



NEW YORK

**Team Building – Brainstorming &
Conflict Resolution
For
Destination Imagination
Team Managers**

Or....

How to Manage a DI team and stay sane!

Building Team: Exercises and Activities

Introduction

This is a collection of activities and exercises that I have used with student groups and adults in volunteer groups to build community and a sense of team. Many of the activities originated in published books and manuals, but have been passed on to me through oral tradition, handouts and packets that were not cited. There are a few activities, that I personally created and others I have adapted. Each activity lists potential objectives and offers suggested ways to use the activity. However, I have found every group to be different. Most of the activities address a particular stage in a group formation theory that is commonly used in experiential education. Unfortunately my handout does not have a full citation, but it does mention that the following group stage formation theory is by Tuckman:

- *Forming: Members of the group are determining leadership within the group and whom to follow. This is confusion, anxiety, and a willingness to please.*

Storming: This is the control stage. Alliances between members have formed and generate negative behavior. Real testing of the facilitators, and leaders within the group begins, It is an all out get to know you time. Participants are asking: Is this group safe? Am I going to like what I am doing? Can these leaders handle us?

Norming: The group starts to operate as one unit, taking pride in what it is doing and using strengths within the group.

Performing: They can act independently of the facilitators, setting goals, giving honest feedback and changing behaviors.

Transforming: This is the termination of the group. How will they celebrate? What does the future hold?

Therefore, for purposes of this collection, activities have been organized around some of the concepts that support a group in different stages and tasks:

Disclosure Activities: These activities allow the group to share information about themselves, helping the group establish norms, or things in common. These activities range from low to high risk.

Collaboration/ Problem Solving Activities: These exercises provide opportunities for a group to tackle a problem or situation in which everyone needs to contribute and therefore potentially storm.

Group Goals and Communication: These activities focus on communication, feedback, roles and strengths of the group. They provide opportunities for the group to work on ways they could perform better.

Recognition Activities: These activities allow the group to recognize their achievements and growth within a group. This facilitated reflection is critical to transforming their experience.

Disclosure Activities

Two Truths and A Lie

Objectives: Discover new things about each other, assess how well you really know each other

Materials: None

Directions: Ask each team member to think of three statements that tells the group something about themselves, two that are true statements and one that is false. Take turns in the group sharing the three statements and have the rest of the group vote on which one they think is false. The more subtle ones are trickier!

Ex. I have three sisters (true)

I was born in Bozeman, Montana (false: I was born in NY City)

I enjoy ice cream (true)

Battle Scar Galatica

Objectives: Each person shares something about himself or herself. **Warning:** depending on the scar, this could be a high-risk activity, but allows people to explain scars in their own way.

Materials: None

Directions: Take turns in you group sharing a story about any scar they might have on their body. If you have several groups, have them share " the best story". Be prepared: this one can get gross.

What's In A Name?

Objectives: To learn something about someone's name, family, heritage, etc.

Materials: None

Directions: Ask each person in the group to share the story, if any, behind their name, one or all of them. They can talk about why that name was chosen, what it means, or any nicknames that have come about. The group could also talk about a name they wish they had or another name they like, find unusual or funny. This activity is pretty free flowing. Remind the group to respect the name that that person wants to be called.

Ex: My name is Amy. I was named after my father's mother. My parents were going to go with the French spelling Aimee, but decided Amy would ultimately be easier for me and others to spell. Amy means " beloved" and has a Latin base in the word for love. There were six Amys in my neighborhood when I was growing up. It was the second most popular name when I was born. Etc, etc,.

"Take as much as you need..."

Objectives: To have each person share something about himself or herself

Materials: Toilet paper, M&M's, or Skittles

Directions: Form the group into a circle. Without telling them any of the details of the activity, pass around the bag of candy or toilet paper roll and tell them to "take as much as you need". Once everyone has taken some and the bag or roll has gone full circle, ask them to tell one fact about themselves for every piece of candy or square of TP. (They can eat the candy when they are done.)

Finish this sentence.....

Objectives: To share information, disclose on a medium risk level

Materials: list of sentences

Directions: Ask group members to complete the following sentences.

My favorite book is....	If I could change one thing in this environment I would...
The most important thing in my life....	If I could give up one bad habit...
The best measure of wellness is...	I like to spend my free time...
If I changed schools...	Love is...
When I feel sad...	I "collect" tensions in (body part)...
Five years from now...	I'm critical of myself...
I believe...	The thing I like most about myself ...
The best thing in life is...	The worst thing in life is...
I wish...	I like hugs...
When I'm excited...	My experience with ...

Personal Brochure

Objectives: Disclosure, expression, communicates why they are part of the group and what they are looking forward to, to be creative

Materials: 8 1/2"x 11"sheet for everyone, crayons, markers, pencils, magazines, glue and scissors

Directions: The task each group member has is to create a "brochure" in full color about themselves. Ask them fold their paper in thirds, creating six panels (like a travel brochure). Ask them to represent the following in a creative way on each of the six panels:

Panel 1: Their name and a symbol that represents them. (This is their logo)

Panel 2: 10 quick facts about themselves (sites and attractions)

Panel 3: Why or how they are involved in this group (The hard sell)

Panel 4: Their goals for this group (at least 3) (Highlights)

Panel 5: Three tips on how they like to be treated. (Travel Tips)

Panel 6: The one way you can get their attention (How to make a reservation)

Have them share their "brochure" with the group.

Wallet Introductions

Objectives: To find out some unique information from people through the contents of their purse or wallet.

Materials: access to their purse or wallet

Directions: Ask people to take out three things from their wallet that represents something they value. Have each person share those things. For a more challenging version: ask them to find something with their full legal name on it, the oldest thing they have, something that has expired, a dated picture and something you would not think to find in a wallet or purse.

Lifelines

Objectives: High level of disclosure, high risk, discovers some of the "hot" buttons and why they are so important. This activity is good for a group that works closely together and has a high level of investment.

Caution: can be emotional and take quite a bit of time.

Materials: Large pieces of newsprint, markers or crayons

Directions: Each member draws a line on a paper to represent the highs, lows, significant events, turning points, etc. of her/his life to date (can also project into the future). Indicate peaks, dips and label areas of the timeline to help explain it. Members share their lifelines with other members. The group can ask questions, but everything remains confidential.

Best Friend Introduction

Objectives: To have people share about themselves from a third person perspective- their best friend. The idea is they may be more comfortable disclosing aspects of themselves if they are not talking directly about themselves. Low risk.

Materials: Questions, can be a fill in the blank sheet.

Directions: Ask the group to fill-in the sheet or answer the following questions as they would expect their best friend to describe them.

I would like to introduce: _____ (name)

She/ he is the kind of person who likes: 1. 2. 3. 4 5.	She/he greatly appreciated and values: 1. 2. 3. 4.
Some of his/her dislikes or pet peeves are: 1. 2. 3.	Someday she/he would like to: 1. 2. 3.

Collaboration/ Problem Solving Activities

"Reunited"

Objectives: Find things in common, talk to everyone in the group

Materials: None, pen and paper helpful

Directions: Ask team members to find 5-10 (depending on the time frame) things they all have in common. Challenge them to think creatively; places they have traveled, TV show they have watched, some other experience. The first group to come up with the designated number of things wins, points for creativity too!

Human Knot

Goal: Problem solving, communication, and teamwork

Materials: None

Directions: The group forms a circle. Each person holds out their right hand and grasps another hand as if shaking hands. All then extend left hands and grab another left hand. They should not have both hands of the same person or hands of the people on either side of them. The goal is to then untangle themselves into a single circle without releasing hands.

Traffic Jam

Objectives: To work on communication, problem solving, to understand roles of leadership and followership within the group

Materials: Place markers; chalk, tape, paper plates, anything handy that people can stand on.

Directions: set up a line of place markers, one for each person plus one extra. Have the two teams stand on a place marker with one space in between them. Have each team facing toward the middle space. The object is to have the top groups exchange places in the same order on the opposite side of the open space. They may not touch anything but the markers and each other (imagine a hot lava flow). The only "legal" moves are: a person can move to an empty space in front of them and a person may move around a person who is facing them into an empty space. The "illegal " moves include: any move backwards, any move, which involves two people moving at once. If at any time an "illegal move" is done or anyone steps off the markers, they must return to the starting position

Diagram: Start [x] [x] [x] [x] [] [o] [o] [o] [o]

-----> <-----

Object: [o] [o] [o] [o] [] [x] [x] [x] [x]

When time is up or they have completed the initiative, ask them the following discussion starter questions:

Who were the leaders of this activity?

The followers?

How was it for the people on the end?

Did everyone feel involved in the process?

Additional challenges: Give them a time limit. Blindfold or ask certain member to close their eyes. Make certain members mute- they are unable to talk. If they are having a particularly frustrating time, call time out and arrange their line in more of a horseshoe pattern, so they can see each other, do not forget to ask about this change in the debrief.

Group Conflict and Communication

Turtles

Objectives: To share goals, work as a team and identify potential barriers to achieving the goals.

Materials: Flat markers, paper plates, carpet squares, newspaper sheets

Directions; Have each person "name" their marker, making it symbolize a goal that they have for the year, project, etc. identify a "sea of chaos" that is filled with all of the thing that would prevent them from reaching the end of the year with their goals intact. (Mark off an are with a safe zone on either end). Tell them that they must cross this " sea of chaos" utilizing their goals, which will protect them from the sticky sea. Tell them that they must always be in contact with each other and with their goals. If at anytime in the sea of chaos they lose contact physically with either their goals or a group member, they will lose that goal of that person may become "injured". Losing sight, ability to speak, etc.

When they reach the "other side", have the group debrief. What made them successful? If they lost any goals, what were they? Why did they lose contact? What were the threats in the sea of chaos? What will they do to support each other and their goals?

Roles and Labels

Objectives: To observe how roles can play out in a group, examine roles people play and identify both the positive and negative aspects of roles.

Materials: Post-it notes with labels or other "head band type labels, paper, tape, string and odds and ends.

Directions: Give each person a role to "wear" on their head. Ask them not to look at it, but put it on directly. Tell the group that their task is to build a "tower" using the materials given (paper, tape, etc.) Ask them to treat people according to their labels. Designate at least two observers, who will not participate in the task. Have them begin the role-play, let it go on as long as they need to bring out some of the roles. Stop the role-play. Facilitate a discussion with the following questions:

What did you think your label said?	How did it affect your participation?
Are their labels among our group?	How does it affect participation?

Potential labels to work with: "ignore me", "act surprised", "laugh at everything I say", "none of my ideas are good", "hang on my every word", "I confuse you", "tell me to shut up", "treat me like a kid", etc.

Hidden Agenda

Objectives: Similar to Roles and Labels, this is an activity to see how roles in a group play out.

Materials: Note cards with roles on them

Directions: Give each person a note card and ask them to keep it to themselves. Have them think of ways they could play out their role in a group situation. Give the group a task, such as building something or brainstorming an idea for an activity. Allow the roles to play out. Stop the role-play.

Facilitate a discussion with the following questions:

What was your role?	How did it affect your participation?
Are there roles among our group?	How does it affect participation?

Brown Bag Discussion

Goal: To have an opportunity to discuss group issues in a fair way

Materials: Small pieces of paper, paper bag

Directions: Have each person write down, on a small piece of paper, the topic that they think the group should discuss most. Have them fold the paper twice and deposit it in the bag. Shake the bag and take turns drawing out a topic, reading it and discussing it. Make sure that the person who wrote the topic is satisfied with the discussion before you move on the next topic. Remind people to use "I" statements.

Variations: Have the group write down questions to make it an icebreaker, or write down different quotes and draw them out one at a time and talked about what they mean to the group.

Recognition Activities

Penny For Your Thoughts

Objectives: To express appreciation for other group members

Materials: Pennies

Directions: Have everyone bring or supply a certain number of pennies to a meeting or gathering. Invite each person to have the opportunity to give a penny to those members of the group they'd like to, and share their thoughts about how that person has been special or had an impact on them during the course of the year.

Graffiti Boards

Objectives: To give feedback on a personal level. These are great for a long or all day meeting

Materials: A sheet of paper per person and pens

Directions: Have each person create a border for their piece of paper, including their name. Hang up these graffiti boards and invite other group members to write messages of appreciation on each board. Ask them to be sincere. Let each group member take them home at the end of the event.

Success Jars

Objectives: To share success with the group. Great mini-break in a meeting.

Materials: Jar, slips of paper big enough to write on.

Directions: Ask everyone in the group to write down a recent success on a card. Throughout the meeting, take time to draw out and read the cards.

Brainstorming Activities

Mind Dumpster

Objective: To quickly empty cluttered minds of preconceptions, prefab ideas and blockages so that original work can be undertaken. Mind dumpsters is also a fast way to read the landscape of what's running through your mind and, if you are working in a group, the mind of others.

Materials: Note cards and pens

Directions:

1. Get a stack of "Flush Cards" - 3x5 index cards, preferably of varying colors- and a big fat pen for each person.
2. Ask a prepared question about the idea or problem you want to wrestle with.
3. Give them two minutes to write one idea per card. They could be:
 - Graphic images relating to the area of interest
 - Rumors and gut feelings about the problem
 - Best and Worst memories associated with the problem
 - Sensory elements: sights, sounds, tastes, touches
 - Emotions, positive and negative
 - Pet ideas, peeves and otherwise, that your mind connects with the task
4. Call time. And collect the cards, shuffle and let ferment for about 25 minutes.
5. Go back and arrange the cards in idea stacks, add to them as needed.
6. Watch for sparks.

Brainstorming: " The Rules"

Brainstorming sessions are a sacred time for ideas to be born and grow. So that they flow freely in a comfortable environment, please observe the following care instructions:

Ideas are.....

Wild, crazy, outlandish, shocking, hilarious, fun, imaginative, interesting, amazing, inventive, different, clever, complex, incomplete, undeveloped, a framework, a start and a beginning.

Ideas can be....

Added on to, stretched, run with, played with, borrowed with permission, transformed, put in context, celebrated, expanded, admired, run past, saved for another time, tangential, shared, protected, formed around and overwhelming.

Ideas are not....

Dumb, stupid, silly (unless that is the idea), insane, impossible, unrealistic, inherently faulty, half baked, boring, "too" anything, wrong, out of bounds, hurtful, negligent, assuming or labels.

Ideas cannot be...

Put down, discounted, ripped on, squelched, trapped, hurtful, exclusive, trampled on, discarded, scoffed at, judged or patronized.

How to Resolve Conflicts --Without Killing Anyone

Whenever you have to deal with other people, you will, sooner or later, have to deal with conflict. Conflict is not inherently bad. In fact, conflict simply stems from differing viewpoints. Since no two people view the world exactly the same way, disagreement is quite normal. In fact, anyone who agrees with you all of the time is probably telling you what you want to hear, not what he or she actually believes.

The reason conflict has received such bad press is because of the emotional aspects that come along with it. When there is conflict, it means that there is strong disagreement between two or more individuals. The conflict is usually in relation to interests or ideas that are personally meaningful to either one or both of the parties involved. The key to managing conflict effectively is to learn the skills necessary to become a good conflict manager.

Conflicts in interpersonal relationships. Sometimes in interpersonal relationships, such as those between team members, there may be a conflict that you are not aware of. If someone who is normally upbeat and friendly toward the team suddenly begins avoiding meetings or being rude, there is usually a reason. If the person has remained cheerful with everyone else except one team member, chances are you are dealing with a conflict situation. In these instances, you will want to address the problem by proceeding through the following steps.

- Try to determine if there is a problem between only two members of the team.
- Set up a private face-to-face meeting to discuss the problem between the two team members.
- In a nonconfrontational manner, ask the two if there is a problem. If the answer is "No", inform the team members that you think there is a problem and explain what you think the problem is.
- As you talk, ask for feedback. Do not allow "attacks" or accusations.
- Insist that each team member try to listen to each other with open minds.
- Be sure each team member shows respect for the other's opinions.
- Ask team members to take a few minutes to recycle the other person's opinions in their mind.
- Ask each team member to try to determine why the other person felt the way they did.
- Avoid "finger-pointing."
- Try to work out a compromise that pleases both.

Conflicts in meetings. Conflicts in meetings can be very disruptive. But they can also be very helpful. Remember, conflicts are disagreements. If the person who is disagreeing with you is raising valid questions, it may benefit the group to address the issues they are presenting. In fact, by listening to them, you may gain valuable insight into what is and what is not working within your team. However, if the person continues past the point of disagreement to the point of disruptiveness, specific steps should be taken. Below is a list of conflict resolution tactics that can be used for meetings that get "out of control."

- Have team members find some "grain of truth" in the other person's position that can be built upon.
- Have team members identify areas of agreement.
- Defer the subject to later in the meeting to handle.
- Document the subject and set it aside to discuss in the next meeting.
- Have each team member present their view, but do not force agreement. Let things be and go on to the next topic.
- Ask team members if there may be some way to make the situation work for everyone.
- Create a compromise.
- INSIST that the TEAM and not individuals on the team be considered the most important!
- Seek more information: ask a lot of questions!
- Check understanding and summarize: make sure that you are understanding everything!
- Try to understand the other person's perspective: communication is more than just listening; try to see it their way!

Rules for disagreeing diplomatically.

Regardless of the type of conflict you are dealing with, there are several general rules of thumb you should follow whenever you are trying to bring harmony to a volatile situation. Here they are.

- Reflect your understanding of the other's position or opinion. "I feel, think, want, etc." This says, "I am listening to your opinion and I take your opinion into account before I state mine."
- Let the other person know that you value him/her as a person even though his/her opinion is different from yours. "I understand (appreciate, respect, see how you feel that way, etc.)". This says, "I hear you and respect your opinion."
- State your position or opinion. "I feel, think, want, etc." This says, "I don't agree, but I value you - so let's exchange ideas comfortably, not as a contest for superiority."