

## **Icebreakers and Introductions**

The first day of a course is essential to the success of the course. It is important to start the course on a positive note by making sure all of the participants feel comfortable and get to know each other as soon as possible. The activities the trainer or facilitator uses at the beginning of a course to help the participants get to know each other are known as icebreakers or introductions. Here are a number of icebreakers and introductions you can use.

### **Unique Characteristics**

Even if the participants already know each other, the facilitators must get to know them. Instead of asking participants to say their names, the trainer can divide the group into pairs and give participants a few minutes to interview each other. Then, each participant should introduce their partners by name and to share at least two unique characteristics about them.

### **Your Favorite Things**

The trainer divides the group into pairs and ask participants to tell each other their favorite food or name the animal they feel best describes them and why. This information is shared with the group when participants introduce their partners.

### **Ball Toss**

Participants and the clinical trainer form a circle and toss a soft ball around the circle. Participants state their names as they catch the ball. After a few minutes, when they catch the ball, they call out the name of the person who tossed it to them. This activity can also be used throughout the course by substituting a quick information exchange for people's names. For example, the facilitator may ask, "What are examples of behaviour change indicators?" The ball is tossed around the circle and participants call out a different indication as they catch the ball.

### **Three Questions**

Participants write down three questions and find someone in the room they do not know well. Each participant then asks questions of the other. The participants then introduce their partners to the group by sharing both the questions and the answers.

### **Nametags**

The trainer prepares a nametag for each participant and places the nametags in a box. Each participant picks a nametag from the box. Participants locate the person whose nametag they drew and introduce themselves. (This is especially useful for larger groups-20 or more.)

### **Find the Missing Piece**

The facilitator prepares pieces of paper, enough for everybody in the group. The papers include words that are split into two, for example:

|       |        |
|-------|--------|
| COCOA | BUTTER |
| MILE  | STONE  |
| ICE   | CREAM  |

Each person picks one piece of paper and then begins to look for the person who has the matching word. When the participant has found her/his match, s/he should know the other person. Then, they will be asked to introduce one another to the rest of the group.

An alternative is to use words that are opposites. For example:

|       |       |
|-------|-------|
| BLACK | WHITE |
| UP    | DOWN  |
| LEFT  | RIGHT |
| HOT   | COLD  |

### **Fact or Fiction**

Each person writes down four facts about themselves, one of which is not true. Each person takes turns reading their list aloud and the rest of the group writes down the one they think is not true. When all are done reading the lists aloud, the first person reads their list again and identifies the fact, which is not true. The group should compare their written responses with correct answers.

### **Everyone's a Liar**

Step 1: The facilitator writes three statements on the board. Two statements are true, and one is a lie. Example:

I have been training for 10 years.

I have a pet dog called, "Dog."

I lived in Switzerland for a year.

Step 2: The participants ask "lie detector" questions to get further information, in order to determine which statement is false.

Training - Where have you conducted training? What have you taught? What year did you start?

Pet - How old is Dog? What does Dog eat? Where do you keep Dog?

Switzerland - Where did you live in Switzerland? What language was spoken in that part of Switzerland?

Step 3: Participants vote on which statement is a lie. The facilitator reveals which are truths and which are lies.

Place participants in small groups (3 or 4 works well). Small groups repeat steps 1 - 3.

Have participants introduce each other to the large group.

What's the Question?

Step 1: The facilitator writes some facts on the board. Example:

Purple

16 months

Kenya

Step 2: Participants try to think of the question that matches each fact.

Purple - What's your favorite color? What color is your car? What color is your favorite clothing?

16 months - How long have you lived in this city? How old is your child? How long have you been married?

Kenya - Where were you born? Where have you worked? Where are you going on vacation?

Step 3: When participants have discovered all of the questions, place them in small groups (3 - 4). Repeat steps 1 and 2. Have participants introduce each other to the large group.

### **Nonsense Name Game**

Introduce yourself to the group with a sentence based upon the first letter of your name. Examples:

"I'm kooky Katherine. I like kissing kittens."

(Pattern: I'm ADJECTIVE NAME. I like ACTION-ing NOUN)

"I'm darling Dorothy. I like dancing daily."

Participants introduce themselves to the group with their sentences. "I'm generous George. I like giving gifts."

Name Chain - You can play "Name Chain" as a follow-up to the "Nonsense Name Game."

Introduce yourself and the person to your right. "I'm kooky Katherine. This is darling Dorothy."

The person to your right repeats previous introductions and introduces the person to their right. "She's kooky Katherine. I'm darling Dorothy. He's generous George."

Continue with the next person to the right, until all names have been repeated. Challenge volunteers to rhyme off all names quickly!

### **The Magic Wand**

Ask the participants what they would do if they just found a magic wand that allows them to change three work-related activities. They can change anything they want. How would they change themselves, their job, their supervisor, those they work with, an important project, etc.? Have the participants discuss why it is important to make the change. Another variation is to have them discuss what they would change if they become the supervisor for a month. This activity helps them to learn about others' desires and frustrations.

### **Marooned**

Divide the participants into teams. Ask the participants to pretend they are marooned on an island. Have the teams choose five (the trainer can use a different number, such as seven, depending upon the size of each team) items they would have brought with them if they knew there was a chance that they might be stranded. Note that they are only allowed five items per team, not per person. Ask each team to write their items on a flipchart and discuss and defend their choices with the whole group.

This activity helps them to learn about other's values and problem solving styles and promotes teamwork.

### **The Interview**

Break the group into two person teams (have them pick a partner that they know the least about). Have them interview each other for about 20 minutes (You can also prepare questions ahead of time or provide general guidelines for the interview). They need to learn about what each other likes about their job, past jobs, family life, hobbies, favorite sport, etc. After the interviews, have each person introduce their partner to the group. This exercise helps them learn about each other.

### **Finish the Sentence**

Ask each person to complete one of these sentences (or something similar):

The best job I ever had was...

The worst project I ever worked on was...

The riskiest thing I ever did was...

When starting a course and you want everyone to introduce themselves, you can have them complete "I am in this course because..."

You can also move on to a new subject by asking a leading question. For example, if you are training trainers, "The one time I felt most stressed because I did not plan was..."

## **Warm-ups and Energizers**

### **Super Model Exercise**

Objective - Ice breaker or energizer - Great for laughs and relaxation. Shedding of status and roles.

Time required -5-10 minutes.

Space requirements - big enough for participants to form a circle.

How to do it:

1. Arrange participants in a circle.
2. Instruct participants that they have to act out your instructions. When pointed to and given the following commands:

"Super Model" - Participant should immediately pose as a fashion model. The two participants alongside the participant acting as a super model (the one on the left and the right) take the role of photographers and mimic gestures of taking a photo.

"Elephant"- Participant poses as an elephant by immediately thrusting two hands held together in front to represent the elephant's trunk. The two participants alongside form a circle with their hands and place them on the side of the participant pointed to serve as "ears" of the elephant.

"Jello" - Participant shakes his or her body like jello continuously. The two participants alongside hold each other's hands and form a circle around the target participant. The idea is to form a "glass" around the jello.

"Queen Bee" - Participant turns around and puts his or her hands together behind the back (just above the buttocks) and flutters them back and forth to mimic a bee's tail. The two participants alongside thrust their arms away from the bee and flutter them like wings.

"Donkey" - participant and those alongside him or her should freeze and not move at all

Expect that people will be confused and make mistakes. Such mistakes generate laughter and fun. To make the exercise competitive, participants who make a mistake (both the one pointed to and the two participants alongside him or her) can be eliminated from the game. The exercise can be used several times in a meeting or seminar.

### **National Anthem**

This warm-up works best when you have participants from a number of countries. To conduct this warm-up, you will need a source of music (tape player or radio) and a ball. The participants should stand in a circle. The trainer puts on the source of music and participants dance and pass the ball around in the circle. Whenever the music stops, whoever has the ball in his/her hand must step into the circle and sing the first verse of his/her national anthem. If he/she cannot remember the national anthem (which happens sometimes) he/she must sing a love song to pass. After this has been done satisfactorily, the trainer turns on the music again and participants again pass the ball in the circle. The game continues until many participants have had the opportunity to sing or the trainer feels that everyone has been energized.

### **Tell A Story**

The participants should stand in a circle. The purpose of this activity is to build a story with each participant contributing one sentence that must:

Make sense and at the same time add some fun to the activity,  
Build on to the last sentence, and  
Be grammatically correct.

For example:

- #1: "I was walking to breakfast this morning."
- #2: "A dog came up to me."
- #3: "I said good morning to the dog."
- #4: "The dog asked me what I was going to have for breakfast."

### **The Last Word**

The participants should stand in a circle. One participant moves and stands randomly in front of another. He/she makes a statement (e.g., "It is such a lovely day"). The person spoken to will move to another person and make a statement starting with the last word in the statement he/she received (e.g., "Day one of the course was very tiring"). Each participant takes turns to ensure that everybody gets a chance to participate.

### **The Telephone**

Participants should sit or stand in a circle. The facilitator quickly whispers a message to one participant. This participant passes the message in a whisper to the next person and so on. The last person shouts out the message. Chances are the final message will be different from the original. Here is an example of an initial message (note how two different activities are blended into the initial statement, a sure cause for confusion when whispered quickly): "I had rice for dinner and then dressed in blue to go dancing."

### **What Do You Have?**

Divide the participants into teams of 4-6 people. Each team should make a list of 6-8 items that they would probably have with them. Make one or two items less common things. The team gets points for each person who has these items. Only one of each item per person can be counted and the team with the most points wins. The list could include: a photograph, a calculator, a pencil, a photograph of a family member, an unusual key chain, something red, etc.

### **Brainstorming**

Divide the participants into teams of five people. Ask the teams to list: things that are square, things associated with a holiday, things that are red, things they can make out a coat hanger, etc. The teams are not allowed to discuss, just list items! The team with the most items on their list wins.

### **Topic Lead-Ins**

Sometimes when a group is meeting for a workshop on a specific topic, participants already know each other well. In these situations, use an icebreaker that leads into the content of the gathering. A topic lead-in can play a number of functions. It can:

- generate interest in the topic,
- activate participants' prior knowledge of the subject,
- help the facilitator and participants to identify individual learning needs and goals,
- encourage the sharing of information and resources, and
- reveal resistance to discussion or learning

Topic lead-in questions can be answered collectively as a group or individually. Use topic lead-ins liberally because it is appropriate to use them in every session and you can use types for groups or individuals in a single session.

### **Group Lead-in Activities**

Group lead-ins are particularly useful for introducing the topic, discovering what is already known and activating that prior knowledge. Here are

some activities.

### **Word Tree**

Generate a list of words related to the topic. For example, in an infection prevention course, ask participants to give you words related to the phrase, "body fluids." Participants may suggest: "dangerous," "disease," "HIV," "gloves," "infectious," etc. Write all the words on the board, clustering by theme where possible. You can use this opportunity to introduce essential terms, too.

### **Multiple Choice or True/False Quiz**

Rather than giving participants a multiple choice or true/false quiz at the end of a session, try giving it at the beginning. As facilitator, you can walk around and discretely scan participants' responses to help you to identify where to focus your attention during the training. Review the answers with the group at the end of the session. Note that participants should check their own answers.

### **Ball Toss Brainstorming**

Announce a topic (things associated with a topic, a holiday, the course content, etc.). Then, toss around a ball. When someone catches the ball, they shout out something related to the topic and then toss the ball to someone else. Continue the exercise until everyone has had a chance to speak.

#### *Variations*

When they catch the ball, each person tells what they thought was the most important learning concept was. Continue the exercise until everyone has caught the ball at least once and explained an important concept of the material just covered.

Each person tells one step of a process or concept when the ball is tossed to them. The facilitator or participant, in turn, writes it on a chalkboard or flipchart. For example, after covering audience segmentation," the facilitator would start the ball toss by having everyone give one step in the audience segmentation process.

### **Calm Down!**

Sometimes the participants need to calm down or "come down" to reality after some intensive material is presented. Also, to get the full benefit of new material, some "introspective time" is needed.

Have the participants lay their heads on the table, lay on the floor, or get in a comfortable position. Then, have them reflect on what they have just

learned. After about 5 minutes, say a key word or short phrase and have them reflect on it for a couple of minutes. Repeat one or two more times then gather the group into a circle and have them share what they believe are the most important points of the concept and how they can best use it at their place of work.

Note: This may seem like a waste of time to many, but reflection is one of the most powerful learning techniques available! Use it!

### **Boom!**

All participants should sit in a circle. They are instructed to count out loud around the circle. Each person whose number is a multiple of 3 (3-6-9-12, etc.) or a number that ends with 3 (13-23-33, etc.) must say BOOM! instead of the number. The next person continues the normal sequence of numbers.

Example: The first person starts with 1, the next one says 2, and the person who should say 3 says BOOM! instead, and the next person says 4.

Anyone who fails to say BOOM! or who makes a mistake with the number that follows BOOM! is disqualified.

The numbers must be said rapidly (5 seconds maximum); if a participant takes too long to say her/his number, s/he is disqualified.

The last two participants left are the winners.

Note: You can have the participants "clap" once instead of saying Boom.

Note: To make this energizer more interesting, when a specific number is reached (e.g., 30) have the participants count backwards towards zero. The game can be made more complex by using multiples of bigger numbers, or by combining multiples of three with multiples of five.

### **Unique Sayings**

At the beginning of the week, form groups of three or four participants. Ask each group to record some of the sayings frequently used in their countries or in their region of the country. After 5 to 7 minutes, ask the groups to report their list of sayings. As each group reports their list, the facilitator should check that the entire group understands each saying. Keep this list of sayings for another warm up later in the week. Write each saying on a piece of paper and place each in an envelope.

The activity continues until all of the participants have contributed or until the facilitator feels that the group has been energized.

On the third or fourth day of the course or workshop, divide the participants into two groups, one group at each end of the room. One representative from each group comes to the center of the room to receive an envelope containing a saying. The representatives read the saying silently and return to their groups. Without speaking to her/his group, the representatives draw a picture on the flipchart to represent the saying s/he has received. The drawings cannot contain any words or parts of words.

The members of each group guess the saying that their representative has drawn. The first team to guess the correct saying receives one point. After one group has guessed the saying, each group sends a new representative to the center to receive another envelope with a saying and the activity proceeds as described above. The activity continues for 10 minutes or until all the sayings have been drawn and identified. The group with the higher number of points wins.

### **Hot Pepper**

Participants sit in a circle away from the tables and close their eyes. The trainer gives a small ball to one participant who is instructed to pass the ball quickly to the next person saying "Hot!" Participants continue to pass the ball around the group.

As the ball is passed from participant to participant, the trainer turns her/his back, closes eyes and calls out "Pepper!" The person who is holding the ball when "Pepper!" is called is removed from the circle. The ball continues to be passed until only one person is left.

### **Words**

Divide the participants into three or four small groups. Write the word INTERACTIVE on the flipchart. The groups have 5 minutes to create as many three-letter words as possible from the word INTERACTIVE.

For example, some of the words could be:

It  
Rat  
Retain

After their time is gone, the group with the most words wins. Note: Depending on the topic, other words can be used in this way, such as "demonstration," "counselling," etc.

### **Spider Web**

The participants should stand in a circle. A ball of yarn is given to one participant who tells the group something about her/himself, such as name, where s/he is from, her/his type of work, why s/he is attending the course, etc. (The information to include will depend on the size of the group and the time allotted for the activity.)

The participant with the ball of yarn holds onto the end of the yarn and throws the ball to another participant in the circle, who in turn must introduce her/himself in the same way. Participants continue introducing themselves by tossing the ball around the circle until all participants form part of this spider web.

As soon as everyone has introduced her/himself, the person holding the ball returns it to the person who threw it to her/him, as s/he repeats the information about that person. That person then returns the ball to the person who threw it to her/him, repeating her/his information. This continues around the circle, with the ball following its previous path in reverse order until it reaches the participant who first introduced her/himself.

Note: Warn the participants beforehand of the importance of paying attention to each introduction, since they will not know who will be throwing the ball at them.

### **The Post Office**

The participants should sit in a circle, each having her/his own chair. The facilitator takes one chair away and the participant who is left standing stands in the center of the circle and begins the activity.

The participant in the center of the circle says something like:

"I bring a letter for all of my colleagues who have brown hair."

All of the participants who have the characteristic stated (e.g., brown hair) and the person in the center of the circle change places. Whoever ends up without a chair to sit on, stands in the center of the circle and again states that s/he is bringing a letter, but for people with a different characteristic, such as: "I bring a letter for all of my colleagues who are wearing black shoes."

"I bring a letter for all of my colleagues who have never conducted a mass media campaign".

The activity can continue as long as the group is interested and enthusiastic, but no longer than 5 minutes.

## **Assumptions**

One of the most crucial assumptions that this training makes is about you, the facilitator. You are the key to success for this training. Since sensitive issues related to sexuality, stigma and HIV will be discussed, you should:

- like working with people;
- be knowledgeable about HIV and AIDS, sexuality, health;
- be respectful of others;
- be enthusiastic about facilitating this training;
- have good communication and group facilitation skills;
- be non-judgmental;
- be comfortable discussing sexuality issues with colleagues and other peers;
- have a sense of humour;
- be adept at using a variety of experiential programme techniques.

**Making it Your Own:** As with all training curricula, we have provided as much information as possible. However, it is up to you, the trainer to make it your own. We encourage you to add your own experience, stories, and complimentary content which may enhance the learning for participants.

Good curricula are dynamic and should always be reviewed prior to each use so you can adapt it to the specific needs of each set of participants. Also, each session has suggested timings. As you use the curriculum, you may wish to adjust the timings. Good luck and enjoy the training!



## Procedure

### **Session 1      Introductions.....45 minutes**

**Step 1**      Start the session by welcoming everyone to the training and by saying how pleased you are to have everyone present.

**Step 2**      Invite the local organizer to come and give a word of welcome. If there are any official guests or visitors, allow them to address the participants.

**Step 3**      Ask participants to sit with someone they don't know or don't know well. Explain that they are going to introduce themselves by interviewing one another. Ask them to spend about 5 minutes getting to know each other by answering the following questions:

- What is your name and what name do you want to be known by during the workshop?
- What work do you do?
- One personal like/dislike
- Give at least one expectation you have of this workshop. Ask participants to write their expectations on the card provided and hang them on the wall.

**Step 4**      Ask each pair to introduce one another.

**Step 5**      End this session by encouraging participants to get to know more about one another during breaks and mealtime.

**Discussion/  
Evaluation**      None