

ICEBREAKER GAMES FOR SMALL GROUPS

Brag & Bummers

Have each person share one “brag” & one “bummer” from the previous week (i.e. a high light and a low light). This is an easy exercise to use to get feedback concerning their life at that moment. Encourage Small Group Members to be honest and authentic in their responses. Some Small Groups do this most weeks and the Brags & Bummers become more honest in time. Use this time to affirm and empathize with students.

M&M’s Game

Pass around a bag of M&Ms and have each student take two M&Ms of different colors. After the Small Group Members have their M&M’s tell them they need to share two things about themselves before eating them. Have a different category for each color of M&M for Small Group Members to share about. For example: Red-Pet Peeve; Blue-When I grow up, I want to be a...; Green- Something about their Family; Brown-An Accomplishment; Orange-Favorite Superhero; Yellow-If they could get a \$50 gift card to any store, where would they want it? These are only a few examples. Be creative and think of some on your own!

The Swatting Game

Every one goes around the circle and shares their name. The leader stands in the middle with a fly swatter or a “newspaper bat” or a pillow. A Small Group Members starts with saying his name and the name of someone else around the circle (i.e. “Matt ... David. David ... Elizabeth. Elizabeth...Paul”etc.). The person in the middle tries to swat others before they can say their name and someone else’s name. If the person in the middle is successful, the one “swatted” becomes the “swatter.” If the group already knows each other’s names rather well, mix it up with students choosing fruits or animals or whatever.

Find & Sign

Hand out sheets of paper with a 10-15 categories that describe Small Group Members. For example: A female wearing contacts, A White Sox fan, Someone with a Drivers License, A guy who can play an instrument, etc. Students then need to have other students sign their sheet. No one can sign a sheet twice. The first person to have all needed signature wins! Variation: If you don’t want to type the sheet, hand out blank pieces of paper and have Small Group Members list 1-10 on the left side. Have a poster board that lists all the categories.

Trait Trader

You have just taken a job as a trait trader in the fictitious exchange, the Personality Market. You are a new executive and it is very important to you that you do well in your new job. To do so, you must trade wisely and end the game with a trait that applies to you. Everyone gets a piece of paper (trade slip) with a personality or character trait written on it (e.g. tall, creative, adventurous, quiet, etc.) Then everyone writes their name on the slip. Then everyone must trade your slip with someone else. If your new trait also applies to you, write your name on that slip. If not, do nothing and then everyone trades again. The goal is to end up with a trait that applies to you and to have written your name on more slips than anyone else. When the leader calls out “exchange closed.” The game is over. You may stop trading for the exchange closes. Remember, your goal is to end up with a trait that applies to you and to have written your name on more slips than anyone else.

Allow 12-15 minutes for the game and then call “exchange closed”. Next, ask everyone to turn their trait slip to the side that holds the names of the traders. Ask your first trader to say his or her name and to read his or her trait, stating whether or not it is true about them. Then, ask the others in the group to raise their hands if the trader’s name appears on their trade slips. Count the hands. Move to the next trader and repeat. When done, award the prize to the trader with the most slips signed who has a trait that describes him or her on the final slip.

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I Remember

First, everyone gets a coin. Then, after looking at the date on the coin, take a minute to think about what you were doing when that coin was minted. What grade were you in? Who was your teacher? Who were your friends? What was your favorite thing to do or play with? What is a funny story from that time? What was going on in your life at that time? What kind of music did you listen to? etc. (If you were not yet born or prefer not to discuss your life during the year selected, choose another coin.) After taking some time to think about it, you are ready to play the game. The goal is to find someone with a coin that was minted at least two years before or after yours. Ultimately, the goal is to have the oldest coin in the room. Find a partner; take three minutes each to tell each other about your moments in time. When you are finished, each of you toss your coin. If they are alike (both heads or tails) exchange coins. If they differ, keep your original coin. Repeat the process up to three times as designated by the facilitator. Allow 5 minutes for each round. At the end of all rounds, call each year in order and ask each participant to stand and give his or her name. Award a prize to the holder of the oldest coin. Use your own coins to ensure an even distribution of years.

Balloon Game #1

Have everyone put one piece of information about themselves in a balloon, then blow up the balloon and throw the balloon in the middle of the circle of participants. Then, one by one, pop the balloons and guess to whom that piece of information belongs

Balloon Game #2

Pass one balloon around the circle and have each person write a question (i.e. What is your most embarrassing moment? Who is your hero? etc.) on that balloon. Then pass the balloon around the circle and each person has to answer three questions on the balloon.

Candy Confessions

You have just taken a job as a candy tester in the Candy Confessions factory. What makes this candy different from other candy is that each flavor is associated with a fact about you. Your job is to select and "test" four different candies from a bowl/box that will circulate among all testers.

1. Choose four candies from the bowl without looking. In a moment, a key code will be revealed, indicating which truths you should tell. 2. Once the code has been revealed you may begin your confession. Materials Needed = Basket of Candy

Key Code (e.g. Kit Kats = favorite movie/favorite magazine, Krackle = favorite vacation spot/place you would like to visit, Gum = worst vacation, Gum Drops = something about where your childhood, Lollipop = something about your family, Butterfinger = your most embarrassing moment, Kisses = wildcard [tell us anything])

Allow 10-20 minutes for the entire process. Variations: Allow people to take as many candies as they like from the basket and reveal something about themselves for each candy they take. Or, use a ball of string. Allow each person to take as much as they like. For each inch, they must reveal something about themselves. (Additional material: string, scissors, and ruler)

Tattoo

You have just arrived at Tony's Tattoo Parlor for a tattoo. Tony wants each of his tattoos to say something about the person wearing them. From you, he needs a little inspiration and a design before he can start his work. Everyone gets a piece of paper where you are design a rough tattoo that reveals something about yourself, your school, your hobbies, or your family, in order to help get Tony's creative juices flowing. You must also make a note about how big the tattoo should be and where you will have it applied. Everyone then shares their tattoo ideas with each other, and in the process, they tell a little about themselves. If you want, you can vote on the best tattoo, or everyone can tape their tattoos on their bodies to wear for the rest of the night.

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Story of My Life

You have just been given a contract to write your autobiography for a major publishing company. Everyone takes a piece of paper and folds it in half and then in half again to form a book. Choose the title of a popular song for the name of your book. Write that title on the front cover. On the inside of the front cover (page two), list a table of contents. (Name of the place where you were born, description of your childhood, name of someone important in your life, etc). On page three, draw a picture of your family. On the back cover of the book, draw a picture of what you plan to do when you graduate. Where will you go? What do you want to do? etc. Allow 5-10 minutes for setup, and drawing. When all books are complete, have each person tell their story, using the book as a visual aid if possible, leave the books in a central location during the night for others to look at. Variations: Change the focus of the pages of the book. For instance, most exciting moment, favorite food, most exciting vacation, etc. Be careful not to make any of the questions too personal. The idea is to open people up, not shut them down.

True or False

You have just entered a new society of truth-tellers and liars. You and the others sometimes tell the truth and sometimes lie. The key to this society is knowing when you are being lied to and when you are being told the truth. Partners must guess if truth or lie. If both are correct, move on. If both are incorrect, move on. If one is correct and one is wrong, the wrong person is out. 1. First, flip a coin, if it reveals "heads," you tell truth, if "tails," you lie. 2. Find a partner, swap stories. Your partner must then guess if you told a truth or a lie. If both are correct, move on. If both are incorrect, move on. If one correct and one wrong, wrong person is out. 3. Move on and repeat steps one and two until one person remains and is declared the winner.

ABCs of Me

First, take a piece of paper and write your name vertically down the left side. Next, choose a word that starts with each letter of your name. The word should describe something about you. Write those words horizontally across the paper, using the letters of your name as the first letter of each descriptive word. After you have listed your words, draw an accompanying picture to illustrate each. Allow 5-10 minutes for setup, and drawing. When all posters are complete, have each person introduce themselves using their name drawing. If possible, leave the drawings posted throughout the night. Variations: Narrow the focus of the words. For instance, all words must be adjectives, nouns, verbs, related to work, related to foods you like, etc.

Adjective + Name Game

Go around the circle and have students share their first name preceded with an adjective (or noun) that starts with the first letter of their name. For example: Mischievous Mike, Daring Dan, Packer Paul, Sassy Susan, etc. After everyone has said their name, go around the circle trying to say each name together. If you want to add some excitement, have students say someone else's name then toss a tennis ball to that person. The tennis ball has to be tossed to everyone. Also, it cannot be tossed to someone next to the person. To add even more excitement have 3 balls handy toss around the circle. Variation: As you go around in a clockwise order, before a person says her name, she must say all the names everyone else up to that point.

Would You Rather...

Go around the room one by one answering questions such as "Would you rather have hair growing out of your ears or your nose?", "Would you rather eat liver or sushi?", "Would you rather shovel snow or rake leaves?" These types of questions provide for some fun discussion. As a variation, after the selected person answers, you can take a group vote to see what the majority of the group would choose.

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Scar Show & Tell

Many Small Group Members will have a scar with an interesting story. Ask Small Group Members to reveal scars in “appropriate” places to the group and share the background behind the injury or surgery.

Wallet/Purse Show & Tell

Most people carry important things in their wallets or purses. Have each Small Group Members take an interesting item out of their wallet/purse to show the group (a photo, a driving permit, a report card, an ID for work, etc.). Be sure to ask some follow up questions to find out more about the item.

Playing Card Clusters

Deal one playing card per person – take out 2’s, 3’s, 4’s, etc. if needed because of size. Then call out categories and have Small Group Members cluster into groups. For example: Suits (hearts, spades, diamonds, & clubs), Number (aces, kings, queens, etc.), Blackjack 21 (must have 4 people and not exceed 21), etc. Once clustered, have Small Group Members introduce themselves and answer a question like “What’s your biggest pet peeve?”

Blanket Name Game

Have the guys gather on one side of the room and the girls on the other side. Set up two chairs in the middle of the room facing each other. Two leaders hold a large blanket up between the two chairs – so each side cannot see the other. Have a guy and girl sit in the chairs and drop the blanket. The first person to call out the name of the person directly across from them gets a point for his or her team. Repeat as many times as you wish. This is a great game for students to get to know the names of others in your Small Group.

Who Am I?

You need to write the name of a famous person (Ronald Reagan, Bugs Bunny, Brett Farve,...,etc.) on 3x5 cards and tape a different name on the back of each student. They then need to ask other(s) in the group questions to determine "Who am I?" All questions need to be answered with only a "yes" or "no". You are only allowed to ask one question to each person in your Group. This forces them to mix it up with many people in the group. As a variation, you can use this for holiday words instead of names.

TP Sharing

Hand out a roll of toilet paper to your group. Tell Small Group Members to take as many sheets as they wish (with enough to go around to everyone!). After Small Group Members have their TP in their hands, they need to share an interesting fact about themselves for *every* piece of TP they are holding!

Do You Love Your Neighbor?

Sit in a circle and have everyone share their name. Make sure everyone is listening as they will need to know names. There should be one less chair than people. The person without a chair stands in the middle and says to someone sitting, “Do you love your neighbor?” The person can respond one of two ways, “Yes” or “No, I’d rather have...” If the person says “yes” everyone in the circle must find a new seat (and move at least two spaces). If the person answers “No, I’d rather have ___ & ___”, the people to the left and right must move and the people called on must try to get to those seats. There will always be some one left standing in the middle. He/she then asks, “Do you love you neighbor?” to someone else. Repeat as many times as you wish.

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I have never...

Sit in a circle. There should be one less chair than people. The person without a chair stands in the middle and says something they have truly never done (i.e.: "I have never left the United States"). Everyone who has done what the person in the middle has not (i.e.: everyone who has left the United States) must stand up and find a new seat. The person left without a seat now stands in the center and begins again.

Chart Your Life

Encourage students to draw a line graph to represent their lives. Consider the high points, the low points, leveling off times, and where they are at now. It can represent their spiritual journey as well as life experiences. The line will probably be a mixture of straight, slanted, jagged, and curved lines. After drawing their line graph, encourage Small Group Members to share their life story with the group. Be sure to set aside ample time for this exercise.

Magazine Life Stories

Hand out a variety of magazines (perhaps encourage Small Group Members in advance to bring some), scissors, a sheet of paper, and glue sticks. Give Small Group Members 10 minutes to look through magazines to cut out pictures, words, and images that describe them. Have them glue the items on a piece of paper to share visually and verbally with the rest of the group.

Two Truths & A Lie

Have each person write 3 statements about themselves on a 3x5 card along with their name. The leader can collect the cards or each Small Group Member can read his/her card. The group tries to guess which statement is a lie.

Hot Seat

Designate Small Group Members to sit in the "hot seat" for 5 minutes while others in the group ask questions. Keep the questions fun and interesting ... while encouraging depth and authenticity. Small Group Members have the freedom to pass on questions if they wish.

Spiritual Journeys

Encourage a Small Group Member to share his or her life story with the Small Group. Ask for volunteers and make sure this person has a week or so to prepare his/her thoughts.

Zip Bong

Have Small Group Members huddle in circle with arms around each other. Someone starts by saying "zip" and it moves to the next person to the left (in a clockwise direction). The next person may say "zip" and keep it moving clockwise around the circle or she may say "bong" and it reverses the direction. Another "bong" from someone else reverses it again. The catch to the game is that no one may show his or her teeth at any point in the game. If someone says "zip" or "bong" out of turn or shows teeth at any point, needs to sit down. The game ends when there are only two people left in the circle.

Watermelon

This game is like "Zip Bong" (see above) in that motion is passed around in a circle. Have Small Group Members stand in a circle. Make slurping noises as you wipe your mouth with the palm of your hand. To move motion right: use left hand and wipe to right. To move motion left: use right hand and wipe to left. To skip the next person: use right hand and wipe up (over nose). If someone "slurps" out of turn, he or she needs to sit down. The game ends when there are only two people left in the circle.

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Jiggy-Jiggy-Joy-Jiggy-Joy-Boy-Boy

This was a game we learned from friends in Costa Rica. This is a rhythm game requiring coordination. The beat is the group repeating the words “Jiggy-Jiggy-Joy-Jiggy- Joy-Boy-Boy”. Following the beat that is created someone starts by moving a body part in rhythm. The next person in the circle repeats the motion after seeing from the leader while the leader starts a new motion. The goal is to get all the way around the circle during a variety of motions to the same rhythm.

Human Knot

Have Small Group Members sit close together and then grab the hands of two different persons forming a large “human knot.” The goal is to untie the knot without letting go of any hands. It will require group cooperation and communication to complete the task. If a group lets go, it is disqualified.

Human Rock, Paper, Scissors

To put a twist on the popular “Farckle” game, assign three roles to replace the traditional rock, paper and scissors. For example: Small Group Members can play the roles of Gun (pulling to pistols from holsters and saying “Bang. Bang”), Gorilla (scratching arm pits and making gorilla sounds), and Girl (shaking hips, waving a hand and saying a high pitch “Yoo Hoo”). The Gun beats the Gorilla, the Gorilla beats the Girl, and the Girl beats the Gun. Have students gather in pairs – each with his back to his partner. On the count of three, the students turn and face partners while doing a motion and making a sound. The winner then finds another partner. Repeat as many times as necessary. There are many other versions to this game ... or be creative and think of your own.

Finger Counting Game

Have your Small Group Members gather in pairs. Two people stand back-to-back. Each person holds up random number of fingers (using one or both hands). On the count of three, each turns to face their partner. The first person to shout out the correct number of total fingers wins and finds another partner. The loser sits. Repeat as many times as needed.

Hula-Hoop Pass

Form 2 lines and have people join hands. Start the hula-hoop at the front of the line and attempt to get the hula-hoop at the end of the line without allowing it to touch the ground. People look pretty funny doing this.

Electricity

Have Small Group Members form two lines. Place an object (banana, Beanie Baby, etc.) at the front of each line. Everyone in each line (except the last person) closes their eyes. A leader stands in the front and silently signals to the last person. At the signal, the last person squeezes the hand of the person next to them. The squeeze is passed up the line, until it reaches the first person. At this point, the first person grabs the object and they run to the back of the line. They are now the last person, and everyone else moves up. The game is over when one team returns everyone to their original position.

Mummy Game

Divide Small Group Members into 3 or 4 even groups. Give each group one roll of toilet paper. One person from each group is mummy. The rest of the group uses the toilet paper to cover the person as completely as possible in one minute. The group with the person who is covered the most completely wins.

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Over/Under

Small Group Members form two lines standing facing the same direction (lines should have even number of Small Group Members). The two lines of Small Group Members compete against one another. Use an object such as a banana. On "go" the first student passes the banana by handing it off over her head or under between her legs and the next student passes it off the opposite way – over, under, over, under, and so on. When the last person in line receives the banana he runs to the front of the line and starts again. This continues until each person has started at the front of the line. The line sits down when finish designating the winner!

Fast Lemon

This game is for 6 players or more. First, divide the Small Group into two or more equal lines. Then give the leader of each line a full length pencil and a full-grown lemon. As the teams line up single file, mark a starting line and finish line on the floor (about 20 feet away at most). The object is to push the lemon with the pencil along the floor in a straight line-if you can. Each player must push it to the finish line and back to the next teammate in line. The team to finish first wins. What you discover is that the lemon always keeps rolling, despite a slight wobble. You'll have trouble keeping it in your lane so be sure the furniture is pushed back.

Killer

Walk around and shake hands. When the killer shakes your hand, you must fall to the ground and 'die' others must guess who the killer is. (The killer adds a tickle when shaking hands)

Sentence Game

Everyone splits up into groups, and each group gets a sentence. Each group must make up a story that ends in that sentence. The crazier, the better!!! (Example: And that is why you can't trust an AZA an inch above the knee.)

Scavenger Hunt

Break your Small Group into three to four groups. The object of the game is to be the first group to collect all of the items listed below – or the group that has the most items after a set amount of time. You may not leave the room, and all items must be turned in to the leader together in one bag.

1. Driver's License 2. Photo 3. Store Receipt 4. 1979 or Earlier Penny 5. A Piece of Candy 6. A Ballpoint Pen 7. A Lipstick / Chapstick 8. A Planner, Palm Pilot, Calendar, or Other Organizer 9. A Drink 10. A Coffee Cup 11. A Marker 12. A Piece of Candy 13. 6 belts connected together 14. A Pair of Glasses 15. A Magazine or Book. Allow 5-10 minutes for the game. Once a team calls, "hunt over." Have them review each of the items, where they got them, and from whom.

Definitions

You have just taken a job at a dictionary company. You are responsible for editing a new edition. The only problem is that some of the computers went on the fritz and wiped out