanation). Ask each participant to spend 5 minutes thinking for themselves and writing down what they hope to learn on this journey (i.e., expectations) and what they are hoping to deliver (i.e., dispose of, contribute to the group, and so on).
2. Ask each participant to introduce themselves and explain their deliveries and collections.
3. You could write on two separate sheets of flipchart paper what is said.

Suggested Explanation

"I would like you to consider for a moment that we are going on a journey. Training is always a bit like a journey—you may be going down a new route, hoping to discover new things, or perhaps going over ground you've traveled before but for once wanting to make sure you notice the side roads and turns.

"What I'd like you to do is to consider for about 5 minutes what you are hoping to collect on this journey and what you are hoping to deliver—in other words, what do you want to gain from the course, what do you want to change about yourself, and what can you contribute to the rest of the group? It might help to write these things down.

“When you’ve finished, we’ll go around and I’ll ask you to introduce yourself and tell us about the collections and deliveries you hope to make while we are together.”

Notes:

11 Dings and Dongs

Context Any

Purpose A useful (and enjoyable) energizer

Materials Two small objects that can be easily handled (e.g., two balls, two different colored flipchart pens)

Time 20 minutes

Method

1. Decide which two objects you are going to use.
2. Ask participants to form a circle with their chairs fairly close together.
3. Explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation) but don't spend too long on explanations. This game is much easier to play than to describe.
4. Ask the person on your left if they will help you pass the "dong" around so that they are the starting and finishing point for this exercise.
5. When you are ready, pass your object to the person on your right saying, "This is a ding." The person now holding the object hands the object back to you and asks, "A what?" and you repeat, "A ding!" as you hand it back. The second player now passes it on to the third person saying, "This is a ding"; the third person passes it back to the second player asking, "A what?" and the second player, now not so sure, hands it back to you saying, "A what?" You reassure the second person that it is "A ding" and hand it back to them. They then pass it back to the third person saying, "A ding," and so on until the object has gone all around the circle and returns to you from the left.
6. At the same time, the person on your left passes their object to the person on their left, saying, "This is a dong" and the same process is followed with the object being passed on and then back to the first person each time until it has gone around the complete circle and returns to the first person from the right.

7. Once everyone is familiar with the procedure and the objects are about two-thirds of the way around, you can introduce an element of competition to see whose “ding” or “dong” arrives back at the start first.
8. There will be a point (or person) in the group at which the two objects cross over. This usually results in great hilarity but may need encouragement from you to the person concerned who will want to “do it right.”

Suggested Explanation

“Now we are going to play something really silly that will wake you up! I know that these things look like flipchart pens [*or some other object*], but in fact, this is a ding and this is a dong [*hold them up so that everyone is clear which is which*].

“Now I’m going to pass the ding around to the right and say, “This is a ding.” Of course [*name*] being an intelligent person will have her doubts and so she will hand it back to me saying, “A what?” and I will repeat, “A ding,” and pass it back to her. She, by now filled with enlightenment, will pass it on to the next person [*name*], who, confused, hands it back to [*name*] asking, “A what?” And now doubt returns to [*name*] and she is no longer sure what it is, so she passes it back to me also asking, “A what?” Again, I am able to reassure her saying, “A ding,” so she can pass it on to [*name*] confidently saying, “A ding,” and he will pass it on to the next person, [*name*], saying, “This is a ding!” And so on all around the circle until the ding is actually returned to me.

“At the same time, [*name of person on your left*] will pass the dong around the other way but the same thing happens—each person has to question what it is and pass it back to the start to be reassured.”

Variation

If your group doesn’t seem to grasp the idea very quickly, you can start the “ding” going around until they seem more confident before introducing the “dong” going the other way. You cannot make a competition of it, of course.

Possible Pitfalls

Although on the face of it this is merely an amusing game, sometimes participants take it very seriously and have a real need to “get it right.” Of course, sometimes this doesn’t happen, and the whole game can deteriorate into helpless laughter with you deciding when to end it. But beware that participants may have some strong feelings that will have to be dealt with before moving on.

Most groups enjoy this game immensely. They have been known to ask for it to be repeated the following day.

Notes:

12 Do I trust you?

Context Personal development groups, awareness groups, or team building

Purpose To develop trust within a group

Materials None

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to form pairs (if you have any groups of three, you will need to allow more time).
2. Explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation) and make sure that everyone understands the exercise and is excited to take part. If anyone is hesitant, then they should be allowed to sit out.
3. You can use two exercises with each participant taking their turn as leader:
 - a) The “leader” guides their partner, who has their eyes closed, carefully and slowly around the room.
 - b) The “leader” promises to catch their partner as they fall backward to the floor.

Make certain that the “leaders” ensure the safety of their partners.

4. Allow enough time for each person to be the leader and for some feedback between partners and between exercises.
5. When the whole group reforms, lead a discussion on how participants felt during the exercises. Some questions you could ask are:
 - How did that feel?
 - What was it like when you were leading?

- How did your feelings change toward the other person in the second exercise?

Suggested Explanation

“I would like you to choose someone to work with in this exercise, which is about developing trust. I will ask you to do two exercises as a pair. In the first exercise, one partner will slowly lead the other partner, who has their eyes closed, around the room. The leader will make sure their partner will not bump into anything or fall over anything. You will then switch roles and do the exercise the other way around.

“The second exercise involves one partner catching their partner as they fall gently backward toward the floor. The partner catching will make sure that their partner doesn’t get hurt. And again you’ll switch roles and do the exercise the other way around.

“Provide feedback to each other as you go along, and then we’ll regroup and talk as a group about how it went.”

Variation

As an ending exercise for the same group, you could use “Do I trust you now?” (see page 105).

Possible Pitfalls

This exercise requires commitment (and courage!) from the participants, which you should acknowledge.

It can provide feelings that need to be dealt with sensitively and can lead to many more exercises to build on the importance of trust in teams and groups.

Notes:

13 Fruit

Context Useful as a beginning for a group that has already trained together or an existing team, or it can be used as an energizer after lunch

Purpose To remember people's names and have some fun!

Materials None

Time 20 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to stand with you in a circle.
2. Explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation). Ask participants to in turn say their name and to choose a fruit (e.g., pear, banana), or vegetable, to tell the group what it is, and then to "mime" it as creatively as they can. This is not a conventional miming game because the group is not being challenged to guess what fruit/vegetable is being mimed. What is called for is some physical action that represents the fruit/vegetable.
3. Start by saying your name and then performing the actions to your "mime" while saying, "and I'm a _____."
4. The participant to your right then has to introduce you and repeat your mime before doing their own, saying, "This is _____ and she's a _____. My name's _____ and I'm a _____."
5. Going around the circle, each participant begins with you, introducing you and repeating your mime, and then doing the same for those who followed you in the circle. They finish with their own introduction and mime.
6. Once each participant has had a turn, ask the group together to go through all the mimes one at a time beginning with yours so that everyone in the group acts like a pineapple, lemon, mushroom, etc.

7. If, as you go around, someone cannot remember a mime, you (and the group) can remind them by miming the action for them. They will soon remember.

Suggested Explanation

“As an opportunity to learn/relearn everyone’s name, we’re going to start with an exercise called Fruit. It’s quite a silly exercise, but I’ll start so that you can see me make a fool of myself first!

“What I want you to do as we go around is to say your name and mime being a fruit. The group does not have to guess what your mime is because you say what it is as you do the actions. Be as inventive and creative as you can. And if you can’t think of a fruit, you can be a vegetable.

“I’ll start, then the next person introduces me and repeats my mime, then introduces him/herself and does his/her mime, and so on around the circle, always starting with me.”

Variation

Ask the group to guess the fruit/vegetable being mimed.

Possible Pitfalls

This is an extremely silly game, and some participants may be embarrassed by this type of activity, which is why it should never be used “cold” with a group. Always be prepared to model “foolish” behavior first and encourage the less forthcoming to join in the best they can. It is well worth the risk involved because it creates a good rapport in the group.

Notes:

14 Getting to Know You

Context Any group, but could be particularly useful for personal awareness work

Purpose

- To get to know one another other
- It can be used to raise people's awareness of the assumptions we make about others

Materials Flipchart paper and markers

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation) and write reminders on the flipchart about what information you want the pairs of participants to share in step #3.
2. Ask participants to move around the room and choose someone who has something in common with them, e.g., the same hair color.
3. Ask these pairs to exchange their names, jobs, and what it feels like to have, for example, the same hair color.
4. After a few minutes, ask the pairs to split and form a new pair according to something *they* have in common, for example, the same color eyes. This pair exchanges the same information as before.
5. Continue pairing participants in the same way according to:
 - same color socks
 - same weight
 - same age
 - same birth sign
 - same length of hair
 - same size shoes, etc.
6. Continue for at least four pairings.

7. Ask everyone to sit down again and lead a short debriefing session, asking questions of the group:
 - How did you enjoy the exercise?
 - What did you learn?
 - How aware did you become of people in the group as time went on?
 - How accurate were you in the assumptions you made about people on the basis of their physical appearance? What can we learn from this?

Suggested Explanation

“To get to know one another, I am going to ask you to pair up with another person in the group according to something you have, or think you have, in common.

“I would then like you to exchange your names and what jobs you do, and how it feels to have this particular characteristic in common with someone you don’t know.

“If you are pairing up with someone according to something you don’t know *for certain* that you have in common, for example, your age, you will need to exchange that information too to ensure that you were right!

“After the first pairing, I will ask you to pair up with someone else who has another characteristic in common with you.”

Variation

Once one pair has exchanged information, ask them to join with another pair who are the opposite or different, e.g., short people with tall people, green-eyed people with blue-eyed people. They then exchange names and jobs, and share what it is like to be *different*.

Notes:

15 Great Expectations

Context Any group

Purpose

- Introduce one another
- Learn participants' expectations

Materials Flipchart and markers

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Go around the group and ask each participant to introduce themselves by saying their name and one expectation they have about the course.
2. Write each expectation on the flipchart. Keep this list so that you can refer back to it at the end of the course to see at what level these expectations were met.

Suggested Explanation

“To begin, perhaps we could go around and you can introduce yourself and say one thing you expect to gain from attending this course.”

Variation

In addition to one expectation, ask for one fear or concern.

Notes:

16 **Guess Whose**

Context Any

Purpose To introduce participants to one another and learn more about one another

Materials None (although participants will need various items—see Method)

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to pair up with someone they don't already know.
2. When in their pairs, each participant should select two objects of their own to lend to their partner. These objects can be taken from a purse, pocket, wallet, or off the participant themselves, and should have some significance to the participant. Make sure they know that these things will be returned.
3. In a large group circle, ask one pair to volunteer to go first and to introduce themselves to the rest of the group. One person in that pair must then tell the whole group what they can deduce about their partner simply from the objects given to them. The partner then agrees or corrects what has been said and adds what they want to what has been said. Then they switch roles.
4. Go around the circle until all pairs have spoken, and then make sure the objects are returned to their owners.

Suggested Explanation

"I would like you to pair up with someone in the group who you don't know, and when you're sitting with that person, please introduce yourself to each other."

“Now I’d like each of you to select two objects that are significant to you, either from your pockets, your purse, your wallet, from yourself—it can be anything that means something to you. Now I’d like you to give those objects to your partner, but don’t worry; they are only on loan. You are going to have them back soon!

“Look at the objects in front of you and pretend that you are a detective. What can you deduce about the other person from the objects they have given you? What do these things tell you about your partner?”

“Let’s go around the circle and hear your deductions about each other.”

Notes:

17 Hobbies

Context Any group

Purpose To learn one another's names

Materials None

Time 20 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to sit in a circle.
2. Ask each participant to choose something they enjoy doing in their spare time that they will mime for the group.
3. As the trainer, you go first, introducing yourself and then miming your hobby, which the group has to guess.
4. The next person in the circle has to introduce you and repeat your mime ("This is _____ and she/he enjoys _____") and then say their name and do their mime.
5. Going around the circle, each person begins with you and repeats everyone else's name and mime until they come to themselves and it is their turn to introduce themselves and do their mime.
6. If someone can't remember a mime, then you and the rest of the group can remind them by miming the action for them. They will soon remember.

Suggested Explanation

"To begin, we're going to do an exercise together to help remember one another's names and also to learn a little about one another. Going around the circle, I'm going to ask each person to think of something they enjoy doing in their spare time and to mime it for the rest of the group to guess.

“I’ll begin and say my name and then do my mime. I’ll keep miming until you guess. Then the next person has to introduce me and mime what I like doing in my spare time before they say their name and mime what they like doing, and so on until we have gone around the circle.”

Variation

If this seems to go quickly (or the group is small), you can go around a second time, repeating the first round mimes before the second round.

Possible Pitfalls

Some participants might be embarrassed miming in front of a group of people, so encourage them to do the best they can.

Notes:

18 How are you feeling?

Context Any group, but particularly useful for awareness work

Purpose For participants to get to know one another and to share some feelings about being in a group

Materials None

Time 15 to 20 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to sit in a circle.
2. Explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation).
3. As the trainer, you should start by saying your name and one feeling about being in the group. Choose a feeling that is positive to give confidence to the group since they will be looking to you for support (so don't say "I'm nervous," even if it is true!).
4. Then go around the circle giving each participant the opportunity to do the same.

Suggested Explanation

"As a way of getting to know one another, I'm going to ask you to introduce yourself by stating your first name and expressing one feeling you have about being here in this group today. For example, you may be feeling excited, nervous, joyful, or sleepy. I will start the exercise myself."

Variation

Ask the group to do the exercise as described above and then go around again, asking each participant to make a sentence with the feeling in it that they expressed, giving an understanding of that feeling. For example, "I am Michele and I am very nervous to be here in this group today because it is the first time that I have been in a large group."

Notes:

19 I want to be...

Context Any group

Purpose To get to know one another and share some fantasies

Materials None

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to sit in a circle.
2. Ask participants to think of a famous person, living or dead, fictional or real, political, artistic, etc., they would like to be and why.
3. Go around the circle giving everyone the opportunity to express themselves as that person.
4. Go around again asking participants to introduce themselves by their real name and say how they feel about leaving behind that fantasy figure and being themselves.

Suggested Explanation

“To begin to get to know one another, I’d like you to think about a famous person—either dead or alive, fictional or real—who you would like to be and why. For example, “My name is Charlie Chaplin and I enjoy making people laugh—and cry.

“We’ll go around so that everyone tells us their fantasy. Then we’ll go around again, this time introducing ourselves by our real name and saying what it feels like to return to ourselves and leave behind the fantasy person and their qualities.”

Notes:

20 Journey to the Group

Context Any group, but particularly useful for self-awareness work

Purpose To start the day in a relaxed manner

Materials None

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to sit comfortably and close their eyes.
2. Say the instructions (see Suggested Explanation) slowly and distinctly.
3. When the participants are done with the relaxation exercise, ask them to open their eyes and take a few seconds to be fully back into the room.
4. Go around and ask each participant to say their name, their symbol, and what that means to them.
5. Ask participants for general comments about the exercise and how they feel now.

Suggested Explanation

“Close your eyes and make yourselves comfortable. Take a deep breath, and as you breathe out, allow every part of your body to relax and become limp. Let me invite you to imagine that you are now leaving the place where you were this morning—either your home, or a friend’s place, or somewhere else—and as you are retracing the journey, I would like you to pay attention to any interesting incidents or conversations that you had or things that you saw. You may not have had time to pay attention to these before. Allow all the irritation and tension of that journey to be left behind and forgotten as you concentrate on the interesting aspects of that journey to give your mind a chance to see it differently. Then pick up from that journey an object, a word, a color, or something else that symbolizes

it in a positive way. I'll give you a few minutes to do that on your own *[allow 2 to 3 minutes of silence]*.

"Now it's time for you to open your eyes and come back into this room. Introduce yourself by your name and the symbol of the journey and what that symbol means in just a few words."

Possible Pitfalls

Some people say they can't imagine anything or don't want to join in. Encourage them, but don't force them, and when you go around at the end, ask them to say their name and maybe choose a symbol that positively describes their journey. If they can't, then ask them for their name only.

Notes:

21 **Left Luggage**

Context Any group

Purpose

- To introduce one another
- To enable participants to put aside their preoccupations and be truly “present” in the training group

Materials None

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to pair up, preferably with someone they don't know.
2. Give each pair 4 minutes (2 minutes for each partner) to introduce themselves, say where they work, and what they have left behind in order to attend the training course that day. Remind them when it's time to switch over.
3. Back in the whole group, ask each participant in turn to introduce themselves, say where they work, and say one thing they've left behind (if they want to).

Suggested Explanation

“To start getting to know one another, I'd like you in your pairs to introduce yourself to your partner, say where you work, and tell them what you've left behind in order to be here today. That can be any kind of thing—lots of dishes to wash, a warm bed, or worries about what's going to happen at work while you're here.

“When we come back together, I will ask you to introduce yourself, tell us where you work, and one of the things you've left behind, if you want to tell us. If you prefer to keep it to yourself, then that's fine.”

Notes:

22 Life Collage

Context Any group that will be together for some time, either in a one-day course, a series of modular courses, or an on-site course; can be particularly useful for any program with elements of career planning in it

Purpose In-depth introductions to group members

Materials

- Old magazines that reflect a wide range of interests and depict a diversity of ethnic groups
- One pair of scissors per person
- One glue stick per person
- Sheets of flipchart paper and markers
- 2-sided tape and/or plastic adhesive

Time

- 30 minutes to look at magazines and choose the pictures they want to use (no cutting is allowed during this time)
- 20 minutes to cut and stick pictures on flipchart paper
- 5 minutes per person to present their collage

Method

1. Ask each participant to take a sheet of flipchart paper, turn it on its side lengthwise, and divide it into two sections, labeling the top *Work* and the bottom *Outside Work*. Then sub-divide each section into three, *Past*, *Present*, and *Future* so that the page is now divided into six sections. (Have a sample available for reference.)
2. Explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation), and as a reminder, write on a flipchart how much time they have for each part of the exercise.
3. Your role now is to keep time and deal with any difficulties participants might experience—though generally participants manage on their own with this exercise.

4. When the whole group comes back together, ask for a volunteer to come up to the flipchart and explain his or her collage to the group. Either you or other participants can ask questions for clarification.
5. These collages can be displayed on the walls for the rest of the course or module, and at the end, participants can take them home if they want.

Suggested Explanation

“Since we are going to be working together over a period of time, I want us to spend some time introducing ourselves to one another.

“What I want you to do is enjoy yourselves and make a collage of your life. Divide your flipchart paper into six sections and label the sections as I have. Spend time looking through the magazines, finding pictures that represent those areas of your life. You can use cut out letters or words too, but try as much as possible to use pictures.

“At the end of the time, I will ask each of you to explain your collage to the group in more detail. Don’t forget to put your name on it somewhere.”

Possible Pitfalls

Because this is a highly personal exercise, it could generate all sorts of feelings for group members. You need to remain alert to those.

Notes:

23 Messages from My Past

Context Any group, but particularly useful for awareness groups

Purpose To get to know one another

Materials None

Time 20 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to think of a phrase that they can remember from their past that a parent or someone else significant in their life used to say to them.
2. Ask the group to mingle and when they meet someone else to say their name and tell them their “message” (e.g., “My name is Elizabeth and I must clean my room!”).
3. They repeat the same message to each person they meet.
4. Continue until you determine that all participants have introduced themselves to one another.
5. Take general feedback about how participants felt as children and what they think of those messages now that they’re adults.

Suggested Explanation

“To begin to get to know one another and for us to think about ourselves a little, I’d like you to think back into the past and recall a phrase that was used by your parents or the people who brought you up, or maybe a school teacher or someone significant to you. This might have been a positive or negative message, but choose one that still stays with you.

“Then I’d like you to mingle around the room, greeting everyone in the group by saying your name and telling them this message, for example, ‘My name’s Elizabeth and I must clean my room.’”

Possible Pitfalls

Not everyone was brought up by their parents, so always take this into consideration when giving instructions.

Notes:

24 My Fantasy

Context Any

Purpose To introduce one another

Materials None

Time 20 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to pair up with someone they don't know.
2. Ask them to introduce themselves to each other and discuss any fantasies they have in life or anything they have always wanted to do or achieve.
3. Reform the whole group after about 10 minutes and ask each participant to introduce themselves and tell one of their fantasies to the rest of the group.

Suggested Explanation

“To begin to get to know one another, I'd like you to pair up with someone else in the group—preferably someone you don't know—and spend a few minutes introducing yourself and telling your partner what fantasies you have in life or maybe what things you want to achieve.

“Then we'll come back together, and I'll ask you to introduce yourself and tell us just one of your fantasies.”

Notes:

25 My Secret Self

Context Any group

Purpose To encourage participants to open up and share something personal at the start of a course; participants can decide how personal they wish to be

Materials None

Time 5 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to sit in a circle.
2. Explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation) and give an example:

My name is _____ and I have two cats.

My name is _____ and I take tap dance lessons.

Suggested Explanation

“To give us a chance to get to know one another, I’m going to ask you to tell us something about yourself that we wouldn’t know simply by looking at you. It might be a hobby or something about your home life or where you live.

“Say your name first so that we know who you are. I’ll start: ‘My name is _____ and I’m a grandmother.’”

Possible Pitfalls

1. Some people feel what they have to say is not as interesting/valid as others in the group, so each person needs validating by the trainer.
2. Occasionally, someone may reveal something very personal that needs to be treated sensitively.

Notes:

26 Obituary

Context Any group, but more acceptable for personal development groups

Purpose To gain insight into how others perceive them

Materials None

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to sit in a circle.
2. Ask each participant to imagine that they are writing their own obituary and to think of three positive things they would particularly like to be remembered for.
3. Ask each person to say their name and then tell the rest of the group their three points.

Suggested Explanation

“Imagine that you are writing your own obituary: what would you like to write about yourself? I would like you to think of three positive attributes you would like to be remembered for. They can be anything you like—a personal quality, something you’ve done, or whatever you can think of. It doesn’t have to be something big or profound. Choose whatever you want to tell us about, and we’ll go around the circle and hear from everybody.”

Possible Pitfalls

People can bring up all sorts of things, so you need to be sensitive and validate everyone’s experience.

Notes:

27 Personal Shield

Context Any group that will be together for some time, either in a one-day course, a series of modular courses, or an on-site course

Purpose

- To introduce and learn more about one another
- To discover expectations of the course that can be related to specific topics (see Variation)

Materials

- A sheet of flipchart paper for each participant
- Flipchart markers
- 2-sided tape and/or plastic adhesive

Time 45 minutes

Method

1. Before conducting this exercise, draw on flipchart paper an outline of a shield that has written inside it questions you wish to ask the participants.
2. Ask each participant to take a sheet of flipchart paper and a marker and draw a shield.
3. Within the shield, ask participants to draw/write the following:
 - A symbol that represents them (to be drawn in the center of the shield)
 - A significant date for them
 - The name of an organization that has been important to them
 - The name of a person who has been/is important in their life
 - One quality they are proud to possess
 - One expectation of the course
 - Anything additional that relates to the topic (see Variation)

4. Allow about 20 minutes and then ask each participant to explain their shield to the rest of the group.
5. The shield can be displayed on the walls for the rest of the course, and at the end, participants can take them home if they want.

Suggested Explanation

“To help get to know one another, I am going to ask you to think about yourself and your life for a moment and to represent some important things on paper for us to share.

“I’d like you to do this by drawing an outline of a shield on a piece of flip-chart paper and then include the following information somewhere on the shield *[go through the elements you want them to cover]*.

“After about 20 minutes, we’ll come back together and I’ll ask each person to explain more about what they have chosen to put on their shield and why.”

Variation

This shield format can be adapted to suit any course, and the elements on it can be more or less personal, depending on the group and the topic. You can also ask specific questions (e.g., about management: Give an example of a good manager you have had or one aspect of ineffective management you have experienced).

Notes:

28 **Picture of Myself**

Context Any group, but most useful for ongoing groups

Purpose

- To introduce (or re-introduce) participants to one another
- To enable the trainer to get an idea of the “baggage” each participant brings to the group
- If used for an ongoing group, it can also serve as a useful link with previous modules—see step #2 in Method below

Materials

- A sheet of flipchart paper for each participant
- One colored flipchart marker for each participant
- 2-sided tape and/or plastic adhesive

Time

- 20 minutes to draw
- 3 minutes each for introductions

Method

1. Ask participants to take a sheet of paper and a marker.
2. Explain that as their (re-)introduction to the group, you want them to draw a picture of how they see themselves at the moment. If this is an ongoing group, suggest that participants reflect on how they felt at the end of the last module and how they feel now before deciding what to draw.
3. Explain that the picture can be a full-length drawing, just the head and shoulders, or just the face, whatever participants feel is appropriate, and can include other people or situations. They can even add word “bubbles” coming from their heads to show what they’re thinking. Tell them to add their name somewhere as well.
4. Reassure them that good drawing skills are not necessary for this and that the picture can be as simple as they choose.

5. Tell them they have about 20 minutes to draw. It sometimes takes participants a while to start. If after about 5 minutes someone seems to be having difficulty, subtly find out what the problem is and provide encouragement.
6. When everyone has finished, ask each participant in turn to bring their drawing to the flipchart and explain it.
7. The pictures can be displayed on the wall for the rest of the course, and at the end, participants can take them home if they want to.

Suggested Explanation

“As an introductory exercise and to give you a chance to tell us something about yourself, I would like you to draw a picture of yourself. Now don’t panic at the thought of this; take a piece of paper and don’t worry if you feel you can’t draw because this can be as simple as you like. Draw something that will give us an idea of how you see yourself at the moment.

“You can include other people or objects or situations in the picture if you wish and you can have word ‘bubbles’ coming from your head to show what you’re thinking. Draw anything you want.

“Write your name on the picture somewhere and take about 20 minutes to draw. When everyone is finished, I’ll ask each person to come and show us their picture and explain it in more detail.”

Variation

Ask participants to draw a picture purely of themselves without anyone or anything else or any words. This approach does not allow them to show themselves in relation to others.

Possible Pitfalls

You need to be sensitive to what people put in their pictures and how they depict themselves. This can reveal a great deal about how people see themselves in relation to others in their lives. It can also produce for participants some disturbing feelings, which need careful treatment.

Notes:

29 Reincarnation

Context Any group

Purpose To learn more about one another

Materials None

Time 15 to 20 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to sit in a circle.
2. Ask them to think for a few minutes about who or what they would like to come back as if they were reincarnated and why (see Suggested Explanation).
3. Ask for someone to volunteer or choose someone to go first and ask them to say their name and then who/what they would like to be reincarnated as and why.
4. Go around the circle until everyone has had a chance to speak.

Suggested Explanation

“To introduce ourselves and learn something about others in the group, I’m going to ask you something that you might find strange. Imagine that you are going to be reincarnated, either as a person, an animal, or an object. What person or thing would you like to come back as and why? Take a few minutes to think and then we’ll go around the circle and hear from each person.”

Variation

Participants could choose famous characters from history or literature.

Notes:

30 Shaking Out

Context Any group

Purpose To warm up the group and raise their energy level

Materials None

Time 20 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to stand in a circle and give themselves plenty of space.
2. Start by asking them to shake their hands up and down in a brisk manner by the side of the body. You should demonstrate this and do it with them.
3. Continue for a few seconds and then expand this movement by throwing out the arm from the shoulder with an open hand in a rhythmic movement.
4. Add to this by kicking one leg out from the hip on the same side as the arm movement.
5. Ask each member to add some noise to this (for example, grunting, shouting, whistling).
6. Stop them making the noise and then start again on the other side of the body with the hand, then shoulder, then leg, then adding the noise.

Suggested Explanation

“To make us lively, warm, and alert this morning, I’m going to ask you to copy the movements I do. We’ll do them all together so that nobody feels silly.”

Notes:

31 Shapes

Context Any group; probably most useful in personal development courses

Purpose To introduce one another and learn more about one another

Materials

- Sheets of colored card stock (in six different colors)
- Scissors
- Templates for shapes (e.g., star, circle, square, triangle, oval, rectangle)

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Before conducting the exercise, cut the cards into a variety of abstract shapes in different colors so that you have at least twice as many shapes as there are people in the group. Each shape should be about the size of a hand.
2. Put the shapes in a pile in the center of the floor in front of participants and ask each member of the group to look at the shapes, handle them, and select one that appeals to them.
3. When each person has chosen a colored shape, ask participants to introduce themselves to one another and say why they chose that particular shape and color—in other words, indicate the significance of their choice. As this is a rather abstract exercise and it relies on people's interpretation of shapes and colors, it is impossible to predict what might happen. However, this is part of the strength of the event.

Suggested Explanation

“As an opening exercise, please choose a shape from the pile on the floor. Look at all the shapes first, pick some up, and then make your final choice. Then we’ll go around the room and I’ll ask you to introduce yourself, show us your shape, and tell us why you chose that particular colored shape. It may be that you feel like a star at the moment or that the red reminded you of your favorite car.”

Variation

You could use cards with particular shapes (e.g., cat, car, sailboat), although this would change the abstract nature of the exercise.

Notes:

32 Snapshot

Context Any group, but especially those in a longer course (i.e., three or more days), in an ongoing course, or in a course involving personal development activities

Purpose

- To share information about one another
- To be aware of the “baggage” each person brings to a course (this can be useful information for the trainer also)
- To provide continuity with an “ending” exercise (Snapshot, page 137)

Materials

- Business-sized envelopes for each person
- Selection of colored felt-tip pens—at least one for each participant
- 2-sided tape and/or plastic adhesive

Time

- 20 minutes to draw
- About 3 minutes each for introductions

Method

1. Give participants an envelope and a pen(s).
2. Ask them to imagine that someone is taking a snapshot of them at this moment that will show how they feel, what the concerns and preoccupations are in their lives, etc.
3. Ask each person to write their name and draw this snapshot on the *front* of their envelope, using the envelope lengthwise with the flap at the top (this is important if you are to use this envelope again in an ending activity).
4. Explain that they can use diagrams, pictures, symbols, and a few words, but the emphasis is on some form of pictorial representation of how they feel now.

5. Reassure participants that good drawing skills are not required for this and that everyone will be asked to explain their “photographs” to the rest of the group at the end (see Suggested Explanation).
6. Tell them they have about 20 minutes to draw and allow them to carry out the exercise. It sometimes takes participants a while to start. If after about 5 minutes someone seems to be having difficulty, subtly find out what the problem is and encourage them to try.
7. As participants finish, ask them all to display their snapshots on the wall.
8. As a group, cluster around the display and ask for a volunteer to introduce themselves to the group by explaining their snapshot. After the explanation, other participants can ask questions about the snapshot for clarification.
9. Someone else elects to go next and so on until everyone has had an opportunity to explain their snapshots.
10. Leave these envelopes on the wall until the end of the day, or ideally, until the end of the course if you are using them as an ending activity.

Suggested Explanation

“As an introductory exercise, to give us a chance to get to know one another, I’d like you to imagine that you are able to take a photograph of yourself right now that shows how you are feeling and what your preoccupations and concerns are at the moment—these might be at work or they might be in your home or social life. It’s up to you what you choose, but what I’d like you to do is actually draw that snapshot on the envelope you’ve got.

“Now you might want to use diagrams or symbols as well as actual pictures and add a word or two if you need to, but I’d like it to be as pictorial as possible. Don’t worry if you feel you are not good at drawing because I know you’ll be able to put something down on paper that will be meaningful.

“Don’t forget to write your name somewhere on the envelope and please use the front of the envelope, holding it lengthwise and keeping the flap at the top. This is so that we can use these envelopes again at the end of the course.”

Variations

1. You could join in if you feel this is appropriate and do your own snapshot. This is necessary if you are using this as an ending activity as well and you want to receive positive messages from the group yourself (see Snapshot, page 137).
2. This activity could be used purely as a “beginning” in which case a sheet of 8½" x 11" paper can be used for each participant instead of an envelope.

Possible Pitfalls

You can never predict what “baggage” people bring with them to courses, and this exercise could arouse all sorts of feelings in participants as they remember their concerns and preoccupations. You therefore need to remain sensitive to this.

Notes:

33 Success Story

Context Any group working on personal development issues, but particularly useful when working with groups that in the past have been discriminated against (e.g., women, minorities, people with disabilities, gays)

Purpose For participants to recognize the successes in their lives

Materials None

Time Allow 3 minutes per person

Method

1. Ensure that participants agree to a contract of confidentiality and support within the group.
2. Ask participants to sit close together in a circle.
3. Explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation) and go around the circle asking for a volunteer to start, allowing everyone 3 minutes. If anyone uses a negative tone, remind them that they are reviewing their triumphs and successes.
4. As much as possible, adhere to the 3-minute time limit. Most people find 3 minutes a very long time and will need to be encouraged to keep going. Even if someone says they are finished, still give them the full time because they may need that time for thinking or to continue speaking. If a participant is still talking after 3 minutes, tactfully cut them off because it is unfair for someone to dominate and take more time than others. Related issues that are raised can be revisited later in the course.
5. Model attentive listening in the way you listen to each participant; don't allow others to interrupt.

Suggested Explanation

“What I want to do to start off is to ask you to think about the successes in your life and the ways in which you have triumphed, possibly in very difficult circumstances. Now don’t say there haven’t been any successes because everyone here has obviously had many in order to get this far. We have all had some success in different ways.

“Oftentimes we go around thinking of the negative things in our lives, and we are sometimes encouraged to do this by others. Well, just for 3 minutes, I want you to put all that aside and concentrate on telling us about your successes; if you like, tell the story of your life from a position of triumph. Start where you like in your life and keep on talking, moving through from the past to the present however you like. Nobody is going to interrupt you and everyone will have a turn. So who wants to go first?”

Variation

If the group finds it particularly difficult to start, you might want to take the first turn yourself to show what you mean, but be careful not to intimidate the group with your experiences because you might have had many more advantages (e.g., education, social) than they have.

Possible Pitfalls

An exercise as personal as this can bring up all sorts of feelings, and you have to be prepared and able to treat these sensitively. Be sure to give each person your complete attention and respect as they speak and encourage them to use the time by prompting with questions such as “What else?”

Notes:

34 Suitcases

Context Any group

Purpose To learn participants' names

Materials None

Time 15 to 20 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to sit in a circle.
2. Explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation) and ask each participant to think of something they would take on vacation with them in their suitcase.
3. As the trainer, begin by saying "My name is _____ and when I go on vacation, I pack a _____ in my suitcase."
4. The person on your right goes next, beginning with you and what you said and then introducing him-/herself and saying what he/she would pack (i.e., "This is _____ and when she goes on vacation, she packs a _____ . My name is _____ and when I go on vacation, I pack a _____ in my suitcase").
5. Then the next person begins with you, followed by the person on their left, and then him-/herself, and so on, until you reach the last person, who has to remember the whole group.

Suggested Explanation

"We're going to start with an exercise to help you remember everyone's name. Now it's always pleasant to think of going on vacation, and I want you to think of what you would pack for your vacation.

"I'm going to start by telling you my name and telling you one thing that I pack in my suitcase when I go on vacation. Then we'll go around to the next person who will begin by introducing me and telling you what I pack

in my suitcase, and then introduce herself and tell you what she packs. We'll go around the whole group, always starting with me. You will be amazed how easily you will remember everyone's name, so there is no need to write things down."

Notes:

35 Three Faces of Me

Context Any group, but particularly useful in awareness groups

Purpose To get to know one another and share feelings about yourself

Materials None

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Decide whether you want to join in or not—it helps participants feel less self-conscious if you do.
2. Ask each participant to think about three aspects of themselves that they are willing to disclose to the group.
3. Ask participants to stand in a circle.
4. You start first (if you are joining in). Move into the center of the group, state your name, and mime one of the “faces” of you (e.g., “My name is Harry and I’m joyful” [*jumping up and down*]). Then go back to your place, think for a second, and come back into the center to show your second “face.” Then do the same for the third “face.”
5. Ask for a volunteer to go next who does the same thing (e.g., “My name is Joyce and I’m caring” [*miming embracing*]), and so on until she has mimed her three faces.
6. Go around the circle until all participants have done the same thing.

Suggested Explanation

“I’d like you to think of three aspects of yourself that you wish to disclose to this group by announcing it and miming it. For example, I might say, “I’m Harry and I’m joyful,” and I’d jump up and down by way of illustration, or “I’m Harry and I’m loving,” and I’d blow kisses to you all. Get the idea?”

Possible Pitfalls

People may need coaxing and encouraging to take part, but the effort is worthwhile.

Notes:

36 Travel Agents

Context Any group

Purpose To learn participants' names

Materials None

Time 15 to 20 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to sit in a circle.
2. Explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation) and ask each participant to think of a place they would like to visit that starts with the same letter or has the same sound as their first name (e.g., Austin/Australia, Kate/Cairo, Baljinder/Bali).
3. As the trainer, you start first saying, "My name is _____ and I've just been to the travel agent to book a trip to _____."
4. The participant on your right goes next beginning with you and then their own details (i.e., "This is _____ and she's booked a trip to _____, and my name's _____ and I've booked a trip to _____").
5. The next participant begins again with you, then the participant on their left, and then themselves, and so on, until you reach the last participant who has to remember the whole group.

Suggested Explanation

"We're going to start with an exercise called Travel Agents. It will help us learn everyone's name. I'd like you to think of a place you would like to visit that begins with the same letter or has the same sound as your first name, for example, Baljinder/Bali, Austin/Australia, Kate/Cairo. Okay? I'm going to start and imagine I'm going into a travel agent to book the trip of my choice. Then we'll go around to the next person who will begin by introducing me and saying where I'm going and then introducing themselves and where they are going and so on around the circle. You will be

amazed how easily you will remember people's names, so there's no need to write things down."

Notes:

37 Where do I fit in?

Context Personal awareness group or ongoing group

Purpose For participants to express nonverbally what they feel their position in the group is in relation to the group itself and in relation to one another

Materials Something large enough to be a focal point for the group (e.g., a basket or a bin)

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Choose the object you want to use to represent the group and place it in the center of the room.
2. Ask participants to join in (see Suggested Explanation) and allow them time to alter their position if they want to.
3. Reform the whole group and ask people how they are feeling and what they learned from this exercise or any other comment they want to make.

Suggested Explanation

"I am going to put this object in the center of the room so that it is symbolic of the center of this group.

"I will then ask one of you to volunteer and take a position without saying anything as close to the center or as far away from the center of this group depending on how you feel at the moment in relation to the group. Also position your body to show how you feel, for example, embracing the group with arms outstretched, feeling small by crouching down, and so on—whatever feeling you want to express physically.

“Another person will then be asked to volunteer to take a position not only in relation to the center of the group, but also in relation to the person who is already there and to express physically how she/he feels.

“When everyone is placed in the group, I will ask each one of you to be aware of your position in relation to the center of the group and to every other member of the group and also the physical position you have adopted. If you then want to change position, for example, move closer to the center, you can do so.

“Think about what it feels like to be in a new position and then we’ll discuss it as a whole group.”

Possible Pitfalls

You need to be sensitive to the positions people find themselves in—they may feel very isolated or rejected. Allow time to process any feelings that come up before moving on.

Notes:

38 Where in the world?

Context Any group

Purpose To introduce one another and learn more about one another

Materials

- A large outline map of the world
- Two pieces of sticky paper (e.g., Post-it® notes) for each participant
- Pens

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Attach the map to a wall or whiteboard at the front of the room.
2. Ask each participant to take two sticky notes and a pen.
3. Each participant should think of two places in the world that are of particular significance to them and to write down the names of those places.
4. Ask each participant in turn to come to the front and introduce themselves and stick their sticky notes on the relevant place on the map, explaining why for them these places are important.

Suggested Explanation

“This is an exercise to help us get to know one another a little.

“You’ll see a map of the world on the board, and what I’d like you to do is to think of two places in the world that are especially important to you. It may be a country, a capital city, even a street or area. Then I’d like you to write those place names on two sticky notes and be prepared to come up and stick them on the map and explain to us why they are important to you.

“Don’t worry if you’re not exactly sure where the place is; geography isn’t everyone’s strong suit! We’ll help one another if we can.

“When you come up, introduce yourself first so that we know who you are. So, who’s going to go first?”

Variations

1. If you have a large group or not much time, you can ask for only one place.
2. You could just use a map of your country and ask people to be very specific about the place, giving the exact address. But remember that not all participants may have been born in that country or that some participants may not have lived in it for long.

Notes:

39 Who cleaned their teeth this morning?

Context Use this with a group that knows one another at least a little or with an existing team

Purpose

- To reestablish a group
- To learn more about one another and have some fun

Materials None

Time 15 to 20 minutes

Method

1. Arrange enough chairs for each participant in a long line facing the front.
2. Ask participants to sit in the chairs.
3. Ask participants to change chairs according to your instructions (e.g., anyone who brushed their teeth this morning, move three seats to the left). Start with a couple of instructions that you know participants will have to respond to so that everyone moves, and then follow with more varied instructions. You can add anything you can think of to vary the list below (see Suggested Explanation).
4. Watch how people are moving so that you can choose instructions that vary the number of seats people move. It's fun to end up with four or five people sitting on the same chair!
5. Finish when you determine that participants have had enough.

Suggested Explanation

“To start us working together again and to have some fun, I’m going to have you moving around. I’m going to read an instruction that I’d like you to follow if it relates to you, which will involve you switching chairs. If you’re at the end of the row and you have to move, go around to the other end of the row. If you find that someone is already sitting in the chair you have to move to, then you have to sit on their lap!”

Note: Use the following list of suggestions to move participants. You can have participants move one or more seats to the right or left—you decide based on how the groups are forming.

- If you brushed your teeth this morning, move three seats to the left.
- If you read a newspaper regularly, move one seat to the right.
- If you have been on vacation this year, move four seats to the left.
- If you like to be outdoors, move one seat to the left.
- If you play golf, move...
- If you like Indian food, move...
- If you eat chocolate, move...
- If you like going to the movies, move...
- If you wear glasses, move...
- If you enjoy gardening, move...
- If you traveled overseas last year, move...
- If you like eating in restaurants, move...
- If you enjoy working for *[name of the organization]*, move...
- If you are good at being a manager *[if appropriate]*, move...
- If you like animals...

Possible Pitfalls

1. Be aware of the physical condition of participants (disability, pregnancy, size, etc.) and only use this activity if you feel participants will not be harmed or embarrassed.
2. Be sensitive to gender and cultural norms relating to physical closeness.

Notes:

40 Zodiac Game

Context Any group

Purpose

- To introduce one another
- To discover participants' expectations of the course

Materials

- 12 sheets of paper, each with a different sign of the zodiac and the dates for each birth sign
- Flipchart paper and markers
- 2-sided tape and/or plastic adhesive

Time 45 minutes

Method

1. Post your zodiac sheets on the walls of the training room, spreading them out as much as possible. Write the questions you want participants to discuss on the flipchart.
2. Ask each participant to stand under the sheet that represents their birth sign.
3. Explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation) and then form groups of those with the same birth signs (groups of three to five). If you don't have enough for any one sign, then put two or three smaller groups together, as far as possible from "adjoining" star signs.
4. Give a piece of flipchart paper to each group. Ask them to introduce themselves to one another and discuss what they have in common apart from their sign of the zodiac, any significant differences between them, and how they as a group expect to benefit from the training. If you have people with different birth signs together, ask them to discuss what is different about them, any significant commonalities, and what they expect to gain from the workshop. Ask them to record the main points of their discussion on flipchart paper and choose a spokesperson to provide feedback.

5. After about 20 minutes, ask the spokesperson from each group to come to the flipchart, introduce each member of his/her group, and report on what they discussed.
6. When each group has spoken, you might want to pick up on their expectations and clarify the goals and objectives of the course.

Suggested Explanation

“You will see around the walls the 12 signs of the zodiac. You don’t have to believe in them at all, but I’d like each of you to find your sign and stand by that sheet.

“Now what I want to do is put you into small groups by sign and ask you to introduce yourself to the rest of the group. Then discuss these questions in your group [*reveal the questions*] and write the main points of your discussion on a piece of flipchart paper.

“Spend about 20 minutes in your group. Then we’ll come back together and I’ll ask you to select someone to introduce your group and report on your discussion.”

Variations

1. You can use this as a way to randomly split the group for any activity.
2. You can use any questions you like once they are in their group.

Notes:

Part II

Endings

We often use some form of exercise to begin a training event because we know the benefits to the rest of the course. But when the event draws to a close, often no specific “ending” exercise is used. Typically, participants are given an evaluation form to fill out and that is all.

“Endings” are equally necessary to recognize the end point of any experience, before moving on, and it validates what has been shared over the period of the course. Ending exercises don’t need to be deep and meaningful. Often they can be fun; however, with a group that has worked together over a long period of time and has grown together, some endings can be very emotional.

Providing a means of formally saying goodbye to the group is the main reason for ending exercises. Other reasons include:

1. To provide a shared experience for the group before closing
2. To allow participants to recognize what they have gained from the course and think about how to apply their learning
3. To evaluate the course
4. To see if expectations have been met
5. To provide feedback for the trainer

41 Action!

Context Any

Purpose To encourage participants to make action plans and be committed to carrying them out

Materials Paper and pens

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask each participant to reflect on what they have gained from the course and what they are going to do as a result of it by dividing a sheet of paper into three columns labeled *Six Months*, *Three Months*, and *Tomorrow!* and completing the columns (see Suggested Explanation).
2. Allow about 15 minutes for this and then reform the whole group and ask each participant to read one significant item from each column.

Suggested Explanation

“To make sure that you don’t forget the content you learned in this course, I’d like you to think about what you have gained and what you are going to do to benefit more as a result of the course, or what changes you might like to make following what you’ve learned here.

“Take a sheet of paper and divide it into three columns: one labeled *Six Months*, one labeled *Three Months*, and one labeled *Tomorrow!* [or *Monday Morning* if that is more appropriate].

“It’s not always possible to make instant changes and, in fact, it’s often easier to think in the long term about what you want to see happen. You might like to begin with what you want to achieve in six months and then work back until you come to a list of what you are going to do tomorrow.

“You’ll have about 15 minutes to do this on your own and then I’ll ask you to share with the group one significant item from each of your columns.”

Variation

If you have a follow-up session or work with this group again, you could document the significant plans that are offered and circulate them to the participants so that you can refer back to them when you meet again. Make sure participants are clear about what you are going to do and reassure them that if they haven't achieved their plans by the next meeting, then they should still come back. Rather than intimidating people, this method helps reinforce the commitment to action.

Notes:

42 And Now Goodbye

Context Any, but mainly an ongoing group

Purpose To acknowledge the end of the group in a formal manner

Materials None

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to sit in a circle.
2. Explain what the participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation).
3. Demonstrate the exercise by going around saying goodbye to the group as a whole and then saying goodbye to each member of the group, always using the word *goodbye* and the person's name.
4. Ask someone to volunteer to go next and keep going until all participants have spoken.

Suggested Explanation

"As a formal end to our course, I would like each person to say 'goodbye' to the group and to each person in the group. The idea of using the word *goodbye* is so that we can acknowledge this as an end because people often avoid separation.

"I'd like you to say, 'Goodbye group,' looking to the middle of the group, and then looking each member in the eye, say, 'Goodbye Hillary, goodbye Ram, goodbye Riva,' and so on."

Notes:

43 Card to Remember Me By

Context Any group

Purpose To leave with a positive message

Materials

- Flipchart paper or colored 8½" x 11" paper
- Colored pens

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Divide the group into groups of two or three participants.
2. Ask these small groups to design a card with a picture or symbol on the outside and a message on the inside that they would like to “send” to the whole group.
3. After about 20 minutes, ask each small group to give their card to the whole group by showing and explaining it.

Suggested Explanation

“Often people are sent greeting cards to mark a special occasion—a birthday, an anniversary, etc. To mark the end of our time together, I would like you in your small groups to design a card that you would like to ‘send’ to this group. Using the paper and pens we have here, draw some sort of picture or use a symbol on the outside and write a message on the inside as you would do with any other card. It might be a message for the future or an appreciation of the rest of the group—whatever you feel you would like to say.

“When everyone’s finished, I’ll ask you to give this card to the group by showing it to us and explaining it fully.

“Don’t worry if you think you can’t draw; it’s the feeling behind the message that’s really important!”

Variation

Ask each person to design a card individually.

Notes:

44 Closing Circles

Context Any

Purpose To provide something that marks the closing for the group and can provide some feedback for the trainer.

Materials Flipchart and markers

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to sit in a circle.
2. Ask each participant to review the course and provide answers to three statements, for example:
 - One thing I've learned from the course...
 - One thing I've enjoyed...
 - One thing I would've liked more of...
3. Write these statements on the flipchart to remind everyone.
4. Ask for a volunteer to start or choose someone, and then go around the circle so that everyone has an opportunity to give their answers.

Suggested Explanation

"To give me an idea of what you've thought of the course, I would like you to think for a few seconds about how you would answer these three statements..."

"When you're ready, we'll go around so that everyone will have a chance to say what they think. Who would like to start?"

Variations

There are many combinations of statements that can be used, for example:

1. What I have gained from the course...
What I am going to do as a result of it...
2. One thing I have learned about myself...
One important piece of feedback I received about myself...
3. One thing I learned...
One thing that surprised me about the course...
One thing I'm looking forward to (this can be work or home)...

Possible Pitfalls

1. Try to keep contributions short while allowing each person to have "their say." Don't allow anyone to use this as a chance to dominate.
2. Don't be too defensive if you hear criticism of the course. The end of a course is not the time to enter into a lengthy dialogue.

Notes:

45 Color This Group

Context Any group, but preferably one that has been together for some time

Purpose To leave with a positive message

Materials Flipchart paper

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Prepare a list of items that this group “could be” (e.g., “If this group were a color, it would be _____,” or “If this group were a car, it would be _____”). Other items could include:
 - a piece of furniture
 - a piece of music
 - a book
 - a flower
 - an article of clothing
 - a shape
 - a television program
 - a meal
 - a country
 - a place to live
 - a job
 - an organization
 - a holiday destination
 - an animal
2. Write this list on flipchart paper, making sure you have at least one item per participant and one for yourself if you are joining in.
3. Ask everyone to sit in a circle and ask each participant in turn to choose an item and tell the group what they think it would be (see Suggested Explanation) and why.

Suggested Explanation

“Before we finish, I’d like you to consider the positive aspects of this group. Choose an item from this list, and imagine if the group were this item what kind it would be and why.

“You might pick ‘a place to live’ and say, ‘If this group were a place to live, it would be a mansion where there are many individual rooms all beautifully decorated with lots to offer,’ or ‘a shape’ and say, ‘If this group were a shape, it would be a shining star because everyone in this group is a star in their own right.’

“We’ll go around so that everyone has a chance to choose a different item and to say what they think.”

Possible Pitfalls

You may need to start by demonstrating the idea of the exercise to the group.

Notes:

46 Compliments

Context Any group, but especially useful for assertion training and other confidence building/personal development courses

Purpose

- For each participant to leave feeling good about himself or herself
- To practice giving and receiving compliments

Materials None

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to sit close together in a circle.
2. Explain that it can be difficult to give and receive compliments but that it's beneficial to try (see Suggested Explanation).
3. As the trainer, you start and turn to the person to your right and, using that person's first name, pay them a compliment. In doing this, you need to model confident and unembarrassed behavior.
4. That person then accepts the compliment assertively saying, "Thank you," or something similar.
5. Continue around the circle with everyone giving a compliment to the person to their right until it comes back to you.

Suggested Explanation

"To finish on a high note, I'd like us to give each other a compliment before we close. Unfortunately, although compliments are good to receive, they are often difficult to give, and people often feel embarrassed and awkward saying genuinely positive things about someone else.

"Now that we've been working together for a while, I am sure that you have all noticed positive things about everyone else in this group. We

haven't really had time, however, to give each other compliments, so what I want you to do is to give a compliment to the person to your right.

"But don't do it yet because we're going to go around the circle and say it in front of the whole group. When you give your compliment, I would like you to sound as if you mean it and use the person's name to make it more personal. You might want to say something you have noticed about them during the course that you admire or something they have helped you with. Try not to focus on the outward appearance of the person, like their clothes or their hair, but think of the real person inside if you can.

"Now when you accept this compliment, do so assertively and simply by saying, 'Thank you'; try not to feel too embarrassed about it.

"I'll start, and then we'll go around the circle so that everyone has a turn."

Possible Pitfalls

If you know there are two people who sit next to each other who may find this difficult, then reverse the direction of the compliments. You can usually find a way of making this slightly easier.

Notes:

47 Different Ways to Say Goodbye

Context A group that has been together for some time

Purpose To say “goodbye” actively to each participant

Materials None

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask the group to think of all the ways people in different cultures say goodbye (see Suggested Explanation).
2. Ask participants to mingle with the others so that when they “meet” someone, they use a physical means of saying goodbye.
3. Then have participants move on to another person and use another means of saying goodbye so that they go around the whole group using at least three different methods.

Suggested Explanation

“To give us a chance to say goodbye to one another before we leave, I’d like you to think of all the ways different people have of saying goodbye: shaking hands, bowing, a kiss on both cheeks, a hug, rubbing noses—whatever you can think of.

“I’d like you now to get up and mingle, and when you come across another person, use one of these methods to say goodbye, choosing a way you feel comfortable with and a way you think they will feel comfortable with. Then move around so that you have said goodbye to everyone and have used at least three different methods to do so. You may learn new ways from other people.”

Variation

You might want to join in this yourself.

Possible Pitfalls

Don't use this with a group that will find this threatening because of the physical aspect. You don't want them to go away feeling uncomfortable.

Notes:

48 Do I trust you now?

Context To be used only with groups that have already used “Do I trust you?” as a beginning exercise (see page 29)

Purpose To demonstrate the development of trust in the group

Materials None

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask the group to form the same pairs they were in when doing “Do I trust you?”
2. Ask them to repeat the exercises they did at the start of the course.
3. Reform the whole group, and lead a discussion on how they now feel and any differences that have emerged since doing the beginning exercises.

Suggested Explanation

“Before we finish, I would like us to repeat the exercises we did at the beginning of the course, using the same pairs, just to see if there is any difference in the way you feel now and the way you did then. There may or may not be, but I think it will be interesting to see.

“To remind you, the first exercise involved one of you closing your eyes, being led around the room by your partner, and then switching roles.

“In the second exercise, one of you fell backward while your partner caught you, and then you switched roles.

“We’ll discuss what happened in the whole group.”

Possible Pitfalls

1. Only use this exercise if you feel the group has developed more trust in each other during the course, otherwise you might promote a sense of failure among the group or individuals in that group.
2. Only use this exercise if all participants joined in the first time. If they didn't, be prepared to use an additional ending exercise where everyone can join in.

Notes:

49 Gallery of Wants and Offers

Context Any group

Purpose

- To give something concrete to the group
- To give participants an opportunity to ask for what they need

Materials Flipchart paper and markers

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Give each participant a piece of flipchart paper and a marker and ask them to divide the paper into two, with one side labeled *Wants* and the other labeled *Offers*. Ask them to write down their name and telephone number (home or office, whichever they prefer as well).
2. Give them 10 minutes to complete the sheet for themselves and then put it on the wall in the “gallery.”
3. Allow 20 minutes for everyone to look around to see what people have written and then seek out the person(s) they can help or who can help them and make a deal to accept/give what they want.
4. Ask participants to sit down again and formally thank the group and say goodbye.

Suggested Explanation

“So that you can continue to receive help from this group even when the course is finished, I’d like you to think about what you can offer to other group members in terms of skill, information, or support, and what you would like to ask for to help you further. List these on your flipchart paper and when you’ve had a chance to see other people’s lists, I’d like you to negotiate agreements about receiving or giving these things.”

Notes:

50 Gift to the Group

Context To close a group that has been in existence for some time (e.g., a modular training program over several months, a 5-day program, or an on-site course)

Purpose To leave with positive messages from each participant

Materials None

Time 20 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to sit close together in a circle.
2. Explain what the participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation) and give an example of the type of “gift” you mean.
3. When everyone is ready, you go first with your “gift” (which ensures that everyone has the right idea) and then each person takes a turn giving their “gift.”

Suggested Explanation

“As a way of saying goodbye, think of a gift you would like to give to this group. Spend about half a minute visualizing this gift, which might be a physical object like a bunch of flowers, or a thought or feeling, like self-confidence—something you would like to leave with the group as a special gift from you.

“I will start and then we’ll go around the circle so that everyone has a turn.”

Variations

1. Ask participants to mime their gift as if they were sculpting it out of clay. This means the gift is physical or describes a thought or feeling.
2. Ask the group to draw or paint the gift (this will take much longer to allow for the activity and for each person to present their gift).

Notes:

51 Group Shield

Context Any group, but especially one that has been working together for some time

Purpose

- To reflect on the course as a group and provide feedback on some aspects of the training
- To provide positive messages for the group as a whole

Materials Flipchart paper and markers

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Before the exercise, draw a shield on flipchart paper divided into four with the quarters labeled as follows:
 - a) Most useful thing about the course
 - b) Least useful thing about the course
 - c) A message to participants
 - d) A message to the trainer(s)
2. Divide the group into smaller groups (about three or four participants in each) and ask them to complete the shield as a group.
3. After about 20 minutes, ask each group to present their shield to the whole group.

Suggested Explanation

“Now that we’re coming toward the end of the course, it would be helpful to reflect on what has been useful or not in the workshop and also to think of the positive aspects of the group as a whole.

[Show your prepared flipchart shield] “What I’d like you to do in small groups is to draw a shield that is divided into four quarters in which you can write what has been most and least useful about the course and a positive message you want to give to the rest of the group and to me/us.

At the bottom, draw a banner and write a motto that you feel represents the whole group. This could be a single word or a phrase.

“When everyone is finished, I’ll ask each group to present their shield to the whole group.”

Notes:

52 Group Sound

Context Ongoing or awareness group

Purpose To say goodbye symbolically and have fun

Materials None

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask the whole group to make a group sound. Allow 15 minutes for preparation.
2. Ask them to “perform” it for you as a goodbye message.

Suggested Explanation

“It would be good to end the course in an entertaining way, so I’d like the group to invent a group sound to say goodbye. It could be a tune, a song, a sound, or even a dance. I’ll give you 15 minutes to prepare this, and then I’ll ask you to demonstrate it for me.”

Variations

1. Group sculpting (see “Where do I fit in?” on page 81). Suggest that participants take a position that shows how they feel now.
2. Group building. Suggest that each person go outside and collect an object, and when they come back, the group as a whole constructs something that symbolizes the group and presents that to you.

Notes:

53 How do I feel now?

Context Preferably a personal development group

Purpose To review changes since the start of the course

Materials Flipchart paper and markers

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask each participant to draw a picture of how they are feeling now at the end of the course (see Suggested Explanation). Allow 15 minutes.
2. Give each participant time to explain their drawing to the rest of the group.

Suggested Explanation

“I’d like you to think about how you felt at the start of the course and how you feel now as you are leaving it.

“Then take some flipchart paper and draw a picture of how you feel now. It doesn’t matter if you think you can’t draw because you can use symbols or diagrams or whatever you like to depict your feelings. When everyone is finished, I’ll ask each of you to explain your picture to the rest of the group.”

Possible Pitfalls

As with all visual expressions, all sorts of feelings can emerge, and especially at the end of the group session, you will need to be sensitive to the apprehension some people may experience. You should allow a little time right at the end to make sure the group ends on a “high” note.

Notes:

54 **Import/Export Game**

Context Any group

Purpose To gain a sense of what people consider they have gained from the course and to allow them to reflect on this for themselves

Materials Paper and pens

Time 20 minutes

Method

1. Explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation).
2. Ask participants to reflect on what they have “exported” and “imported” on the course by writing two columns on a sheet of paper. Give them 5 minutes to do this.
3. Give everyone the chance to share one “import” and one “export” from their list.

Suggested Explanation

“Now that we are coming to the end of the course, it is useful to reflect on what we have gained from it. Sometimes you can see training as a series of imports and exports—things that you gain and things that you give. Everyone here has certainly contributed to the course, and I hope they have gained from it, too.

“I’d like you to reflect on these two aspects of imports and exports and spend 5 minutes writing them on a sheet of paper. Then when everyone is ready, I’d like to hear one import and one export from each of you.”

Notes:

55 Letter to Myself

Context Any

Purpose To make action plans and provide a mechanism to remind participants of those plans after the course

Materials

- Paper and pens
- Envelopes and postage stamps

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask each participant to write a letter to themselves that includes what they consider the important aspects of the course and what they intend to do as a result of the course.
2. Ask them to address an envelope to themselves and seal their letter in it.
3. Explain that you will arrange to mail these letters to them in three months.
4. Don't forget to mail the letters!

Suggested Explanation

"In case you forget all your good intentions after this course, I'm going to ask you to write a letter to yourself that I will mail to you in 3 months. In this letter, I'd like you to state what are the significant points you gained from the course and what you are going to do as a result of the course. It would also be useful to include a timetable of when you are going to achieve those goals. Nobody else is going to know what you have put in the letter because this letter is entirely for you.

"Then address an envelope to yourself and seal the letter in it. If you don't want the letter sent home, then write your work address. In 3 months, you'll have a pleasant surprise when this letter arrives."

Variations

1. You can vary the time of sending out the letters as appropriate, but allow participants enough time to achieve some of their goals without waiting too long.
2. Ask participants to leave the envelopes unsealed so that you can add a note of encouragement from you when you send out the letter, but obviously this makes it less private.

Notes:

56 Letting Go

Context Any

Purpose To relax before leaving the group

Materials None

Time 15 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to close their eyes and make themselves comfortable.
2. Read the instructions (see Suggested Explanation).
3. When participants open their eyes, make sure they are wide awake and say goodbye before they go.

Suggested Explanation

"I'd like you to take a deep breath in and out gently. . . and again. . . Now as you breathe in, raise your shoulders up toward your ears as high as you can and hold them there for a second or two, then as you breathe out, drop your shoulders suddenly and forcefully so that they are down and relaxed. Now do that again. . . and again for the last time, and as you bring your shoulders down, think of a color that is soothing or a sound that is calming or a sensation that you enjoy. Stay like that for a few seconds, then open your eyes and feel wonderful."

Notes:

57 Messages in the Shoe

Context Any group, but especially one that has been together for a while

Purpose To close the course with positive messages for all members

Materials Paper and pens

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Decide whether you want to join in this activity yourself. If you do, it will enable you to give individual positive messages to group members, which can be very beneficial. You will also receive some positive messages about yourself.
2. Ask each participant to take one of their shoes off and explain what they will be doing (see Suggested Explanation).
3. Make sure that everyone has a sheet of paper that they can tear into pieces so that they have enough to write a message for everyone in the group and allow about 20 minutes for them to do this.
4. As participants finish their messages to others, they can place this message in the shoe of the relevant person.
5. Once all messages have been written and “delivered,” allow participants time to read and absorb their messages.
6. Ask each participant to select a message that is especially significant to them and to read it to the rest of the group without saying who it came from.

Suggested Explanation

“As a way of saying goodbye to one another, I’d like you to write a positive message to each person in the group so that they will have something from you to take away from this program. It may be something you already knew about them that you admire or something you learned from them or something you feel they helped you with during the course—anything you would like to say to them that is positive. You don’t have to put your name on it if you don’t want to, but if you do, it will strengthen the impact. *[And I’m going to join in too with this, so don’t forget a message for me!]*”

“When you’ve written their message, go over and post it in their shoe.

“When we’ve all finished, I will ask you to select one of your messages that is really important to you and read it to the rest of the group.”

Notes:

58 **My, how I've changed!**

Context Any group

Purpose

- To acknowledge each participant's development
- To give positive feedback to the group

Materials None

Time 20 to 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to sit in a circle.
2. Ask for a volunteer to go first and say how they have changed since being in the group.
3. Go around the circle so that everyone makes a contribution.

Suggested Explanation

"I'd like you to think about what you have gained from this group and how you have changed or developed as a result. Then we'll go around the circle, and I'll ask everyone to say how they have changed since being in this group."

Notes:

59 My Message to You

Context Any group, but preferably an awareness or ongoing group

Purpose To give useful feedback to participants

Materials None

Time 30 to 40 minutes (allow 5 minutes per participant)

Method

1. Decide whether you want to participate in this exercise.
2. Ask participants to sit in a circle.
3. Explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation).
4. Ask each participant in turn to go to the other members of the group and give them a message (e.g., “My message to you, Jean, is thank you for your sensitivity in this group”). Both giver and receiver of the message should be on the same level, and therefore the giver may need to crouch down or, if this is uncomfortable, ask the receiver to stand up if they don’t mind.
5. Continue until everyone has given their messages to the others in front of the group.

Suggested Explanation

“To close this course, I’d like you each to give some feedback to the other group members.

“Think about what you have gained from people in this group or what you have noticed about them so that you can go up to them and facing them say, for example, “My message to you Jean is thank you for your sensitivity in this group” or “Louis, my message to you is thank you for your understanding.”

Notes:

60 Over the Rainbow

Context Any group, but preferably one that has been together for some time

Purpose To validate the development of the group during training

Materials Flipchart paper and colored markers

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Divide the group into smaller groups of three or four participants.
2. Give each group flipchart paper and markers and ask them to imagine that during the course, the group has developed and moved on as if over a rainbow (see Suggested Explanation).
3. Ask participants to think of three goals that the group had at the start of the course and three points they have gained from the course.
4. Write these on the sheet of flipchart paper and draw a rainbow to link both together. Allow 15 minutes for this.
5. Ask each group to present their “rainbow” to the whole group.

Suggested Explanation

“During the time we have spent together, each person has developed and moved on in some way, as has the group itself. I would like you to think of that movement as being like crossing a rainbow, as rainbows usually bring hope, which the course may have brought to you.

“In small groups, I want you to think of three goals that you as a group had at the start of the course and to write these three goals on the left side of a piece of flipchart paper. Then think of three points you have gained in your movement through the course and write these three points on the right side of a piece of flipchart paper, drawing a rainbow to link the two sides together.

“When we reform the whole group, I’ll ask each small group to present their rainbow to the whole group.”

Notes:

61 Pairs Appreciation

Context Any

Purpose To gain some positive feedback from another participant

Materials None

Time 20 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to form pairs (or have a group of three if necessary).
2. Give each participant 5 minutes to say three things they like about their partner (see Suggested Explanation).
3. Reform the whole group, and ask each person to announce one of the things they have “owned” for themselves to the whole group.

Suggested Explanation

“So that you can go away from the course feeling positive about yourself, I would like you to show your appreciation for someone else in this group. Choose a partner, and spend 5 minutes each saying three things you really like about the other person. These could be attributes you’ve noticed about them during the course or that you knew about them before—whatever you feel you would genuinely like to express about that person.

“When you are being appreciated, don’t be embarrassed and dismiss the compliment; accept it simply by saying, “Thank you,” to your partner. I’ll remind you to switch roles after 5 minutes.

[After reforming the whole group]

“Now that we’re back together, I would like everyone to think about one of the compliments they have received and then announce that to the group as if you believe it! If you’ve been told that you have been very helpful during this course, say, “I’m a very helpful person!”

Notes:

62 Remember Me

Context Any group

Purpose To end on a positive note

Materials None

Time 20 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to think of something they would like the group to remember them for.
2. Ask each participant in turn to announce this to the group in a confident way.

Suggested Explanation

“As we’ve been together for a while during this training course, I am sure you will all remember the other people here in a positive way. Before we finish, I’d like you to think of how you would like the group to remember you, which might be something you achieved during the course or a particular quality you have or something you are going to do following the course. I’ll ask you to tell the group how you wish them to remember you.”

Notes:

63 **Review of Expectations**

Context Any group

Purpose To evaluate the course and see if it has met participants' expectations

Materials A list of expectations made at the beginning of the course

Time 15 minutes

Method

1. Attach the list of expectations to the flipchart and explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation).
2. Either ask for a volunteer to start or just go around the group, having each participant make a comment.

Suggested Explanation

"Now that we are coming toward the end of the course, it would be useful to look back at the expectations you came with when we started.

"I'd like you to look at what you expected from this course and then I'll ask each of you how far your expectations were met, and if they weren't met totally, then what more could have been done to help this."

Possible Pitfalls

If any criticisms emerge, don't be tempted into a long discussion justifying your course.

Notes:

64 Snapshot

Context Any group, but especially groups attending longer courses and that completed the Snapshot exercise as a beginning exercise (see Snapshot, page 69)

Purpose

- To tie together the beginning of the course and the end
- To leave with positive messages

Materials

- The envelopes completed in the beginning exercise
- Paper and pens

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Make sure that all the envelopes are still on the wall from the start of the course and that they are clearly labeled with people's names.
2. Ask each participant to write a positive message to the other participants and yourself if you are joining in (see Suggested Explanation).
3. As the messages are written, ask participants to put them in the corresponding envelopes on the wall.
4. Make sure nobody looks at their messages at this point, but rather takes home the envelope and reads the messages in private.
5. Use a simple closing exercise (see Closing Circles on page 97) or evaluation exercise to close the event formally.

Suggested Explanation

"You remember the snapshots we did at the beginning of the course and I said then that we would be using them again? Well, as we're coming toward the end, what I'd like you to do is to write a positive message to everyone in the group, including me, that they can then take away with them. This could be something about them that you've particularly admired, something about them that you knew already, something they

have especially helped you with during the course, or whatever. You don't have to write your name on the message if you don't want to, but it would be even better if you did.

"When you've written all your messages, put them into the envelopes on the wall.

"Now I'm not going to let you look at those messages just yet. Save them until you're on your way home or are at home tonight when you can enjoy all those positive attributes that others have noticed about you. It's worth keeping them somewhere safe so that you can take them out when you're not feeling so good about yourself and they can remind you what a great person you really are."

Notes:

65 Story Time

Context Any group

Purpose To validate the group experience

Materials None

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to sit in a circle.
2. Start by telling your story of the group in one sentence, e.g., “My name is _____ and I was in a group that brought me a great deal of joy and support, and I went home feeling good about myself and positive about my future.”
3. The next person then adds, “And I was in the same group and that group gave me _____,” and so on around the whole circle so that the story is ongoing and everyone has a chance to give their feedback about the group.

Suggested Explanation

“To close the course in a positive way, I want us in turn to say what we have gained from the group or valued about it by telling the story of the group as if the course has already ended.

“I’m going to begin and tell you about my experience with this group in a sentence or two and I’d like you to follow along and do the same.”

Notes:

66 This is Goodbye

Context Ongoing or more intensive group

Purpose To say goodbye and give feedback to the group

Materials A pillow or cushion or something similar that can be held or hugged

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to sit in a circle.
2. You start by taking the pillow (or suitable soft object) and talking to it, addressing it as if it represents the group (see Suggested Explanation).
3. Pass on the pillow to the next participant who says goodbye using the same format and their own words.
4. The pillow is passed around until all participants have addressed the group.
5. As the pillow is passed back to you at the end, announce to the group that now everyone has had a chance to say goodbye to the group, and the object reverts to being what it really is.

Suggested Explanation

“Now that we have arrived at the end of the course, I’d like us to say goodbye using this pillow, which for the purpose of the exercise will symbolize this group. Each person, in turn, will address the pillow and say goodbye to it as if it were the group.

“As I take the pillow myself, I will look at it and say something such as ‘Goodbye group and thank you for helping me resolve my conflict,’ or ‘Goodbye group and thank you for being so supportive’ and give it a hug.

“Then I’ll pass the pillow around to everyone.”

Notes:

67 This Is Our Group

Context Any group, but preferably one that has been together for some time

Purpose To appreciate the positive aspects of the training group

Materials Flipchart paper and markers

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Divide the group into smaller groups of three or four participants.
2. Ask each group to devise a motto or logo that for them sums up their feelings about the training group and write it on flipchart paper. Allow about 15 minutes.
3. Reform the whole group and ask each small group to present their motto or logo and its significance to the rest of the group.

Suggested Explanation

“To finish on a positive note and appreciate the group we have been working with, I’d like you, in small groups, to come up with a motto or logo that represents how you feel about the group as a whole. Choose either to use words or symbols, whichever you feel most comfortable with, and when we reform the whole group, I’ll ask each small group to present their motto or logo to the rest of the group and tell us about its significance.”

Variation

Ask the groups to devise both a logo and a motto.

Notes:

68 Traffic Lights

Context Any group

Purpose To introduce the idea of action planning at the end of a course

Materials A drawing of traffic lights with red, yellow, and green lights on a piece of flipchart paper

Time 20 minutes

Method

1. Put your “traffic lights” on the flipchart and explain what participants are going to do (see Suggested Explanation).
2. Ask each participant to note down what are their red, yellow, and green lights. Allow 5 minutes.
3. Go around the group asking each participant to tell the rest of the group one of the things they will stop doing as a result of the course, one of the things they will get ready to do, and one of the things they are going to go ahead and do.

Suggested Explanation

“As this course has only been the start of your development, I would like you to consider what you are going to do now that the course has ended.

“I’d like you to look at this in three ways. See these traffic lights? Well, we all know that the red light means ‘stop,’ the yellow light means ‘get ready to stop,’ and the green light means ‘go.’ What I want you to do is devise mental traffic lights for yourselves and write a list of what you are going to stop doing as a result of the course, a list of those things that need more planning that you are going to ‘get ready’ to do, and those that you are definitely going to do immediately as a result of this course.

“You will have about 5 minutes to prepare those lists and then we’ll reform the whole group and I’ll ask you to tell us one of your red lights, one of your yellow lights, and one of your green lights.”

Notes:

69 What do I take away with me?

Context Any group, but preferably one that is ongoing

Purpose To leave participants with positive feedback about the group

Materials None

Time 20 to 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask participants to sit in a circle.
2. Ask each participant in turn to announce their name and one quality or feeling they will take away from the group (e.g., “My name is _____ and I will take away with me from this group warmth”).

Suggested Explanation

“Now we come to the end of the course. To end in a concrete and meaningful way, I will invite each member of the group to think of a quality or feeling they are taking away from this group, for example, ‘My name is _____ and I will take away from this group warmth.’ We’ll go around the circle so that everyone will have a turn.”

Notes:

70 You're great as you are, but...

Context Any group, but especially one concerned with personal development

Purpose To give positive messages to group members and to suggest the possibility of change

Materials

- Sheets of colored 8½" x 11" paper
- Pens

Time 30 minutes

Method

1. Ask each participant to select a piece of paper and write their name in big letters.
2. These sheets are then placed on the floor in the center of the group, and each participant picks up someone else's and writes on it "One thing I like about you is _____" and "One thing I'd like you to change is _____" and then signs it.
3. They return the sheet to the floor and pick up another, writing a message as before and so on until each participant has written a message on everybody else's sheet of paper.
4. Then ask participants to take back their "own" sheet and share one of the "things I like about you" messages to the whole group.

Suggested Explanation

"Now that we are coming to the end of the course, it would be useful if you all had some positive things to take away with you. I'd like you to take a sheet of paper and write your name on it in big letters, and then place the sheet on the floor.

"Then pick up someone else's sheet and write one thing you like about them, which may be something you've particularly noticed during the

course or something you already knew you liked about them. Then write one thing about them you'd like them to change, and I'd like you to be particularly constructive here because it can be useful to have feedback from others that can help us develop. Be constructive and also be sensitive. Maybe the aspect you would like the other person to change is to do more or be more of the thing that you like about them! When you've written on everyone's sheet, pick up your own sheet again and look at it.

"I'd then like you to share with the group one of the things that someone said they like about you."

Possible Pitfalls

Be careful about using this with a group that may be too negative in their comments. You don't want participants to leave feeling depressed.

Notes: