Group Energizers

Use these activities to engage participants during a break, or to energize your group and ready them for more action.

THE GREAT FINGER GRAB

Setup: Have the participants stand in a circle.

How it works: Instruct them to put their left hands out flat at waist level. Next, ask them to position their right hands with the index finger about half an inch above the palms of whoever is immediately to their right. On the count of 3, each participant should try to grab the index finger that's posed above their left hand, while avoiding having their own right hand index finger grabbed. When everyone is getting the hang of this, switch hands, so everyone is grabbing with the right hand instead of the left.

If everyone gets good at both sides, try adding in feet! Have participants put their feet out on the right and position their left foot over the foot of the person next to them. They'll have to try to pin their foot and grab their finger at the same time. Make sure to caution people not to stomp on any toes!

SWITCH UP

Setup: Introduce the game as an exercise where people will inevitably make errors. That's okay! It's part of it. Try to let yourself make a mistake and keep going. Throughout the game, unless instructed to do so, you should be walking around the space.

How it works: This game is played in rounds. They occur in the following order:

- Round 1: Invite people to walk around the room in no particular direction. SAY: "When I say stop, you stop. When I say start, you start." Try this a few times.
- Round 2: Say "NOW, when I say start, you stop. When I say stop, you start." Try this a few times until people seem to get the hang of it.
- Round 3: Say "Added to those moves, when I say name, you say your name. When I say clap, you clap." Try this a few times.
- Round 4: Say "NOW, when I say clap, you say your name. When I say name, you clap." Try this a few times.
- Round 5: Say "Added to those moves, when I say jump, you jump. When I say dance, you dance." Try this a few times.
- Round 6: Say "Final round! We're going to put it all together with one change. NOW, when I say jump, you dance. When I say dance, you jump."

Wrap up the game and invite everyone to give themselves a round of applause!

ROCK/PAPER/SCISSORS CHEERLEADER

Setup: You'll want some room for people to spread out into pairs around the room.

How it works: Participants find a partner and play rock/paper/scissors. Whoever wins moves on to play another person and whoever loses becomes the winner's cheerleader. This continues until only two people are left with the rest of the participants cheering them on. Everyone cheers for the final winner.

SOUNDBALL

Setup: Have the group stand in a circle.

How it works: The facilitator makes a sound of some kind and gestures like they are throwing a ball to another person. In order to catch the sound "ball", the person being thrown to should mimic the sound the first person made as they catch. Next, this person who caught the first ball makes a new sound as they pass the "ball" to another player in the circle. That player mimics the sound, throws with a new sound, and so forth, ongoing.

- One rule: any sounds are allowed, but not words.
- Also note: In this game, it is important that the sounds being made are possible for other people to mimic easily. If someone makes a sound that others cannot mimic, it is a good opportunity to pause for reflection.

ZAPPER LOOK

Setup: Have the participants from a circle.

How it works: Tell them that their first task is to secretly look around the circle and each pick out a person to stare at when the time comes. Next, have them all look at their feet. Explain that you are going to count to three and say "Look!" and they should all bring their heads up and stare at the person they picked. Any two people who end up staring directly at each other are considered zapped. They should both shout something to indicate zappage and step out of the circle. The circle should then close in and play again. Continue playing until only one or two people remain.

THE GREAT FINGER GRAB

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How it works: On the count of 3, each participant should try to grab the index finger that's poised above his left hand, while avoiding having his own right hand index finger grabbed. When everyone is getting the hang of this, switch hands, so everyone is grabbing with the right hand instead of the left.

BACK TO BACK

Setup: Have the group form pairs – it's best if you assign them into pairs or ask group members not to pair up with people they already know well.

How it works: Give the pairs 30 seconds to look each other over and then tell them to turn back to back. While they're back to back, each person in the pair changes five things about him or herself – take off glasses, let hair down, etc. Then the pairs turn to face each other and each has to guess what has changed in the other.