

TEAM BUILDERS, ENERGIZERS, AND ICEBREAKERS

Teambuilders are exercises designed for groups to work through together, for the purpose of building cohesiveness, raising issues in the group, and posing challenges to the team. They generally take longer than icebreakers and energizers, because of the planning, thought, and execution of the task. Facilitators should choose teambuilders that are challenging, but not necessarily impossible, for a group to perform, although there is value in processing a "failed" teambuilder. Pick and choose from the following:

Blind partner tag: participants in pairs, with one partner of each pair blindfolded. One pair is "it", but only blind partner may tag someone (who also must be blind). Sighted partners may only guide by talking (no holding onto arm/elbow, etc.). When someone tagged, that pair becomes new "it". After a while, switch so everyone experiences being both blind and sighted.

Three Blind Mice: works best with group no larger than twelve, in three lines of four people. Two lines face each other and can't move from spot; third line is blindfolded and can move around and talk. One of the two lines can't speak but can use gestures and sign language to communicate with other immobile line, which has its back to the task area. Facilitator tells goal only to silent group, who then must signal to other immobile line, who can then relay instructions to third line (mobile, blind line). Set up is hula hoop or rope circle arranged with 3-4 items outside it. Object is to place the 3-4 items inside the circle.

Consensus: in three groups, each group must create noise and action to perform for other two groups. After each has demonstrated noise and action twice for other two, facilitator gives 10 seconds time for each group to huddle. Goal is for all three groups to be doing same noise and action together, without consulting one another. After huddle, facilitator counts to three and all three groups at same time must perform one of the three action/noise combinations (doesn't have to be their original one). Keep re-huddling until all three groups doing same (consensus).

Acid River: whole group must get from one end of "river" to other (mark off with lines, tape, or rope). Group gets half+1 as many "islands" (stepping stones) as people in group (i.e., group of 12 or 13 gets 7 stones, 14 gets 8, etc.). Whole group must be off one shore and on to stones before anyone moves on to other shore. Facilitator can make penalties for anyone who dips in river (go back to beginning, whole group starts over, person is muted, etc.).

Jump rope: using a standard climbing rope (20 feet min.), can have either whole group of participants jump together (lined up along rope) or go through one at a time, without skipping beat.

Levitation: group of 10-15 divide into two lines, facing each other. Hold index fingers straight out across, so intersecting with person across. Tent pole is laid across "ladder" of outstretched fingers. Participants may not curl fingers over. With entire group keeping both fingers on pole, object is to lower to ground. At all times, everyone must have two fingers on the pole.



Silent Birthday Line-Up: without talking, entire group must get in order by month and day.

Blind Count Off: group is in circle with backs to one another. Group must count as high as possible out loud, with only person saying a number at a time. There can be no planning, and no one can speak again until everyone has spoken at least once (i.e., if 10 people in your group, person who says "1" can't speak again until "11" at earliest).

Concentration: two lines of 10 people facing each other. First group gets 30 seconds to study opposite line and then turns around. Second group then changes 10 things about them (switch jewelry, untie shoelaces, switch watch to other arm, etc.) as long as all are things in sight. First group turns back around and must identify the 10 changes. Then swap.

Web: group in circle, with ball of string or yarn. First person holds loose end of string and tosses ball to anyone else in circle that he/she wants to say something about (compliment, a thank you, an observation). That person holds on to string and tosses ball to next person, repeating process until a web is made between the entire circle, with everyone holding piece of web.

Paper Bag Notes: each group member puts name on paper bag. Each participant writes notes to any or all other participants expressing appreciation for something done or complimenting on something, to be placed in bag.

Energizers are used to get a group moving, give a break from long periods of sitting down, and excite a group about the next portion of a program. Use them in small doses to rejuvenate a group after lunch or first thing in the morning. Pick and choose from the following:

Animal Circle: group in circle, one person in middle. Middle person points to anyone, who must "make" animal with people on both sides (total of 3 people). If middle person counts to five before animal is "made", then center person of animal comes into middle of circle to replace middle person. Animal example: alligator, with middle person making jaws of two arms, and 2 side people make tail by holding hips of middle person.

What are you doing?: group in circle. First person starts by miming action (ex: brushing teeth). Person to left asks, "what are you doing?" and first person answers with another action/activity (ex: climbing a ladder). Person to left must then act out climbing ladder, while person to their left asks, "what are you doing?". No one stops miming activity until everyone in circle is doing some activity/action.

People to People: human twister, with group in circle (paired up) and one person in middle. Middle person calls commands, such as "hand to hand" or "elbow to shoulder" to twist up pairs. After 2-3 twists, middle person calls "people to people", everyone raises arms and yells, running across circle. All must find new partner, including sole middle person, so one person will be left over and be new middle person. Repeat.



Clothespin Samurai: group in circle, one-person middle with blindfold and "sword" (inflatable or foam). Middle person has several clothespins attached to clothing (back, arms, legs, shoes, etc.). Group members must remove pins without getting whacked by sword. If whacked three times, you're out.

Eye Contact Samurai: group in circle, one person in middle who calls "heads down". Everyone bows heads. When middle person says, "heads up", everyone looks up and at anyone else in circle. If any pair makes direct eye contact, they must swap places, with middle person trying to get into one of the places. Leftover person becomes new middle person.

Partner Tag: in twos, partners link arms. One pair starts as "it" and separates, with one of the two chasing the other. Everyone else in pairs just walks around. Person being chased is "safe" when he/she link arms with anyone, but whoever is on other side of newly linked person is now solo and can be tagged by chaser. New person being chased becomes safe by linking with anyone he/she chooses, forcing someone else to unlink and become chased.

Earthquake and Eviction: one person alone to start, rest of group in threesomes, with two people making house of hands and one person standing underneath. Lone person calls either "eviction", in which everyone in a house must leave and find new one, or "earthquake", in which all houses collapse and everyone must form new threesomes of house and resident. Either way, lone person tries to get into one of the threesomes, so person left over becomes new "caller".

Assassin: group in circle. Rules: choose someone in circle to be your assassin without informing them. Also choose a bodyguard without informing. To stay alive, must keep bodyguard between you and your assassin. When leader yells "freeze", check if alive or dead.

Pulse Race: in two lines, holding hands. Everyone has eyes closed except leader of each line. A beach ball or other object is placed at opposite end of lines from leaders. Facilitator stands by leaders and flips a coin. If tails, do nothing. If heads, leaders start pulse race by squeezing hand of person next to them, which sets off chain reaction. When last person in line feels hand squeezed, he/she may open eyes and grab for beach ball. Whichever team gets ball first each round gets a point. After each round, leader goes to end of line.

Icebreakers are exercises designed to get a group to warm up, to get to know one another, to learn about each other, and to make people comfortable with the group, whether they are newcomers or established members. Pick and choose from the following:

Do you know your neighbor?: in circle, with one person in middle. All people in circle have a designated spot (mark with shoe or piece of tape). Middle person asks anyone in circle if he/she knows neighbors (persons on either side). Person in circle introduces neighbors to middle persons and then says, "But I don't know anyone wearing blue jeans." Anyone wearing blue jeans must leave spot in circle and find new spot, while middle person tries to grab a spot for self. One person will be left over and takes over middle spot. Can use any attributes ".I don't know anyone wearing contacts, who doesn't play tennis, from the Midwest, etc."



Nametag swap: participants share three facts about self with someone else, then swap nametags. When meeting next person, introduce self as person on nametag, sharing the three facts. Then swap again. After 3-4 swaps, everyone introduces self with current nametag, with real owner correcting any mistakes.

Name and Initial Activity: in circle, everyone must introduce self and mime an activity that starts with their initial (ex: Pat mimes pitching a baseball). Everyone else must copy each person.

Silent Nametag: hand out index card and binder clip to everyone. Middle of card has name, four corners can have anything (adjectives to describe self, last book read, tennis playing level, hometown/state, job/role in tennis). Index card is clipped to shirt or existing nametag. Participants walk around silently reading others' nametags.

Blanket Down: group divides into two teams, each crouching on one side of raised blanket (like wall between). One person from each team moves close to blanket, and when blanket is lowered, first person to say name of person opposite "wins" that person onto winner's team. Object is to get everyone on one side.

Name Juggle: standing in circle, one person begins by tossing beanbag or stuffed animal to someone else, saying, "Hi, (name of person)". Catcher says, "thanks, (name of tosser)" and repeats by tossing to someone else. Names must be said each time item is tossed or caught. Can get 3-4 items in play at once.

Clock Date: each person makes clock out of paper plate, with twelve timeslots. People go around making "dates" with someone different for each hour. Facilitator reads a different question or discussion idea for each date (1-2 minutes each).

Human Bingo: make up bingo sheet of 25 boxes. You can only get someone to sign in one box. Boxes say things like "find someone who played professional tennis", "locate someone who has three or more siblings", "find someone who has started a CTA", etc. Bingo can be five boxes across or whole sheet.

Geography Line-Up: group must line up in order by how far each person traveled to come to workshop, then go around and introduce name and where from.

Frame Up: in groups of four, make flipchart with rectangle in middle and four spaces around (one per person). In middle, group must list 10-20 things all four have in common (all human, all USTA staff, etc.). In outer spaces, each individual puts name and three things unique to them in foursome (only one who is a lefty, only one who knows how to play guitar, etc.). Share and compare all foursomes.

Comic Strip Chaos: cut four-panel comic strips into individual panels and drop into paper bag. All participants get one panel and must locate other three with adjoining panels. Those four



introduce in small group. (Can be used for dividing large group into fours).

Beach Ball Toss: beach ball is pre-divided into questions. Group tosses around circle, introducing name and answering question where pinky hits on circle (can choose which one to answer).

