

# TEAMBUILDERS AND FIRESTARTERS (OR ICEBREAKERS)

## **Board of Directors**

- ◆ Draw on a piece of paper a table with chairs.
- ◆ Participants write the names of the people who they would like to have as their board of directors (e.g., family members, teachers, friends, coaches, etc.)
- ◆ Participants share their list of mentors and why those people are important to them.

## **Color, Car, Character**

- ◆ Each person writes his or her name on a piece of paper.
- ◆ Under their name, they write which color they feel best fits their personality.
- ◆ Beneath the color, each writes the name of a car that fits their self-image.
- ◆ Finally, under the name of the car, each participant is to write the name of a fictional character with which they identify.
- ◆ One at a time, group members identify themselves by stating their names, colors, cars, and fictional characters. In the introduction, each participant is to provide a brief rationale for each of his/her three choices. It is not necessary to always use color, car, character; similar topics may be used.

## **Famous Pairs or “Who am I?”**

**Instructions:** In this exercise, group members will be asked to identify the names of famous pairs or persons. The leader tapes the name of a famous person on the back of each participant. (i.e. Fred Flinstone, Oprah Winfrey, Bill Clinton, etc.) The group member is not to see who is taped to their back. Their task is to find out who they are. The participants mill around the room asking others yes/no questions. If the member receives a “yes” answer, they can continue to ask that individual questions until they receive a “no” answer. Then they must continue on to ask someone else. When a group member figures out who they are, they take off the tag, put it on the front of their shirt, and write their own name on it. The member then can help other members find out who they are. The exercise concludes when all members have discovered who they are.

## **Hum That Tune**

**Instructions:** Each person in the group is given a small piece of paper with the name of a nursery rhyme or other song written on the paper. (i.e. “Row, row, row your boat,” “Rock-a-bye baby,” etc.) All of the people who are given the song must hum that tune and fine everyone else singing the song. They then form a group.

## **Human Knot activity:**

**Instructions:** Participants should stand shoulder to shoulder in a circle. Each person should put his/her right hand into the middle of the circle and join hands with someone across the circle (and not directly to his/her right or left). Each person then places their left hands into the circle and joins hands with a different person, and not the person directly to their left or right.

When the participants have their hands tangled, inform them they need to be untangled without ever breaking grips within the group. Note that there are three possible solutions: a circle, two interlocking circles, or two circles with a knot in it. Participants should not make sudden or large movements since they’re all connected.

Processing questions:

- ◆ Was this challenging? Why or why not?
- ◆ How did the group approach this task? What was done effectively? What could have been done more effectively?
- ◆ What role did you personally take in this exercise?
- ◆ For those who were facing out, and couldn't see what was happening, how did you feel?
- ◆ How could each of you have increased participation in this activity?

### **Lap Sit**

**Instructions:** The group will start in a circle. Group members will turn placing their left leg towards the inside of the circle. Everyone will take one giant step into the middle of the circle. With hands on the person's shoulders in front of you, the group will sit on each other. The group will need to work together to communicate. Once this has been completed, the group may wish to try to walk in this formation. This is a dynamic activity - and one that will make the group feels a great sense of accomplishment when successfully completed!

### **Machine Game**

**Instructions:** The object of this game is to create a machine out of a group of people (i.e. ceiling fan, hot air balloon, watch, etc.). You might want to split your group into two or three smaller groups. Each person is required to be accountable for one noise and one motion of the machine. The group members should then put their motions and sounds together to create the machine. Give each group about 5 minutes to work together and prepare, and then have the groups present to everyone. Ask the other groups to guess what machine the group is.

### **Passing the Candy**

- ◆ Pass a bag of candy (like M&Ms) and have everyone take as many as they want (DO NOT EXPLAIN THE PURPOSE).
- ◆ Once everyone has some candy, have each person share one piece of information about him or her for every piece of candy they took.

### **Personal Shield**

**Instructions:** Give each participant a piece of construction paper and have several markers available for everyone to use. Ask them to draw a personal shield or crest for themselves. This shield should tell the rest of the group about that person through illustrations, symbols, and words. Also, ask that the participants include an "open motto" or a quote by which they live their life. Have everyone share and explain their personal shields.

### **Positive Bombardment**

- ◆ Use post-it notes or labels.
- ◆ Each participant writes a positive comment to at least three different people.
- ◆ They attach the post-it notes to those people.

### **Reception Line**

- ◆ Divide everyone into 2 groups; have them stand facing each other.
- ◆ Each person talks to the person across from him or her until signaled.
- ◆ At signal, person at end of one-line moves to other end, consequently, everyone has a new person to talk to.
- ◆ Possible conversation topics include:

- What is your favorite movie/TV show/ music group, and why?
- Who is your biggest role model and why?
- Why did you decide to enroll at Iowa State?
- If you could travel anywhere in the world, where would it be?
- What is a quote that you live your life by?
- What's your favorite hobby or pastime?

### **Shoe Factory**

**Instructions:** Have the group stand in a large circle shoulder to shoulder. Then have everyone remove their shoes and put them in the center. After the group has formed a pile with their shoes, the leader has everyone choose two different shoes other than their own. They should put them on their feet (halfway if they are too small). The group then needs to successfully match the shoes and put them in proper pairs by standing next to the individual wearing the other shoe. This will probably result in a tangled mess - and lots of giggles!

### **Solemn and Silent**

**Instructions:** The instructor explains that this exercise will take self-control. Members pair back to back. On the count of three, everyone must face their partner, look each other in the eyes, and then try to remain solemn and serious. No speaking! The first to smile or laugh must sit down. All who remain standing then take a new partner and the activity continues until only one person has not smiled or laughed. (Second round of playing can involve two teams competing to outlast each other.) If you get a pair at the end who are both keeping a straight face, the rest of the group can act as hecklers to disrupt them.

### **Something Unique**

- ◆ Everyone stands in a straight line side-to-side.
- ◆ Someone says something they think is unique about them (e.g., I spent last summer in Africa).
- ◆ If others have done the same thing they step forward too.
- ◆ Everyone steps back into place and the next person shares something unique about himself or herself.

### **Toilet Paper Game**

**Instructions:** Get a roll of toilet paper and explain to your group that they are going camping and need to take as much toilet paper as they think they may need for a three-day trip. Once everyone has an ample supply, explain to the group that for every square in their possession, they must share something about themselves. NOTE: If anyone knows the activity, ask them not to give away the secret under any circumstances.

### **Trust Walk**

**Instructions:** Every group member is either blindfolded, not blindfolded, but promises not to peek, or wishing not to participate. The leaders of the group will organize the group in a straight line or in pairs, singles, etc. The leader will make sure the group begins by holding one another's hands in a circle to help make them feel comfortable. The leader will lead the blinded group members around, periodically leaving them by themselves (but always holding on to something like a tree, fence, sign, etc. - and NEVER for any great length of time), or with new people to hold on to. **THE KEY TO THIS ACTIVITY IS NO TALKING.** If there is an object that needs to be stepped over, the leader should raise the hand of the group member, the next person will do the same to warn the next person,

and so on. If there is an object that is low, the leader will lower the arm of the blinded group member, indicating they should duck down, and the chain will continue in the same manner as for a raised object. (The leader can pretend as well.) The leader can organize this activity according to their group. HINT: This activity is best down in the dark, but the leader should make sure everyone feels comfortable participating. If someone is nervous, they could become the leader's partner or just watch. Squeezing the hand of a participant is very encouraging and helpful in making them feel safe.

### **Two Truths and a Lie**

- ◆ Have each participant write three unique statements about himself or herself – two of which are true, and one which is false.
- ◆ Each participant reads his/her statements, and the other members try to guess which one is false.

### **Values Discussion**

**Instructions:** Have participants find two people who are wearing the same color as them. Have them find a spot where they can talk together. Instruct them they will be talking about some issues and you will give them new topics every few minutes. Here are some samples:

- Talk about the most important thing you learned this year.
- What are the easiest and hardest emotions for you to express and why?
- What is something that few people know about you?
- What do you value in a friend?
- What do you want to be doing in five years?
- What is one goal you have for next year?
- What is a motto you try to live by?
- What is the greatest challenge you are facing?
- What do you like most about yourself?
- What do you value in a loving relationship?
- What do you value most in life?

### **The Web**

- ◆ A ball of yarn is needed for this activity.
- ◆ The group should be sitting in a circle.
- ◆ One person starts by holding a piece of the yarn, sharing a fear that he/she has about their first year at ISU, and then passing the ball of yarn to someone else in the circle.
- ◆ After everyone has shared a fear and passed the ball of yarn, a web should have formed.
- ◆ Facilitator comments that, like a web, each person in the group is connected by their common fears, and thus are able to support each other through their experiences.

### **Willow in the Wind**

**Instructions:** Should follow after a “two or three person trust fall” has been completed. This activity can be performed in one large group or in smaller groups with a minimum of seven people. Have the group stand in circle with their shoulders touching. One person stands in the middle, with his/her eyes closed, body stiff, and feet planted. The rest of the group should be in a tight circle, in a sturdy stance. The outside circle group members have both of their hands up and ready at chest level. The commands are performed, and the faller may fall any way he/she likes. The rest of the group will gently change the faller's direction by easing their “fall” and sending them in another direction. The middle person will change after a few minutes. NOTE: Address the fact that the more hands on someone, the safer they will feel. The leader also should ask group members to remain quiet during the activity - or even to make the sound of a gentle breeze..