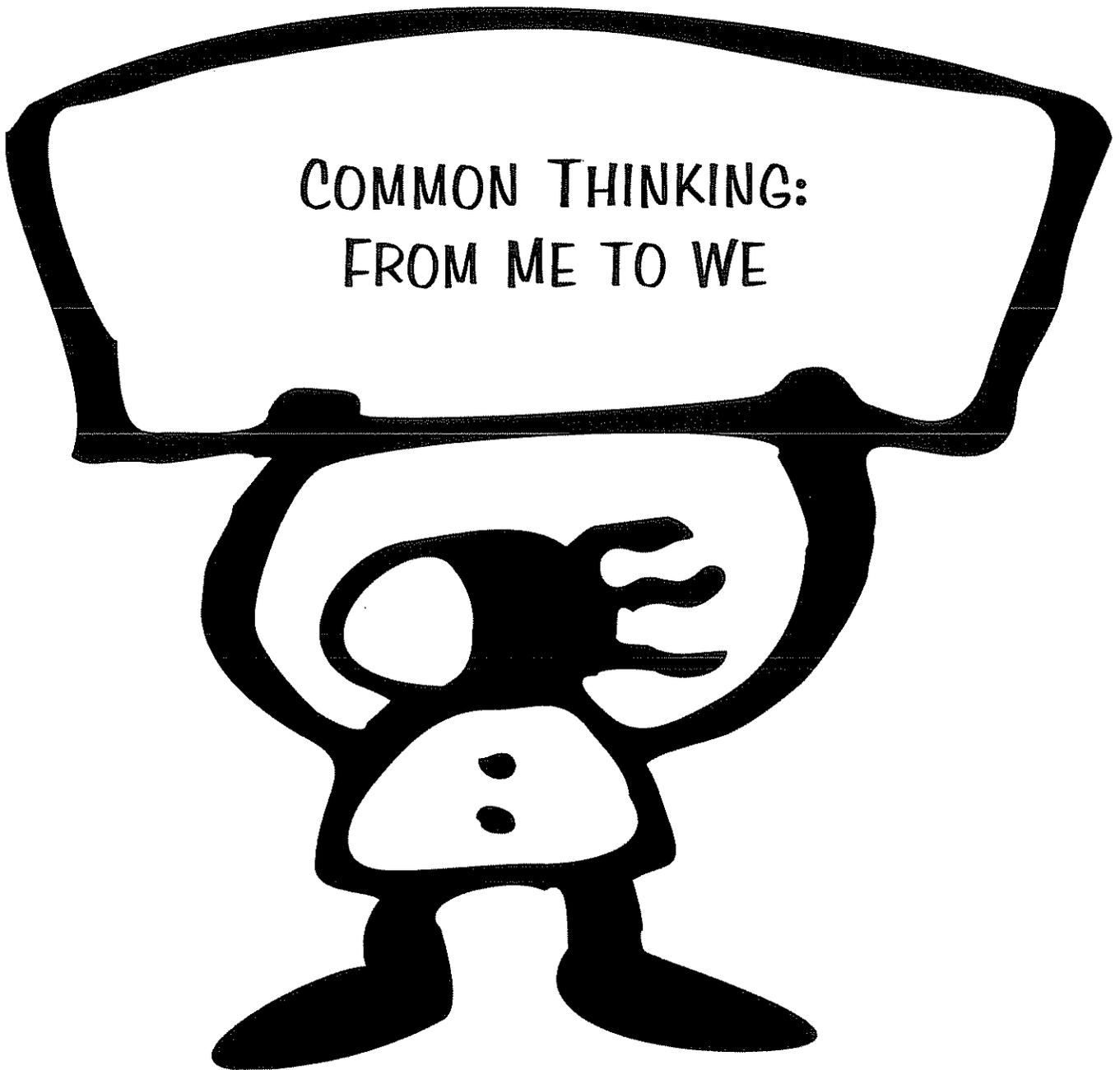


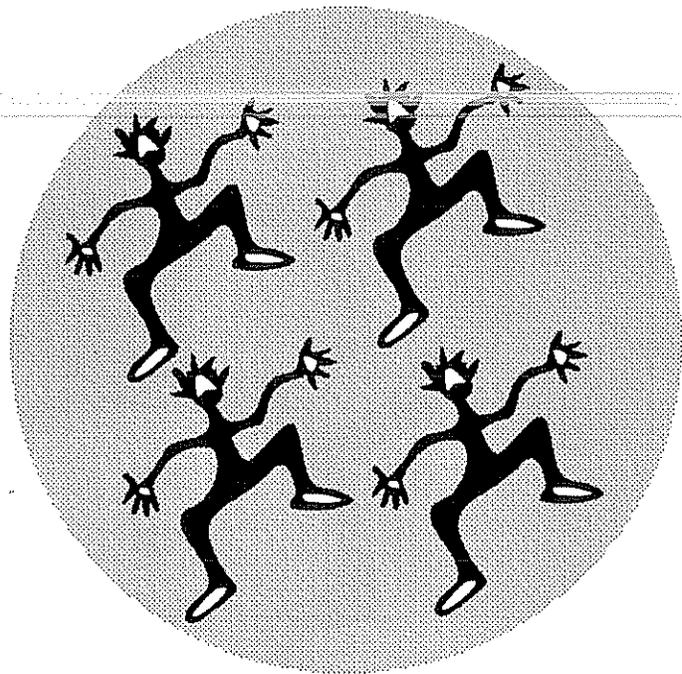
PART ONE

COMMON THINKING:
FROM ME TO WE



INTRODUCTION:

FROM "ME" TO "WE" IN A DEMOCRACY

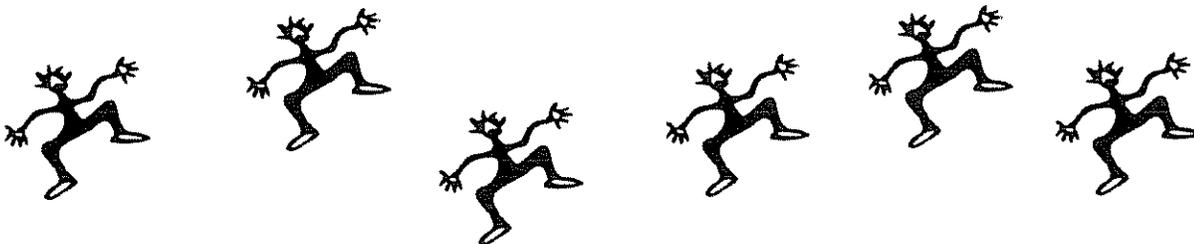


“Part of the excitement of democratic education lies in making the translation between oneself as an individual and oneself as a participating member of a larger group.”

Learning how to work well with others, particularly with people who are very different from ourselves, is a civic skill that community service can help strengthen. Part of the excitement of democratic education lies in making the translation between oneself as an individual and oneself as a participating member of a larger group. Organizations, particularly service and learning centered groups, can model democracy in action by strengthening civic skills. Developing a

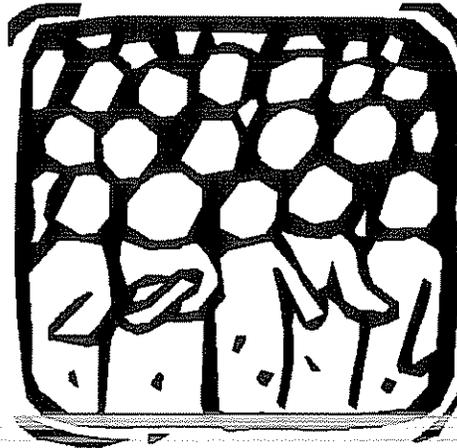
curiosity about the way people think and act, being able to imagine different experiences and perspectives, balancing different opinions and ideas, negotiating and working together to meet common goals — all of these things are important to democracy and civic life. These skills do not always occur on their own, however. Thought, reflection and discussion are requisites for democratic learning. But you need a group of people who respect one another to build these processes.

By allowing community service participants the chance to build and sustain a strong group, we make two things possible. First, the group’s work is enhanced through the mutual accountability, trust and respect that develops. Participants become better able to meet the challenges of community service. Second, participants learn how to build relationships that nurture democracy.



The Importance of Group Cohesion

Often, community service programs are too stretched for time and resources to devote the energy needed to build and sustain a durable group dynamic. “Front-ended training” -- a series of packed days at the commencement of a program year -- attempts to cover all pertinent issues that service participants may face throughout their term. Often times, these trainings rush through the process of allowing participants to get to know one another. At the end of a training week, groups and cliques have formed and it is easy to think, ‘Everyone got to know each other and now we have a good group.’ Only later does it become apparent that participants have much to do before respecting one another and working well together.



Part One of this guide is designed to address these issues. We have put together a compilation of activities that deal with practical and civic issues of group building. They are meant to make it easier for groups to integrate group - building as an ongoing, continual process that is an important part of a community service program. The games and exercises are not simply about enabling group members to get to know each other — they will also enable participants to work on their communication skills. By engaging in these activities, they will become better listeners, more effective spokespeople, more flexible, imaginative and creative members of any group — in essence, better citizens. These skills will prepare your service group to take on the difficult tasks of contributing to your community in meaningful, sustainable ways.



GAMES AND EXERCISES FOR GROUP BUILDING AND COMMUNICATION



At the start of any endeavor, strangers come together to build relationships that will become crucial to their ongoing, collective efforts. People from a wide variety of backgrounds often join service groups. This process can be rich and exciting; it can also be difficult and confusing. After all, people get involved in service for many different reasons and think about their involvement in radically different ways. Some see themselves as “giving something back,” while others see service as a natural extension of personal, political or religious values. The fact is, getting to know one another in this context can be difficult work. Add to the fact that, people being people, we don’t usually all happen to like one another, especially at the start. Sometimes we have to figure out ways to communicate and build relationships that are based on our common efforts and the things we are trying to build before trust and respect can grow.

“...we must be imaginative and creative to build a team that can utilize the strengths of each member to reach common goals...”

You Don’t Have to Be Friends

Working together in common cause does not require friendship. When we develop friendships, we look for similarities, for affinity — we look for people who, at least in some ways, are like us. When we build relationships based on common goals and shared work, we don’t have to be alike. In fact, we can respect and value differences more because our shared efforts demand many different skills and strengths. Everyone has a chance to highlight their talents and learn new things from others.

Relationships based on common work require effort, just like friendships do. We have to learn to listen to one another and to understand other perspectives. We have to learn how to take on another person’s viewpoint. We have to practice articulating our point of view and balancing it with the perspectives of others. We have to determine when to compromise, placing our individual perspectives within a framework of the group. Perhaps most important, we must be imaginative and creative to build a team that can utilize the strengths of each member to reach common goals..

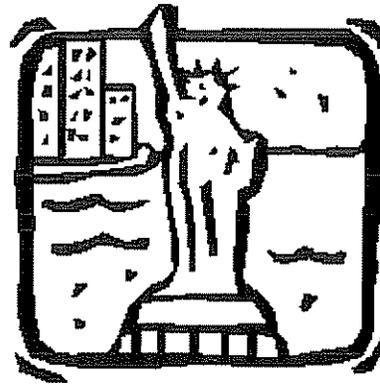




Our aim is to make this easier by providing exercises and games that frame the group-building and reflection process as thoughtful exercise that demands group participants to explore, exchange and challenge ideas, thoughts and opinions in an open way. The following exercises also reflect our belief that the necessary tools for citizenship can be learned through practice.

We start off with some individual thinking and writing exercises that can precede discussions. It is important that we think about our own experiences as citizens, and about the things we want to get out of service, before we embark on discussions with others. Then, we highlight listening and communication exercises that focus on *how* — how we communicate,

how we listen, how we find common ground, how we work creatively together to solve common problems. We provide exercises that are tools for defining priorities, building consensus, working through conflicts and articulating complicated issues. Finally, as an appendix, we provide some energizers and icebreakers that may come in handy, especially if your group faces any special difficulties or conflicts.



Through these games, your group can *learn* the tools of citizenship by *using* them. Debate, compromise, teamwork, imagination, creativity, listening — these are the most important tools we have to build strong communities together. The following games will help you strengthen these important civic skills and prepare you to strengthen your skills and understanding of these democratic processes.



SUGGESTIONS FOR FACILITATION

Facilitating this section is straightforward. The games and exercises are broken into the following categories: Individual Reflection, Listening, Communication, Problem Solving and Other Games (mainly “get to know you” games). Each exercise is accompanied by a small chart that describes the game’s focus, the length of time it takes to play, the number of people it is suited for and any special instructions.

The following are some general suggestions for using this guide to aid in group building:

- ① Focus on building the group, not just for the sake of good group dynamics, but to develop an atmosphere in which the group can work together to learn together. Your aim is to build something meaningful through participation in service. It is important to use these games and exercises to deflect tension, to help members get acquainted, to build the skills of members of the group. *But keep in mind that you are undergoing this for an important reason — the stronger your group is, the better it will take on the difficult tasks of contributing in meaningful, sustainable ways to your community.*
- ② When planning to use these exercises, give yourself plenty of time for explanation and for debriefing and feedback. Figure out for your group what works well and what does not.
- ③ Give group members some flexibility in changing games around. Let them take ownership for as much of the process as you can without creating a chaotic free-for-all.
- ④ Keep in mind that there is an order here for a reason. When you think about facilitating group discussions and exercises, ask yourself whether group members are prepared to move on to the next step. How much time can you devote to each section? (For instance, you may find that you have spent two months of training dealing with *individual* issues and you have never moved forward to *group building* skills.)
- ⑤ Some of these exercises make people “uncomfortable.” You should use that discomfort as a topic for discussion and analysis, but don’t avoid difficult topics out of convenience. Always keep in mind the long term as well as short term well-being of the group. Perhaps when we are uncomfortable we are actually learning more than when we are in an environment that does not challenge us.



STARTING WITH OURSELVES:

INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION EXERCISES





STARTING WITH OURSELVES: INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION EXERCISES



The following individual reflection exercises emphasize self-knowledge as it relates to your background and the civic skills that are highlighted through community service. Making sense of who you are and how your community service involvement relates to your history and identity is an important first step to group reflection and discussion. These exercises can help you see why you chose to get involved in service and what you want to gain from your experience. They can also help you to think about the things you bring to service and public life. Being able to explain the significance of your efforts and involvement to others will be helpful both for you and your program.



Thinking about where you come from helps you frame your expectations for your community service experience. We are not all similar as citizens. We bring different histories to our public activities. If democracy is going to work, these different stories must be heard and respected. The following exercises will help you think about yourself in different ways.

You'll have a chance to:

- ⊙ think about your personal experience and its effect on you as a citizen in the public realm
- ⊙ consider the connection between personal identity and citizenship
- ⊙ assess your skills and talents in terms of doing public work
- ⊙ think about differences between skills needed for public work vs. skills necessary for jobs
- ⊙ consider how you might use your skills and talents in concert with others
- ⊙ to take the first steps towards thinking about conceptions of public life in a democracy



PERSONAL TIME LINE

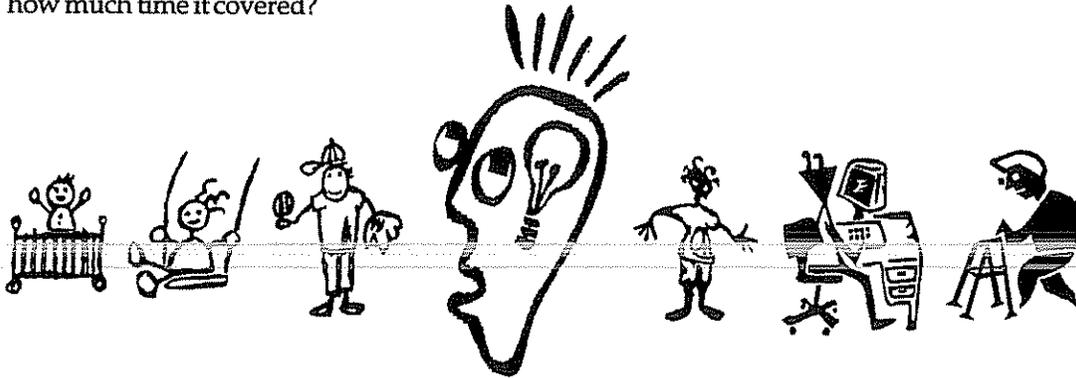
What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

Any size group
To make a time line of your own experiences
Requires pens and paper
30 minutes

Mark down the important events in your life on a time line. Start anywhere you want to and make up your own rules to decide what kind of things to include.

After designing your time line, think about the following questions:

- ⌚ How does knowing your family's history help you to understand your own life and your experiences?
- ⌚ Did you go back 20 years? 10? 2? How would your time line change if you changed how much time it covered?



- ⌚ Is your time line full or empty? Why do you think that is?
- ⌚ Is there a place on your time line when private events cross into public experience?
- ⌚ Are there things or events on your time line that you think are somehow related to your decision to get involved in community service?

Add or subtract from your timeline.

If members of the group want to, have a discussion about the time lines. What was useful about this exercise? Did group members learn anything about themselves and the way they see their personal history? What is the relationship between private events and public experience?

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FIVE THINGS YOU ARE

What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

Any size group
To identify all the things that you are
Requires pens and paper
25 minutes

List five things nouns that describe who you are (i.e. "I am a(n) _____".)
Use single words only. (Some examples are: "soprano", "Korean-American", "athlete",
"Republican", "brother".)

When you are done, think about the words you chose to describe who you are.



- ⊙ How would you differentiate between "public" and "private" parts of your identity?
- ⊙ Would the things you listed be visible to someone meeting you for the first time?
- ⊙ What does that tell you about getting to know somebody?
- ⊙ How can you avoid "judging a book by its cover" or being judged?

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SELF-INVENTORY

What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

Any size group
To assess your strengths and weaknesses
Requires pens
40 minutes

Fill in the matrix on the following page, thinking specifically about your community service work. Think about your interests and skills in relation to your service work, and more broadly, in relation to your role as a citizen.

You'll use the matrix to list:

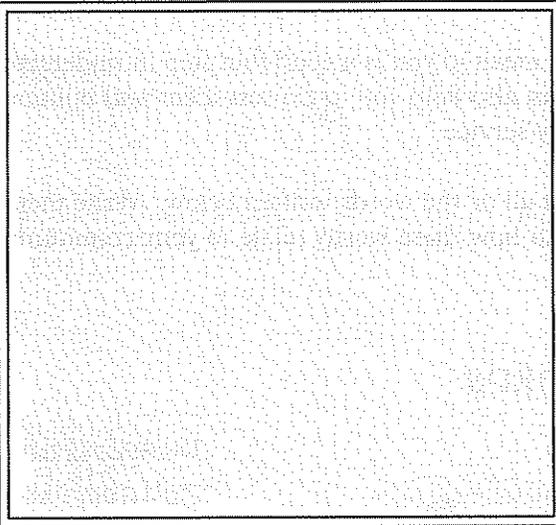
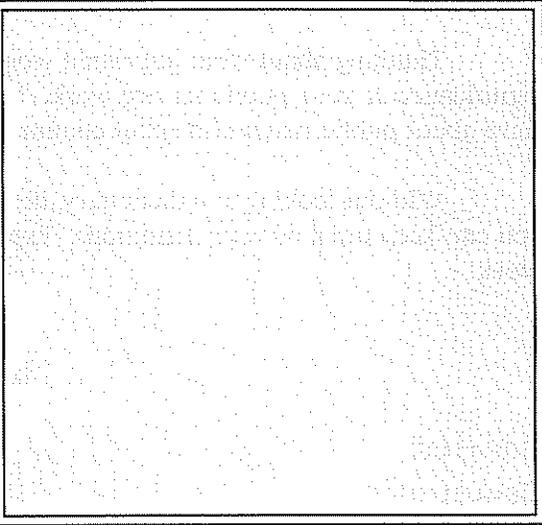
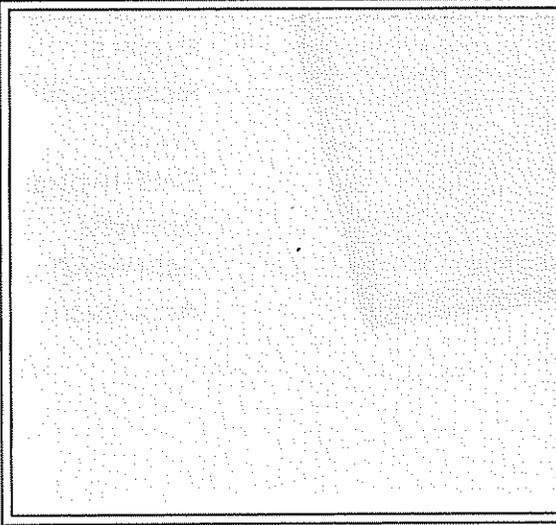
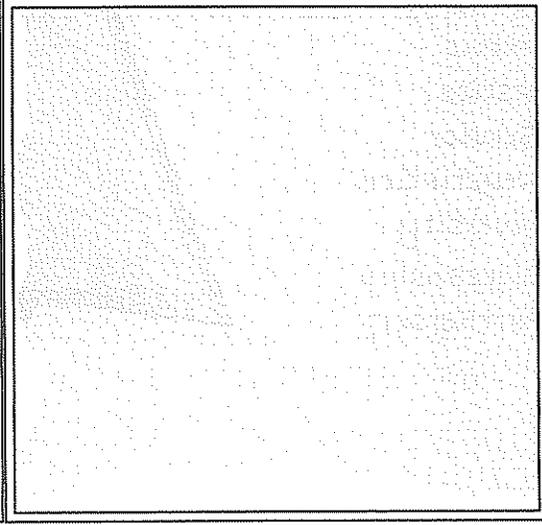
- ⊙ the things you do well and enjoy
- ⊙ the things you do well but dislike
- ⊙ the things you don't do well but enjoy
- ⊙ the things you don't do well and also dislike



When everyone has completed this exercise, discuss what you have found. How can you as a group use these matrices to find new ways to work and learn together?



SELF-INVENTORY MATRIX

	WHAT I LIKE	WHAT I DON'T LIKE
WHAT I DON'T DO WELL		
WHAT I DO WELL		

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INDIVIDUAL REFLECTION EXERCISES



A NEW DICTIONARY

What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

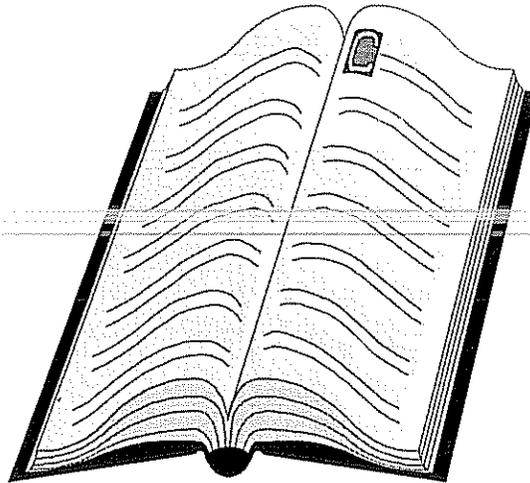
Any size group
To examine concepts related to public life
Need pens and paper
20 minutes

Thinking about what important words mean to you is a good first step in understanding the significance of your public service work. It can also help you to express ideas and opinions that you have about public issues and about community service

Without looking at a dictionary, define all of the words written below. Write them down so you can keep track of your definitions. Explain how these words relate to your community service work.

WORDS

Conflict
Community
Democracy
Wisdom
Education
Public
Justice
Service
Negotiation
Diversity
Citizenship
Partnership



Imagination
Collaborative
Problem
Voluntarism
Private
Rights
Responsibility
Work
Self-Interest
Charity
Learning
Argument

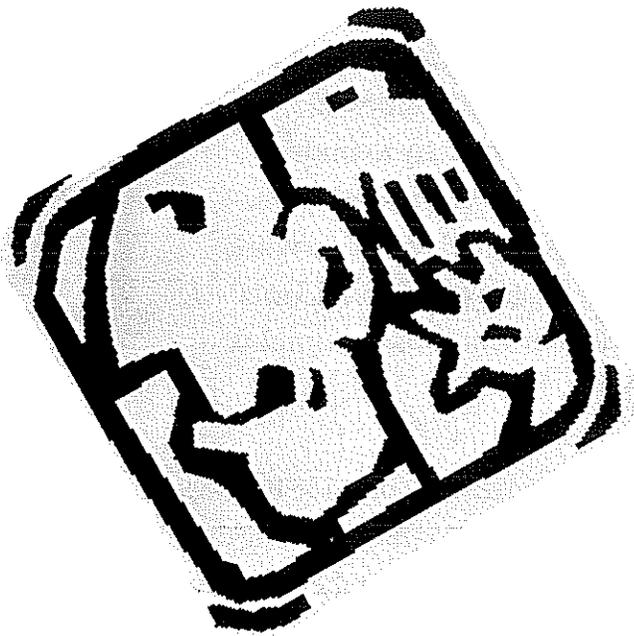
If members of the group want to, have a discussion about the definitions. What was useful about this exercise? Did group members learn anything about how they think about these concepts? Does anyone have definitions they want to share? Why is it important to discuss these terms and concepts? How does it relate to community service?

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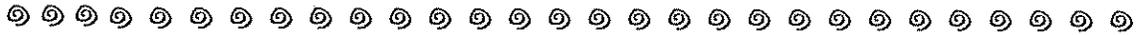
LEARNING TO LISTEN:

EXERCISES
TO IMPROVE
LISTENING SKILLS



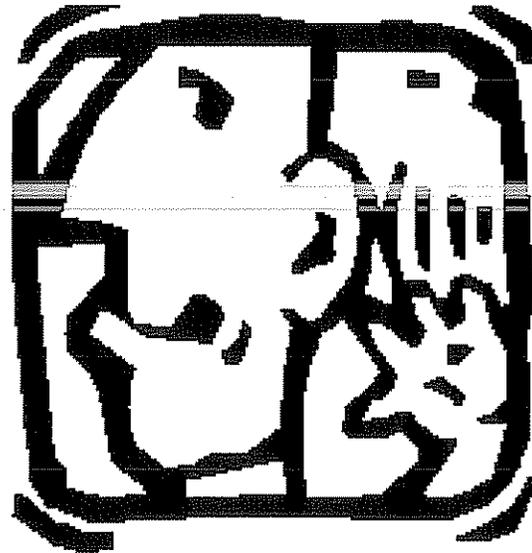


LEARNING TO LISTEN: EXERCISES TO IMPROVE LISTENING SKILLS



You probably think you already know how to listen, right? After all, how hard can it be? The truth is, listening is an *art* and it is essential for the practice of citizenship.

In order to deliberate and act together about our common concerns, we must practice listening. When we can articulate another citizen's perspective without altering it or seeing it only through the lens of our own opinion, we are ready to understand others' concerns and goals. This makes it much easier to work together, to plan together and to find creative solutions to complex problems.



Listening skills provide the necessary foundation for the work of active and open communication. In the following exercises, you will have the opportunity to test your listening skills and to put them to work in discussions about broader issues.



PAIRS

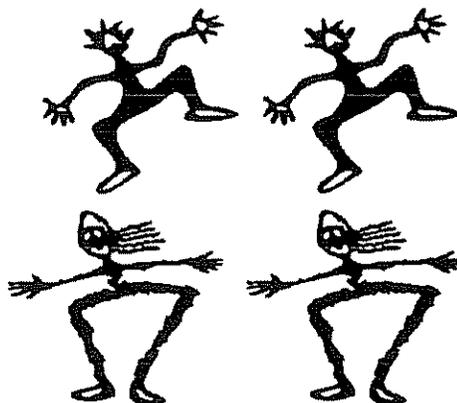
What Size Group?
Aim of the Game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

For any size group
Good for introductions
No special instructions
1/2 hour

Divide your group into pairs — Person A and Person B. Person A asks Person B the following questions: What is your name? Where did you grow up? What is something that you are looking forward to? What is something that angers you? Then switch, Person B asks and Person A answers.

After both have interviewed have them sit back to back. The facilitator asks the following questions: What did the other person say in response to the question? Did your partner express anything nonverbally that also told something about his/her response to the question? What color eyes does your partner have? What color hair does your partner have? Does your partner wear glasses? What color clothes is your partner wearing?

Have them quiz each other and then bring the group back together to discuss how many answers people got right. Then, lead your group in a discussion of different elements of communication, i.e. verbal, nonverbal.



This exercise shows the importance of observance in conversation and teaches participants to be focused actively on others when in dialogue with them.

How to Modify Pairs

This is a good exercise to use when you are having a discussion and it seems as if people are *not* listening to one another. Divide into pairs and put forth questions related to the topic you are discussing, for example, What are the important issues raised in the debate over making English the official language in the U.S.? Instead of sitting back to back, have pairs face one another. First, each repeats what their partner expressed. Next, each explains *how* they think their opinions differ. This demonstrates the diversity of opinions in the group, and enables people to learn to listen to what others think.



FISHBOWL

What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

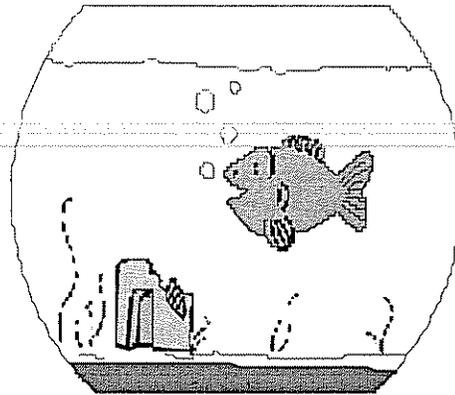
Up to twenty participants
Strengthens listening / observation skills
May be used to discuss critical incidents
1 - 1.5 hours

Have participants volunteer to be in one of two groups: the discussors (“fish”) and observers (“bowl”). It works best when the group discussing the issue sits closely together inside an outer circle of observers.

Decide beforehand what observers should look for in the discussion, i.e. obstacles to discussion — interruptions, lack of eye-contact, lack of listening, repeating ideas, etc.; strengths of discussion — active listening, building ideas, dialogue, learning from participants; the roles of discussors — information-seeking, information-giving, opinion-seeking, opinion-giving, elaborating, summarizing, procedure developing, criticizing, etc.

Pick a topic which requires a group to make a decision; i.e. “Come to consensus on the three most significant factors influencing the outcome of your community service efforts this year.”

Make sure all questions are answered before you begin and be sure there are no interruptions during the discussion. Put a time limit on the discussion and call a warning five minutes before time is up.



When the discussion group is done, ask for evaluative comments, first from the observers and then from the discussors. Once the important issues have been brought up and discussed, it is helpful to repeat the process with a different problem, this time switching roles of “fish” and “bowl”. This way everyone gets a chance to observe and participate.

This exercise is helpful for examining the roles of participants in discussions (explored more fully in Part Two.) It can also be used to introduce guidelines for group discussions.



PLAYBACK

What Size Group?
Aim of the Game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

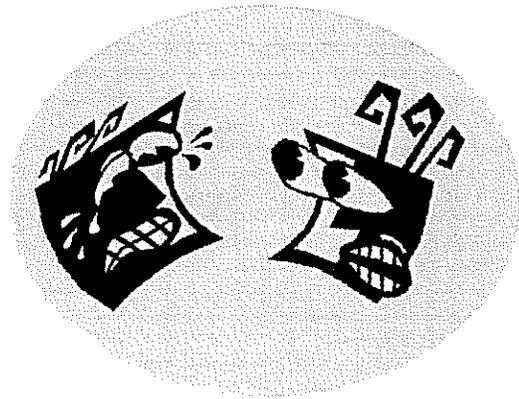
For any size group
Strengthens listening skills
Write instructions on a flip chart
45 minutes for one full round

Divide your group into pairs. Pose a question that brings up strong opinions, i.e., “Why is there poverty?” “Do you think affirmative action is necessary and how would you change it as a policy?”

First, Person A should answer the question for five minutes. Then Person B should take two minutes to summarize to Person A what was said. Next, Person A should correct Person B’s summary. Person B should then state agreements and disagreements with Person A’s position. Person A should summarize and Person B should correct. Then Person A can agree or disagree with B’s position until the time runs out.

A facilitator should call “CHANGE” at each juncture and restate the question *briefly*. Bring the group together after the first complete run-through and discuss the process. What did participants learn about their ability to listen? What was difficult about it? Did the structure of the exercise help?

The idea of the game is to get participants to listen and respond to one another’s opinions and arguments. (Sometimes, however, Person B simply answers the question for him/herself, without responding to the things that Person A brought up.)



This exercise stresses active listening skills both in its content and its structure. Participants are encouraged to listen carefully to one another. Once it is clear that the listener has understood what the speaker said, the game enables the listener to then respond to the ideas expressed by the speaker. In this game, group members have the opportunity to really grapple with one another’s ideas.



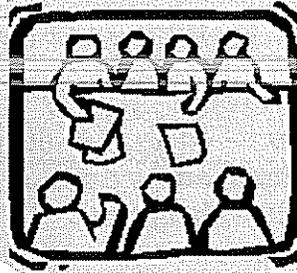
DEBATE

What Size Group?	Better for groups of 10 or more
Aim of the Game?	Strengthens listening/discussion skills
Special Instructions?	None
Time?	1 hour

Place a subject on the table for debate, for example, the reasons for welfare reform, the significance of white students mentoring African American children, etc.

Set up five chairs in a semi-circle, facing a "hot-seat." Ask four participants from the larger group to sit in the semicircle. The fifth chair, or the "hot seat" is reserved for a person with strong opinions about the subject.

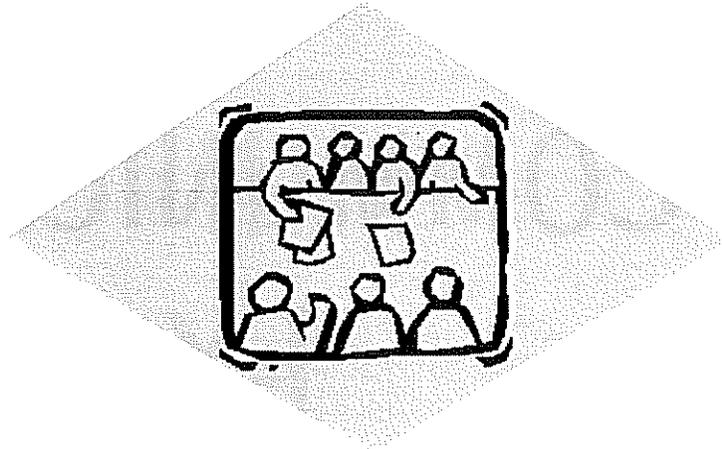
That person starts the debate with a two minute argument for or against the topic. Those sitting in chairs discuss her/his comments and can ask him/her questions. The sixth chair is *open to anyone in the larger group* who wants to ask a question or make a comment. There is a "gatekeeper" who is responsible for enforcing the rules of the game and for keeping track of time.



This exercise fosters group learning and attentive listening. By enabling only some group members to participate, it teaches how to control impulses within conversation and forces group members to listen to one another, instead of jumping in and making points without considering the implications. It also enables someone with strong opinions to express them and to respond to questions and disagreements.



RULES FOR DEBATE



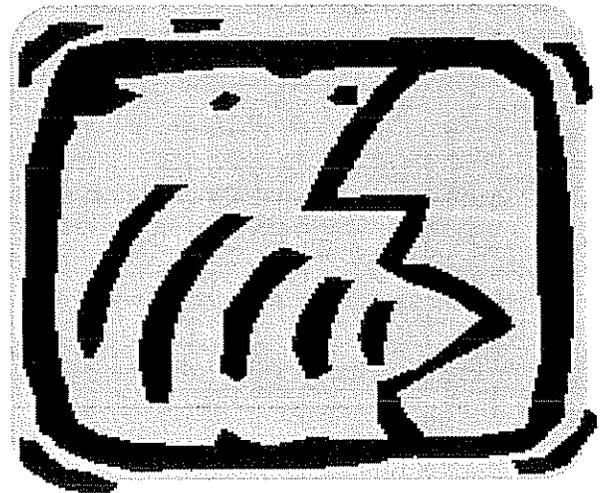
Below are suggested rules (but your group can create its own rules):

- ⦿ Only those in the semi-circle can participate in the discussion. If someone from the larger group wants to participate he or she must wait until a chair is open — raising their hand to indicate they have something to add/ask.
- ⦿ No one can leave the semi-circle until he or she has contributed something.
- ⦿ Once they have contributed to the discussion, those in the semicircle must vacate their seats when others have their hands raised.
- ⦿ Before leaving the semi-circle after making a comment or argument, participants must remain until they have received reactions from other group members.
- ⦿ The gatekeeper can decide when and how often the hot seat rotates.
- ⦿ You can change any of the rules.



WHY TALK IS IMPORTANT:

COMMUNICATION EXERCISES





WHY TALK IS IMPORTANT: COMMUNICATION EXERCISES



The principle of communication has been essential for democracy. Indeed many people have defined democracy as government by discussion. Talk has many significant functions in a democracy; it helps us accomplish what needs to get done. Self-expression, exploring mutuality and commonality, articulating our positions, persuading others, bargaining and negotiating and building a common vision take place through the medium of discussion.

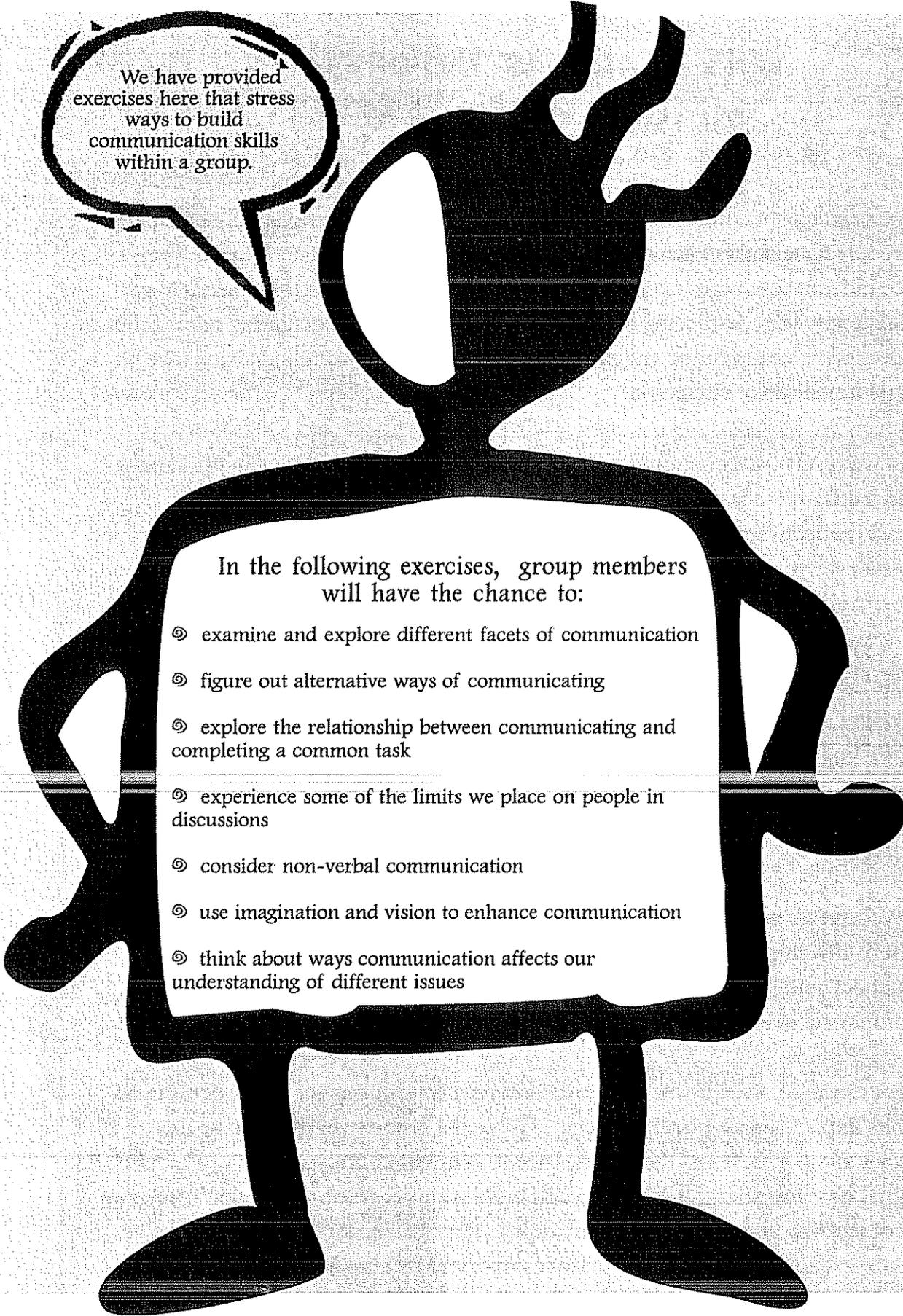
Yet we rarely treat communication as a skill that must be learned and practiced. Some find it difficult to learn — for others it comes naturally. Learning how to communicate effectively in different settings and under different circumstances prepares you for whatever you might encounter on the public stage.

“Self-expression, exploring mutuality and commonality, articulating our positions, persuading others, bargaining and negotiating and building a common vision take place through the medium of discussion.”

We have all been in situations where we have been “shown up” by someone who was a more effective communicator. Sometimes these encounters have long lasting consequences, and when we are involved in community service and social endeavors, these consequences can affect large numbers of people.

For example, what if you need to defend your community service program and explain its impact to a skeptical politician? What if a reporter happens to be there? If you describe your efforts and the significance of your community service work well, you might boost support, gain key allies and build your program. If you don’t, you run the risk of jeopardizing the work you are doing. Strengthening our skills can give us confidence to enter into discussions that are important to us and our communities.





We have provided exercises here that stress ways to build communication skills within a group.

In the following exercises, group members will have the chance to:

- ④ examine and explore different facets of communication
- ④ figure out alternative ways of communicating
- ④ explore the relationship between communicating and completing a common task
- ④ experience some of the limits we place on people in discussions
- ④ consider non-verbal communication
- ④ use imagination and vision to enhance communication
- ④ think about ways communication affects our understanding of different issues

BUILDING EXERCISE

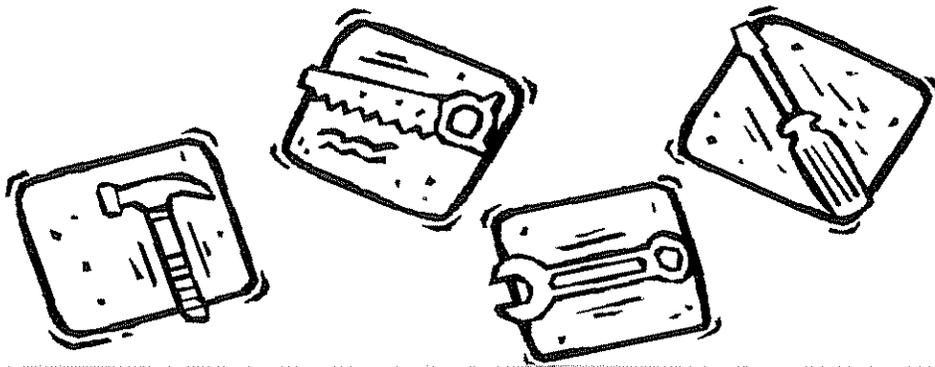
What size group?
Aim of the Game?
Special Instructions?

For groups of six-eight people
Strengthens listening/imagination/teamwork skills
Requires building blocks, Legos or other materials
Requires two or three rooms or partitions
Requires a simple animal or construction built with the materials listed above

Time?

1.5 - 2 hours

Divide group up into teams of six or eight. Explain that there is a model of an animal, building, etc. in another place that participants cannot see. The group must replicate the object in the other room with the tools given to them.



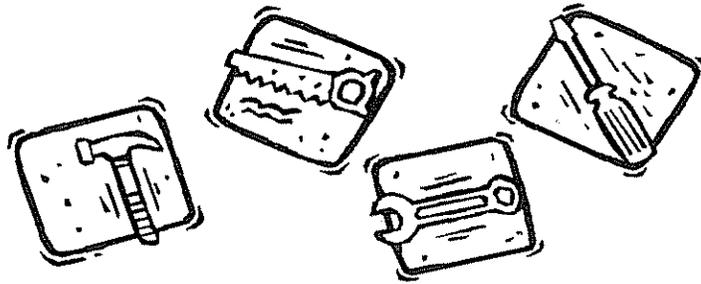
Explain to the group that each person has a designated role in the process of building a small structure. A facilitator should assign roles or break groups down and allow them to choose roles. Groups can be broken down simply by counting off, or a facilitator can choose group members individually.

These are the roles:

- ⊙ The VIEWER sees the original object and talks only to the messenger.
- ⊙ The MESSENGER sees neither the original nor the work in progress. Can talk with looker, builder and other messengers (from other groups).
- ⊙ The BUILDER (one to three people) builds the object with the materials supplied. Can talk with each other, messenger and can ask the Feedbacker questions.
- ⊙ The FEEDBACKER can see both the original and the group model. Can talk with anybody BUT only in response to questions AND can only respond "that's right" and "that's wrong". No nonverbal messages are allowed.
- ⊙ The SUPPLIER has the set of tinker toys and can distribute them to the groups. (This role can be eliminated if the group is small).



BUILDING EXERCISE contd.



All communication must be verbal — don't draw pictures. After instructions are given, groups are given building materials. They have ten minutes to choose roles and set up a communication system. Make sure everyone knows that at any time the group can call a meeting to discuss communication or the process of construction. NO descriptions of the actual object can be given, nor may the Looker see the Builder's model. No time limits are usually given.

The game works best when there are spaces where different players can congregate, away from the model and away from the builders who are working. A hallway or separate room for messengers and feedbackers is good.

**EXPECT
CONFUSION.**

After the construction is over and groups have compared their models to the original, start the evaluation process. (*Evaluation is a crucial element of this game.*)

The following questions are helpful:

- ⊙ How were roles selected? Did people feel comfortable with their roles?
- ⊙ Did the groups work together or compete with each other? Why? (Nothing in the directions except physical placement would indicate that they cannot work together.)
- ⊙ Did the groups call meetings? What characterizes the communication patterns?
- ⊙ What insights have people gained about roles? About roles and task completion? (did some people get bored or not feel a part of the construction?)

This game encourages participants to be attentive to communication and stresses the different roles individuals play in accomplishing goals.



KNITTING

What size group?
Aim of the game?

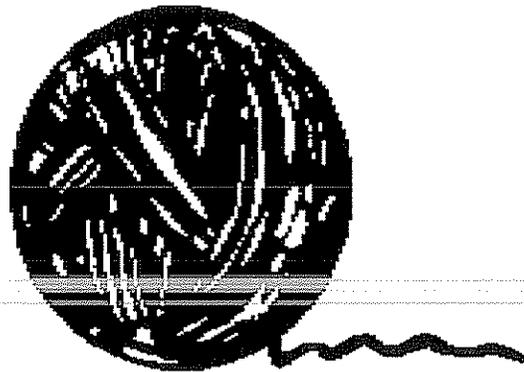
For any size group
Strengthens listening and discussion skills

Special Instructions?
Time?

Requires materials for knitting
1/2 hour

Have one person be in charge of knitting a small piece of wool. The main direction is to take everything literally that each person tells him or her. The person in charge of knitting cannot do anything unless the directive is concrete; i.e. for walking, a command might be, "Stand up. Lift your left foot off the ground. Lift your right foot off the ground."

Select a volunteer. He or she will lead the person through knitting. This originally sounds like an easy thing to lead someone through. For instance, if somebody says, "Pick up the needles", the person in charge cannot do anything. The direction instead would have to be more specific, "With your right hand, wrap your thumb on one side of the blue needle and lift it toward you..."



Once the knitting is complete, lead an evaluation discussion. Was this a useful game? Was this a difficult game? Why? What did participants learn about speaking and listening? What did the direction-giver need to do to help the knitter? What did they learn about giving directions and communicating with others in daily life?

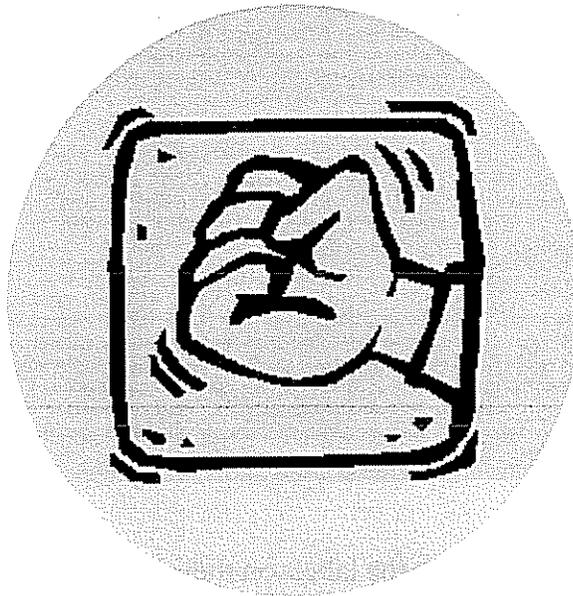
This exercise illustrates the ways that we often take things for granted when speaking with others and helps to show what communication/attention skills are necessary to accomplish group tasks.



OPEN FIST SIMULATION

What size group?	For any size group
Aim of the game?	Intro to other team-building and communication exercises
Special Instructions?	No special instructions
Time?	Twenty minutes

Divide participants into pairs and tell everyone to make a fist. Explain that in the next thirty seconds, without bloodshed or broken bones, everyone should to get his/her partner's fist open.



After the thirty seconds, ask the participants to discuss the answers to the following questions:

- ⊙ What strategies did each person employ? Why?
- ⊙ What feelings did you experience?
- ⊙ What did you notice about your own behavior?
- ⊙ What did you notice about your partner's behavior?
- ⊙ How many of you asked your partners to open their fists?

This exercise offers participants a way to see what "default" mechanisms they use when it comes to solving problems that they are faced with. Participants learn to think more constructively and cooperatively when faced with common problems. It is a good exercise to use when participants need to learn how to "think outside of the box" in approaching problems.



LABELS

What size group?	Game is played in groups of six to ten
Aim of the game?	Shows how we operate in conversations
Special Instructions?	Requires paper and tape or stickers, and a pen
Time?	Twenty minutes

Divide participants into groups of four to six. Put labels on everyone's forehead, without letting participants see them. No matter how many participants, there should be more negative labels.

Labels say:

- Ⓢ Disagree with everything I say.
- Ⓢ Ignore me.
- Ⓢ Respond to everything I say with something totally irrelevant.
- Ⓢ Make fun of me.
- Ⓢ Interrupt me.
- Ⓢ Change the subject every time I contribute something.
- Ⓢ Support my ideas.
- Ⓢ Treat me like a leader.
- Ⓢ Ask me what I think.

Make sure participants cannot see the labels on their own head. Ask participants to carry out a discussion on a question. A question might be, "What tools do you need to carry out your duties at service placement sites in an effective way?"

Everyone should be treated according to their label. The discussion will probably be frustrating.

Halt the conversation after five minutes. Ask the participants what they think their label might read? Have participants read the labels on their own foreheads. Discuss what it felt like to be addressed according to their label. How did it limit them or allow them to communicate? How did it feel to follow directions on others' foreheads? Have participants identify useful comments that got cut down or ignored.

This game establishes the limits that we place on others and the limits which are sometimes placed on us in conversation. Practicing conversation with clear and defined limitations explicitly details this unuseful dynamic and participants see the concrete problems that are created by such limitations.



WORD STORM

What size group?
Aim of the game?

Special Instructions?
Time?

For any size group
To get people thinking about facets of an issue
you are working on
Requires a blackboard or paper and an easel
Twenty minutes

Put a word or phrase up on the board. Have participants say any word that comes to their minds when they see this word. Write down their brainstormed words as quickly as possible. Remind the group that it is OK to say words even if they think someone else used a synonym for their word.



Write down the word and all the responses. When the group has no more words to offer, look over the list and lead a discussion about it.

Lead off questions might be:

- ⊙ Which word really means the starting word to you?
- ⊙ Which words show the positive sides of the word?
- ⊙ Which words show the negative sides of the word?
- ⊙ Which words seem unusual to you?

You can also play this game by putting a photograph on the board and have participants respond to the photo with words.



DESCRIBE THE SITUATION

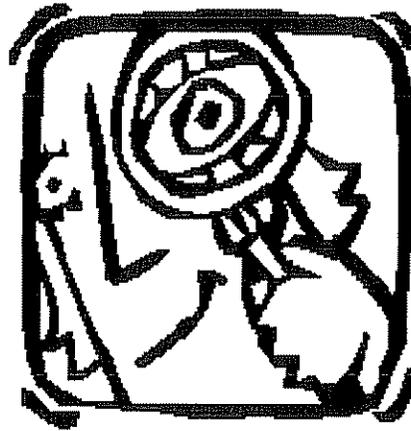
What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

For groups up to twenty
Strengthens observation skills
No special instructions
1 Hour

Send one person out of the room. The rest of the group picks a situation relevant to service or citizenship.

Examples:

- ⊙ There is a demonstration and service participants are asked to speak.
- ⊙ There is a violent altercation between clients and staff at a site.
- ⊙ A student at a service site asks a volunteer for money.



The person returns to the room. Each person goes around the circle and gives one sentence relating to the situation without saying exactly what it is. For example, if the situation is the demonstration, sentences might be, "The police were present but not using physical force" or, "Politicians came," or "I was not sure what my role was there..." After all people have spoken, the person who does not know the situation can ask yes/no questions and can guess what the situation is.

At the end of the guessing game, discuss the assumptions made and hints given. Talk about the language of service and the different comments and ideas within the group. Did the comments seem to fit together? Did they represent a diversity of opinion in the group about the fictional incident? Why did people choose the clue they did?

This exercise does two things. First, it gives group members a chance to think critically about the specific elements of a theoretical situation, incident or problem. Secondly, it demonstrates the different ways group members conceptualize critical situations encountered in community service.



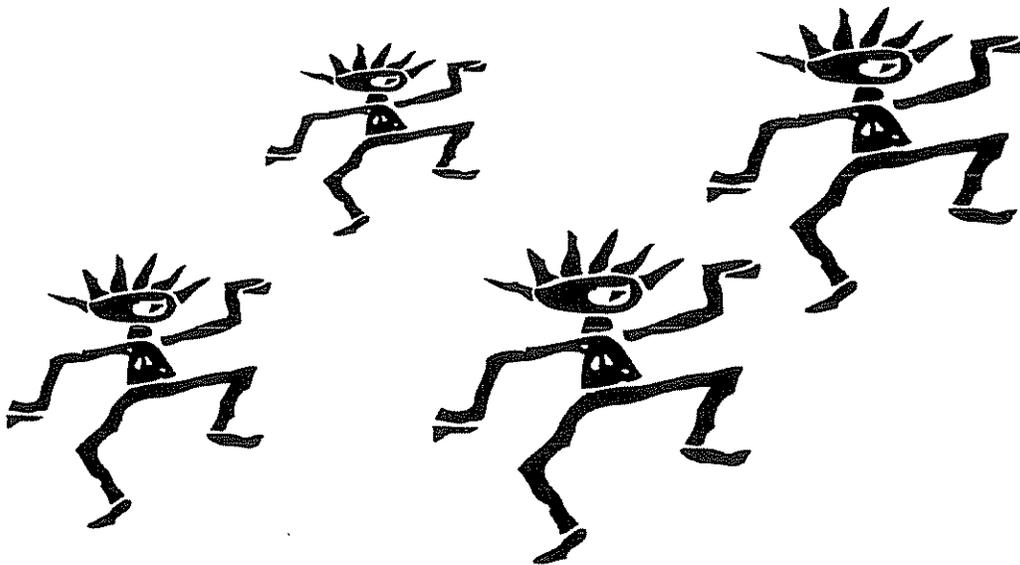
REALIGNMENT

What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

At least three groups of 5 or 6
Strengthens nonverbal communication
Requires a large room
30 minutes

Have participants form “families” of five or six people. Each family will have an opportunity to stand at the front of the room in a straight line. As each family stands at the front of the room, ask the seated families to observe the order of the standing family.

Then, ask the seated families to close their eyes while the standing family changes places in line. Ask the participants to open their eyes and have one seated family come forward to shift one person at a time back to his/her original position. During the time the family is being repositioned, there is no talking between any participants.



The goal is to get the standing family back to the original position. Continue until each group has been both standing and moving a standing family.

When the game is completed, lead a short discussion. What was the most difficult part about the game? What characterized the group dynamics of the families who were maneuvering the standing families? What would have made it easier to move the standing family?

This exercise strengthens individual observation skills and group nonverbal communication skills.



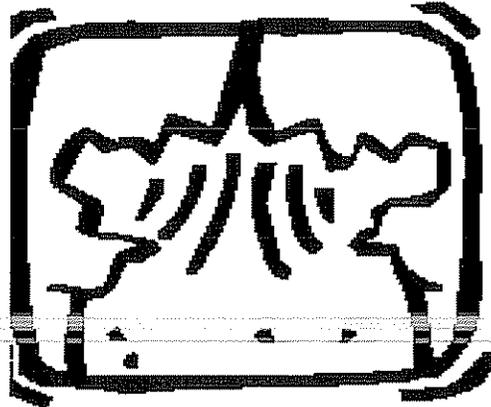
SWITCH SWATCH

What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

For any size group
To illustrate poor communication
No special instructions
Thirty minutes

Ask for two volunteers to come up and face each other. Explain that their goal is to defeat each other in an argument as vehemently as possible. They are NOT to listen to each other, but to talk over each other. You will give them the topic of the argument and the position they will take (for or against). But when you say, "Switch," they have to switch their positions immediately.

Assign the topic and then let the pair argue for about thirty seconds before switching. Switch two or three times for each topic — use new pairs. Try to choose topics that participants have enough knowledge or information to speak about — local issues, etc. For example, "The school board SHOULD/SHOULD NOT have student representatives," or, "Congress SHOULD/SHOULD NOT continue to fund AmeriCorps."



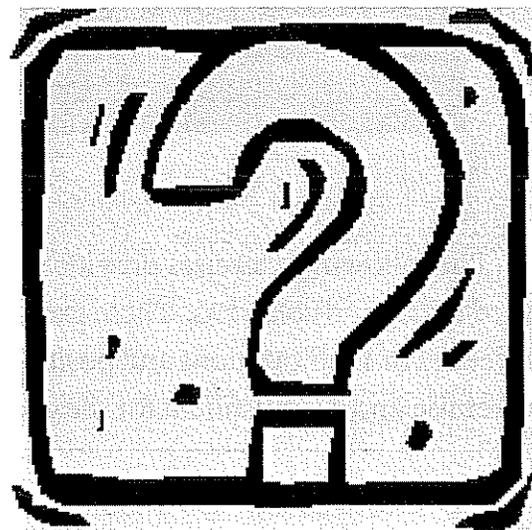
After a few groups have played, have a discussion about the characteristics in each of these discussions. Were there winners or losers in the debates? How did you choose a winner or loser? Did you learn anything about the topics that were debated? Would it have made a difference if the rules were different? Would it have helped if people had been more prepared to discuss the topic?

After a discussion, have the group set up rules for actual debate based on the concepts of active listening and learning. Then, schedule a set of those debates on topics the group chooses for the next meeting.



BEING CONSTRUCTIVE AND CREATIVE:

PROBLEM-SOLVING EXERCISES





BEING CONSTRUCTIVE AND CREATIVE: PROBLEM-SOLVING EXERCISES



Democracy is about problem-solving. Instead of resorting to violent conflict, democracy requires citizens to face problems and come up with peaceful solutions. For instance, if there is a proposed trash dump, citizens have to figure out where it will go. They face a problem and come up with solutions.



Of course, this is never easy. It requires bargaining, negotiating, setting agendas, reframing issues and concerns. Your group will come across problems of its own. It is within these situations that you can begin to learn to solve problems effectively.

“Instead of resorting to violent conflict, democracy requires citizens to face problems and come up with peaceful solutions.”

The following exercises provide *structures* to help your group negotiate an array of issues and concerns. These exercises are useful because they allow people the freedom of their opinions and positions, while at the same time they require compromise and readjustment for the good of the whole group.



PROBLEM-SOLVING DISCUSSION

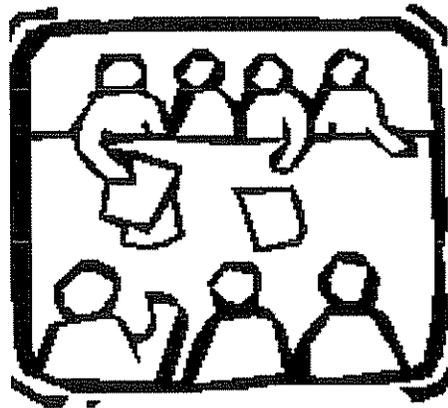
What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

For groups up to fifteen
To practice problem-solving
No special instructions
Thirty minutes to 1 hour

Begin the exercise with a discussion of some the obstacles that participants' face in trying to achieve their goals in service. Brainstorm the obstacles if you think it is better to have participants thinking about the same problems. Otherwise, tell participants to identify an obstacle they face in trying to achieve goals.

Have participants think about the following questions:

- ④ What are you trying to accomplish?
- ④ What are the benefits (two)?
- ④ What are the drawbacks (two)?
- ④ Why are these important? (two)
- ④ How might these perspectives be combined?
- ④ Can you think of alternative approaches ?



In small groups based on similar topics, or in one large group, discuss your findings. What did you discover through this deliberation process? Is there a way to benefit and learn from the disagreement or difficulty?



BRAINSTORMING

What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

Any size groups
To explain and practice brainstorming
Requires a blackboard or paper and easel
Thirty minutes to 1 hour

Brainstorming serves many purposes:

- ⊙ It focuses a group on creating innovative ways of achieving the group's goals.
- ⊙ It gets people thinking about a topic that is relevant to the work they are doing.
- ⊙ It creates an environment where ideas can stand on their own merit, instead of being dependent on who proposed the ideas.
- ⊙ It temporarily enables the group to suspend judgment and to allow people to be creative.

The guidelines for brainstorms are:

- ⊙ Say what comes to your mind.
- ⊙ Don't censor your ideas.
- ⊙ Do not worry if your idea is similar to something that has been said. Say it anyway.
- ⊙ Do not evaluate ideas until the brainstorm is completed.
- ⊙ Do not put down people or ideas.

Next, present a question and write down every one's ideas as they come out. It is important to make sure that everyone can see the ideas as they are being written up on the board, since they will stimulate further ideas. Stimulate discussion by asking relevant questions. Don't end the brainstorm too quickly — it is OK if it is quiet for a while.

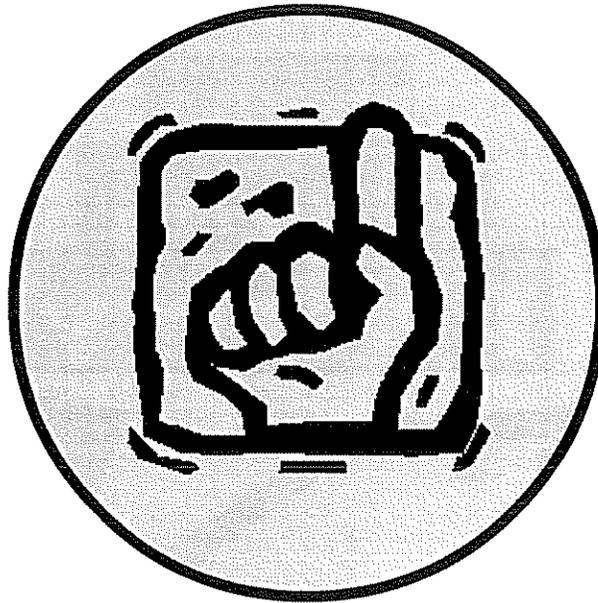
Once the brainstorm is completed, work with the group's ideas. Use priority tools to eliminate less significant ideas, or to prioritize the points that have been made.



PRIORITIZING TOOL #1

What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

Good for large groups
To prioritize from the brainstorm
No special instructions
Ten-Thirty minutes



This exercise helps to identify and rank individual, small group and large group goals and priorities.

After the whole group has brainstormed a question or issue, the group breaks into small groups that discuss and identify individual concerns and the concerns of the small group. If it makes sense, individuals can rank their priorities #1, #2, etc.

The small groups report back to the whole group. The whole group listens to the priorities and concerns and then begin a discussion on common goals and concerns to focus on. Structures can then be set up for individuals and groups to address their specific concerns at a later point.



PRIORITIZING TOOL #2

What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

Good for large groups
To prioritize from the brainstorm
No special Instructions
Ten - Thirty minutes



This can help a group achieve common agreement on top priorities. This can be used for the priorities of discussion or for task-oriented processes.

After the brainstorm process, have the group break into pairs. The purpose of their discussion is to come up with the two most important priorities from the brainstorm. That pair then pairs with another pair to make a four person team. The four-person team then chooses two priorities from the four. Then that group pairs with another group to make an eight-person team. That team has to reach consensus on the two top priorities.

This exercise enables participants to practice making arguments for their priorities while at the same time stressing the importance of discussion, deliberation and common agreement.



OTHER EXERCISES:

INTRODUCTIONS AND ICEBREAKERS



OTHER EXERCISES

INTROS AND ICEBREAKERS



In order to make it easier to break the ice and energize a new group, we have compiled some of the best time-tested and simple exercises.

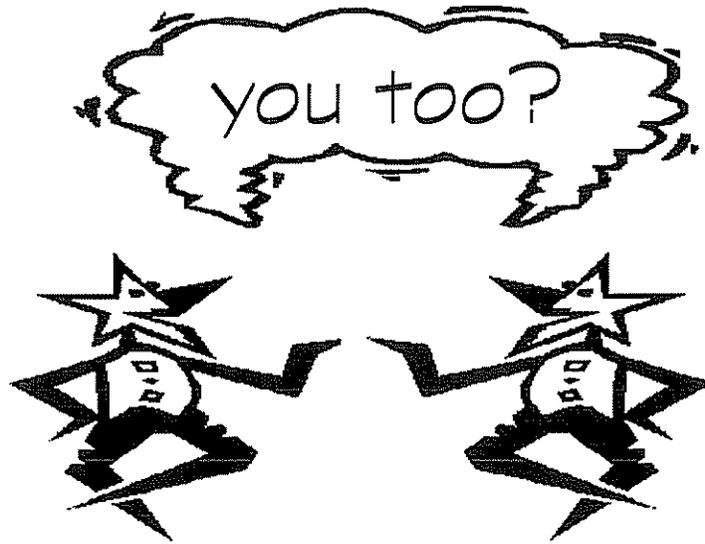
While they do not relate directly to citizenship or public life, the following exercises do set the stage and allow people the opportunity to meet one another and share some information about themselves in fun and easy ways.



YOU TOO?

What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

Good for large groups
Introduction and energizer
Requires a large room and chairs
Ten minutes



Everyone sits in a circle in chairs. There is one chair less than the number of people in the room. One person stands in the middle of the circle. The person introduces him or herself, tells where they come from and one thing about him/herself, and then states, “We’ve got something in common if you ... (have ever run out of gas, are wearing a nose ring, have a job, walk to school, vote Republican, read the paper...)”

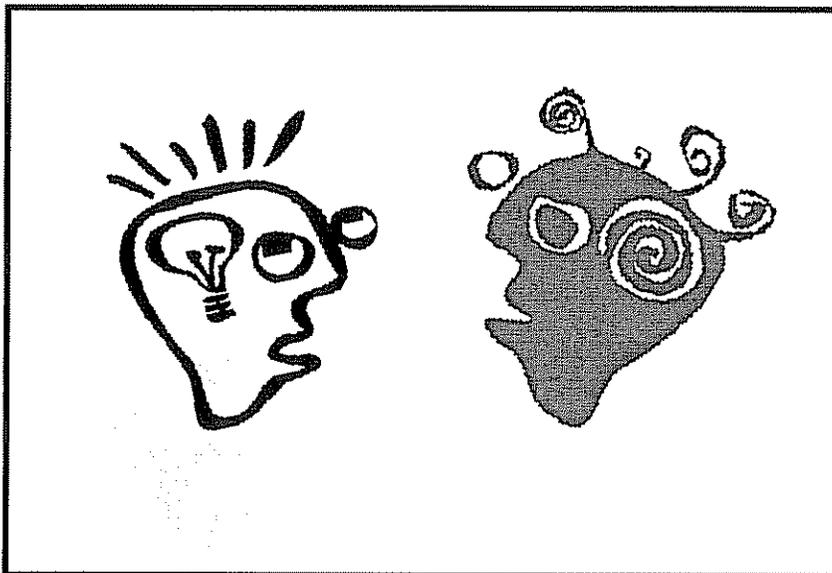
All of the people who can answer yes to the question that was asked have to get up and find an empty seat. The person left standing get in the middle and begins a new round.



NAME AND...GAME

What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

For groups up to fifteen
Good icebreaker
No special instructions
Ten minutes



Everyone sits in a circle. Each person introduces themselves one after another, saying their name and then one word that describes a reason they have become involved in community service or a reason why they think service is meaningful. (You can have different topics — Name a book that is important to you, give an adjective that describes a good citizen, what would you be doing if you weren't here, what did you like about the orientation))

The second person repeats the first person's name and word (adjective) and adds their own. The third person repeats the previous two, adding their own. And so on. The last person has the hardest job.

After you have gone around the circle, start at the beginning and each person says their name and the word they chose again, and explains why they chose that word.



NAME RACE

What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

For very large groups
Good name game
Requires a watch
Two minutes



This is a good game for groups that are so large there is no possibility of learning everyone's names.

Have the group sit in a circle. Explain that the aim of the game is to say everyone's name in as short a time as possible. Tell the group to go around the circle and say their name very fast. Keep time and tell the group how fast they were. Then ask them to try to beat their time. Do this two or three times.

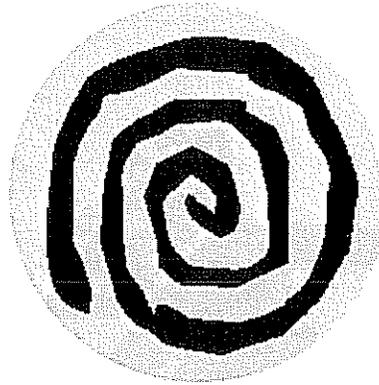
This game can establish the importance of learning names, without putting pressure on everyone to learn all the other participants' names.



M&MS

What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

For any size group
Good intro — gets people to talk
Requires M&M s/ other small candies
Twenty minutes



This is a good introduction game for people who are meeting for the first time. Everyone sits in a circle. Pass a bag of M&Ms around and invite people to help themselves. (If people have dietary restrictions, have something else available - marbles, checkers, playing cards, etc. that you can pass to them.)

Once the bag has been passed, participants tell their name, and for each M&M in their hand, one thing about themselves. Give some categories for what participants might tell — where did your grandfather lived as a boy, where do you want to visit someday, what you never want to hear someone say to you again, what you could eat everyday for a year, what your favorite book is, etc. Give the game as much flexibility so participants can feel that there are a lot of ways to describe themselves and a lot of ways to see others.

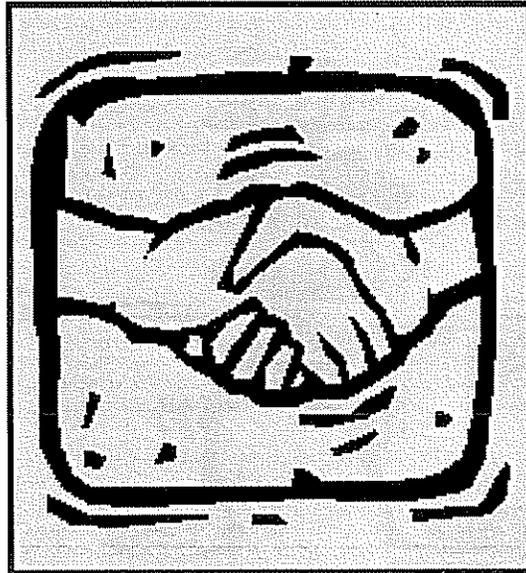
For more group cohesion in the conversation sharing, pass the M&M's around. Then say, "Everyone with a red M&M, answer this question, "What was the last book you read?" or "Who's your favorite TV or radio personality?" etc. Then each person who had taken that particular color M&M has to answer the question.



SHAKE ALL HANDS

What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special instructions?
Time?

Good for groups over 25
Energizer and icebreaker
No special instructions
Two minutes



Explain the game. At the count of three, everyone in the room has to try to shake everyone else's hand within a strict time limit of one minute. Start the game.

This game gets energy up, and obliges each participant to acknowledge everyone else.



MIME THE LIE

What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

For any size group
Energizer — silly game
No special instructions
Depends on group size, five to thirty minutes



Have participants stand in a circle. One by one everyone goes into the middle of the circle and mimes an action, such as pouring a drink of water. The person who was standing next to them asks them what they are doing. They lie, and say, for example, "I am running a race."

The person who asked now goes into the circle and mimes whatever the previous person said that they were doing. When asked what they are doing, they lie and the game continues.



HOLD YOUR BREATH

What size group?
Aim of the game?
Special Instructions?
Time?

For any size group
Silly game - tension breaker
No special instructions
Two minutes



Have participants sit in a circle. Everyone looks at the person directly across from them. At the same moment, everyone holds their breath and sees who can hold it longer, without taking their eyes off their partners' face. By the time everyone runs out of breath, people are laughing at the absurdity of the situation.

Good for diffusing tension.



