

Activities to Foster a Sense of Belonging

Activity 1: Finding Commonalities

Materials

- One sheet of newsprint for each group
- Markers
- Bell or noisemaker
- Prize

Instructions

1. Break into small groups of 3-5.
2. Have each group designate a recorder by finding out whose birthday is next.
3. Tell participants that this is a competition among groups to see who can come up with the longest list. The topic of the list is: "Things We All Have in Common."
4. Tell participants that when you ring the bell, they can begin. At that time they need to come up with a list of everything they can discover that they have in common with one another. Give a couple examples: brown eyes, like to read mysteries. Tell them they'll have 5 minutes, and to continue to add to the list until you ring the bell again.
5. Give them 5 minutes.
6. Now find out who's the winner. Ask first, "who had 5 or more?" Then "who had 8 or more?" and so on until you've established a winning group. Give small prizes to the winning group.

This activity can be done in pairs as well.

Activity 2: As the Wild Wind Blows/Thunder

Introduce the activity by saying that this a game for getting to know each other and finding out what people have in common.

Set up for the game is similar to Musical Chairs. Have participants arrange chairs in a circle (or they can stand on pieces of paper) with plenty of room in between them. There should be one less chair/paper than there are people playing the game. One person is "it" in the center of the circle. They start off with the statement: "The wild wind blows for _____," filling in the blank. For example, somebody may say "...anyone who's wearing white socks." Then anyone in the group who is wearing white socks has to get up and find another chair to sit in. The person who is "it" must find a chair as well, and no one can sit in a chair that was immediately to their right or left. The person who ends up without a chair is "it" next and makes the next "The wild wind blows..." statement.

If the person in the middle cannot think of anything to say, they can also call "Thunder" and everyone in the circle must get up and find another chair/place.

Activity 3: On the Bus

Instructions: Have participants form 2 facing lines. Draw a line in the middle with masking tape. One side represents the first part of each statement, the other side represents the second part of the statement. Read each statement and have people move to the side that best represents their preference. Add or delete statements as appropriate for your participants.

- Morning person or night owl
- Pepsi or Coke
- Big picture or detail-oriented
- Craves sweets or salty foods
- Bath or shower
- Rock or rap music
- Communicate by text or instagram
- Ideal vacation – city or country
- Comedies or dramas
- Day off – go for a hike or read a book
- Ideal car – SUV or Hybrid
- Loner or people person
- \$1000 – save it or spend it
- Prefer spring or fall
- In school – prefer science or history
- Swim or bike
- Go out for breakfast or dinner
- Read the news or watch the news
- Under stress – more likely to do exercise or eat chocolate

Ask at end of activity what they learned about each other. Focus on similarities.

Activity 4: Have you ever...

Similar to “On the bus” have participants form two lines facing each other. You will ask a series of questions, “Have you ever...?” If participants answer yes to the question, they go to this side (point at the yes side). If they don’t agree with the question, they go to the other side. Create a list of 20 questions that may be appropriate for the group. To build trust, begin with less risky questions.

- Have you ever traveled out of state?
- Have you ever learned more than one language?
- Have you ever gone camping?
- Have you ever been in a school bus?
- Have you ever eaten cereal out of a bag?
- Have you ever slept until noon?

Have participants notice who shares different experiences with them. Debrief what they learned about themselves and each other.

Activity 5: You Belong!

Time: 15-20 minutes

Ask youth to form groups as quickly as possible as you call out the different criteria:

- Form a group of two players; now four; now six.
- Form a group of six people wearing athletic shoes (or a particular color).
- Form a group of people in which at least one person wears red socks (or no socks).
- Form a group of people wearing red shirts, white shirts, and blue shirts (or another color pattern at your discretion).
- Find a person who shares your birthday month, and sing “Happy Birthday to us!”
- Form a group of three, each with the same eye color.
- Form groups of morning people and night owls.

Activity 6: Finding Your Twin

Use the next page as a handout. Ask participants to introduce themselves to others and learn something about them by “finding their twin” for each category listed.

Finding Your Twin

Introduce yourself to other people in the room and get to know them better. "Finding your twin" will help you with this.

Category

Your "Twin's" name

1. Same hobby

1. _____

2. Same favorite food

2. _____

3. Same favorite movie

3. _____

4. Same favorite music

4. _____

5. Same birthday

5. _____

6. Same middle name

6. _____

7. Same favorite holiday

7. _____